

Keep Runs Short Until Puppy Is 6 Months

At 8 or 9 months, German Shepherd Puppy can take longer runs.

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Q. I have a 12-week-old Labrador Retriever. I keep getting conflicting advice as to when she can start running. Currently, we have been going for one-hour walks with short runs mixed in. I am concerned about her hips. Is it too early to be doing any sort of running? She seems to enjoy it. When is it appropriate to do longer distances?

A. You could start doing some light running with your puppy, maybe one to two miles at the most, at more of a jogging pace. When she hits 6 months, you could start stretching the runs out to three to five miles at a moderate pace. Once she is 8 or 9 months, she will be ready for whatever you can dole out!

Although there is not a lot of research regarding this topic, it makes sense to limit exercise like running while her cartilage and bones are still developing. To make a parallel with humans, even high-school runners are discouraged from running longer than a half marathon.

Her running should have no effect on the ultimate function of her hips, but if she does have some component of dysplasia, she may be reluctant to run, and you should back off on the running.

Always pay attention to the weather and temperature while running. Ideally, you should run along lakes, streams or rivers so your dog can cool off as needed. Otherwise, provide additional water for her to drink on any run longer than one hour, and avoid running in really hot weather to avoid heatstroke. If at any point during a run, she collapses or appears to be breathing with great difficulty, gradually cool her off and try to get her into the shade, then have her checked out by your veterinarian.

Good luck, and have fun running!