

Put Your Dog to Work for Your Social Life

Tips for determining what activities and social events may fit you and your dog best.

By Linda Branch, Ph.D.

Google the word “dog” and 322,000,000 results are instantly at your fingertips. The results can make a dog owner dizzy. Likewise dizzying might be trying to figure out how to meet and mingle with other dog lovers.

Because dogs are pack animals, they need socializing. They also thrive on variety and activities just as much as their owners. The local dog park may be the old standby, but if you’re looking for something new there’s a long buffet of options from which to choose!

So how do you decide which activity you and your dog would enjoy? The first step is to ask a few questions.

Who Are You?

First, take a realistic survey of who you are and what your likes and dislikes encompass. Do you prefer low energy or high energy? Are you a competitive jock or a fan in the stands? Do you like projects or just want to be entertained?

Identify the ways you like to socialize with others, then think of ways your dog can get involved. Does a walk in the park with a neighborhood group sound like your cup of tea, or does joining a dog agility group cause your social gene to wag?

Who Is Your Dog?

Next, consider your dog. What is his personality like? How about his age, temperament, and mobility? How well-adjusted and socialized is he? Do you need a training refresher before mixing him with other dogs?

Cross off any activities that your dog might not be a good fit for. If your dog is elderly, flyball or agility might not be the way to go. If you have a spunky Jack Russell Terrier, it could be a match made in heaven. Looking at your dog’s abilities and personality can clue you in to whether he’d prefer a weekly yappy hour meet-up or weekends competing in a dog sport.

The Right Scene

Once you’ve determined which activities you think are right for both you and your dog, you are ready to go join in the social circle. If the activity is organized, try doing an Internet search for the activity and your city. Whether you’re thinking of getting started in rally obedience or helping to put on the town’s doggie costume parade, the organization’s website will provide contact information to get you started.

There’s a whole world of dog lovers ready to socialize around their four-legged pals. If you tried something and didn’t like it, there are hundreds of other dog-centered activities just waiting for you and your buddy to sample. Come join the social scene!

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