

How To Get Your Pup Doggone Tired

Q *My Labrador retriever never seems to tire out. I can play fetch with her for an hour and she still wants to play. I take her to the doggy day care three times a week and she plays happily all day with the other dogs. But at night, she still has energy to burn. She is almost two years old. What can I do to tone down her activity level?*

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

SOME YOUNG DOGS DO SEEM TO BEHAVE LIKE FURRY WIND-UP TOYS that never wind down. These overactive dogs like yours do everything at top speed and rarely seems to nap or relax. In addition, your dog's breed is well known for having plenty of energy and for maturing late, but even the most rollicking Labrador retriever should settle down sometimes.

HERE ARE SOME BEHAVIOR REMEDIES TO DEAL WITH YOUR HIGH-ENERGY GAL.

You're on the right path by playing fetch with her and letting her use up her 'ya-ya's' at doggy day care. In addition to burning up energy, try introducing some fast-paced, combination commands designed to work her brain and her body. For example, ask her to perform doggy push-ups which are a series of sits, then plop into a down, back up and then into a sit and plop down into a down in rapid fashion. Once she gets the hang of it, she will look like she is actually performing a canine version of our push-ups. These fast movements are fun for lively dogs.

Expand her trick repertoire and teach her to do three rollovers in a row or have her circle you three times before you hand out a treat. In addition to walks and day care, let her swim and fetch balls in safe waters when the weather permits. Swimming doesn't tax the joints but provides a great aerobic workout and is a natural activity for Labs.

Once you have your canine more dog-tired, it's time to teach her how to settle on cue. Work on this when she is already tired. The settle signal rewards a dog for exhibiting calmness and quietness. You are reshaping her behavior by giving her frequent praise and an occasional food treat as encouragement. Whenever she plops down on cue or sits quietly, wait a few seconds, then say, "settle" in a calm voice and hand over a treat. If she becomes excited, ignore her. As she learns what is expected, gradually extend the time between your "settle" cue and her reward.

Finally, don't accidentally accelerate your dog's animated actions by speaking in a loud or excited tone. Reward her for her moments of quiet and calm behavior, but congratulations! Sounds like you have a fun dog who definitely will never bore you! 🐾

ARDEN MOORE hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on *Pet Life Radio.com* and is founder of the www.petfirstaid4u.com program.

DOGGY DAY CARE IS FUN BUT DOESN'T SEEM TO TIRE OUT PUPS as much as mental stimulation. Try including a dog savvy person that will take your dog for a run (alone) and include obedience training on walks. Throwing a ball, delivering a treat, or spending time with your dog isn't always enough; it's quality that counts!

True hyper-activity in canines is rare. In fact, many overly active dogs are anxious, stressed, in need of obedience training, or desperate for an emotional connection with you. Dig deep and connect ... talk to your dog, work on eye contact and reward for being calm and focused. Really mean it when you say, "good dog"!

CHANNEL YOUR DOG'S ENERGY AND GIVE YOUR PUP A JOB!

Obedience train with a focus on "stay" and practice impulse control exercises. Before throwing their favorite toy, ask for a "sit", wait for eye contact, and then throw the toy. For more advanced fetch training, wait 10 seconds before sending them off to retrieve. Apply rules to your game of fetch and turn the games on and off on your terms; only "crazy" on demand. Try setting up a chill station for your dog!

Brooks' Canine Energy Expenders:

- Agility training
- Automatic ball launcher
- Chase the garden hose
- Diggity Dog Digging Pit
- Dock diving
- Stuffed Kong™ with food
- Tug-of-Toy (controlled)
- Dog Paddle
- Flyball
- Kibble hunting
- Sniffing games (Nose work) – toy hunt!
- Slow feeder / puzzle
- Treadmill (supervised)

Signs of anxiety and attention seeking include: jumping, pawing, whining and barking. These behaviors can be put on cue and allowed only when you ask for them. Ignore attention seeking and teach positive behaviors that are incompatible with unwanted behavior.

Anxiety Aids:

- Beef liver (cooling food) can help calm
- Dog-appeasing pheromones
- Lavender massages
- Rescue Remedy
- Spa music (helps mellow)
- Thundershirt®
- Turkey (tryptophan) has a calming effect

Remember to improve your emotional connection with your dog, and never punish; punishment only increases anxiety. Keep greetings low-key. Consult your veterinarian if your dog has too much energy to rule out any underlining medical issues.

Keep in mind that labs were selectively bred for high-energy activities and require lots of supervised activity! 🐾

STEVE BROOKS (CPDT-KA), Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT/KA), Canine Behavioral Expert and author of *DOG BITES* with STEVE BROOKS, shares 20 years of training techniques using "dog bites" as rewards for good behavior. SteveBrooksK9U.com