

## Five Fitness Tips for Competition Dogs

**Whether you're in the city or the country, prepare your performance dog with these five tips.**

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Dogs who compete in any dog sport need to be fit, agile and strong. Although some dog sports are more demanding than others, the dog who is fit and strong will be better able to perform well, is more prepared to handle the stress of competition, and is less likely to get hurt during practice or competition.

Here are five fitness tips that will help your dog get fit, maintain his fitness, and keep him strong and agile. And best of all, these are fun things to do with your dog!

1. **Go for Jumble Walks.** When you and your dog go for a walk, don't just walk. Instead, every 100 steps do something different. Walk slowly, walk briskly, skip, take longer strides, jog, run, or sprint. Your dog will not skip when you do, obviously, but he will change his pace as you do and by varying his pace, he will use his body in different ways.
2. **You're it!** Play tag with your dog by inviting him to chase you. Have a very special toy and dart around the backyard or living room, dashing right, dodging left, and backing away from your dog. When he catches up to you, give him the toy and make a big fuss over him. This exercise strengthens muscles and helps his agility as he dashes back and forth.
3. **Play Dodge Ball!** Have a family member sit at one end of a hallway in your house while you sit at the other end of the hall. With your dog in between, toss a soft ball past your dog to the other family member. If the dog catches the ball, he gets to keep it for a few seconds while everyone cheers for him. This exercise is great for building quick bursts of speed and agility as your dog twists and turns and dashes after the ball.
4. **Walk the Stairs.** Most dogs would prefer to climb stairs rapidly, dashing up (or down) and missing three, four, or five stairs as they leap. Walking the stairs is better exercise, though. With your dog on leash, walk up and down a couple of flights of stairs, making sure your dog walks slowly up and down. This is a great muscle and body strengthening exercise.
5. **Trick Training is Fun!** Stand with your legs shoulder width apart. Using a treat or toy as a lure, tell your dog to 'figure eight' and lead him through a figure eight pattern through your legs. After one or two repetitions, give him the treat or toy and praise him. This trick helps your dog to be more agile.

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