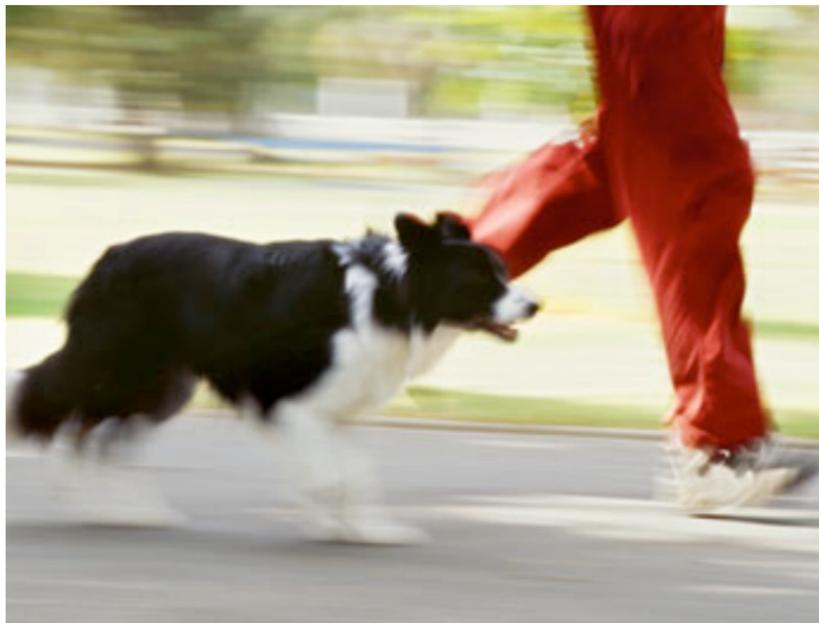


Running With Dogs: What You Need to Know

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If you're a runner and an animal lover, chances are good that you've taken your dog running with you. And that's great. In fact, recent studies suggest that dog owners get up to [eight times as much exercise as a regular gym-goer](#). But in order to keep your dog safe and healthy, you need to be informed.

[Some breeds are natural runners](#) and obvious choices for running partners. Greyhounds, for example, are particularly fast, while many hunting dogs have amazing endurance. Mid-sized mutts can make fantastic jogging buddies, too, because they aren't prone to some of the purebred hereditary disorders.

Even if your dog is a great runner, don't assume you can just start in with long, hard runs. To learn more about running with dogs, we spoke to Dr. Sarah Marzke of [Topaz Veterinary Clinic](#) in Arizona, who is an avid runner and loves nothing more than heading out for a long run with her five-year-old black Lab, Storm.

Storm, who was originally trained to be a search-and-rescue dog but ultimately didn't make the cut due to a small medical problem, is a perfect running partner, said Marzke. "He's extremely high energy. I also had a golden retriever and a Staffordshire terrier, but due to some orthopedic issues, they couldn't -- and shouldn't -- run long distances."

That brings up the first important point: "Before you start running with your dog, they have to get a medical evaluation, just like a human would," said Marzke. "If your dog has any degenerative joint disease, a heart problem, or problems breathing, like bulldogs and other brachycephalic breeds, you shouldn't make them running partners."

Another thing to keep in mind is age. "Puppies shouldn't go for long runs; it can cause real damage. And remember, dogs age quickly, and are generally considered senior by the time they're seven. Some dogs might be able to keep running until they're 10 or 11, while others could develop arthritis or other problems much earlier," said Marzke, who recommended regular vet visits to make sure your dog is still in good shape to run.



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The distance you run is also highly variable. Marzke has implemented a 10-mile maximum for Storm. A basic rule of thumb is to keep an eye on your dog after your run and the next day. If your pup seems sore or is moving more slowly than usual, you might want to scale back the distance.

With the proper conditioning, some dogs, like sled dogs, can go upwards of 50 miles, but that doesn't mean you can adopt a husky and run a marathon the next day. Follow a training program that starts the dog on short runs and builds up, just like you would if you were training a human.

As you're running, you need to be careful. "Remember, you're responsible for looking out for your dog!" said Marzke. "Dogs are often so exuberant, and they love running so much, that they'll go farther than they should." Since many breeds have high pain tolerances, they might literally run the pads off of their feet if you aren't checking every mile or two.

Heat stroke can be another problem. Carry enough water for both you and your dog and make sure the pooch is staying cool enough, which might mean avoiding runs altogether when it's terribly hot or humid.

Dr. Jessica Waldman of [California Animal Rehabilitation](#) has seen many dogs whose owners have run them to the point of injury. She recommends stretching with your dog to avoid problems. In her article "[Paws in Motion: Exercise Your Pet Properly](#)," Waldman points out several stretches that, along with warming up prior to running and massage, will help you keep your pet feeling great. Shoulder and hip extensions, along with hamstring stretches, are key to your pooch's well-being.

Waldman, who doesn't recommend long-distance running for dogs, also told Paw Nation, "If at any point on your walk or a run, your dog lags behind you, and you have to encourage them to keep up with your pace, then that distance and/or pace is too much, and the exercise should be stopped immediately."

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