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EXERCISE TIPS for YOUR DOG

Please check with your veterinarian before starting any exercise program for your pet. Take your dog for a short walk as a warm up before beginning the exercises below.

1 Downhill walking



Improves front leg weight-bearing strength, abdominal strength, and spinal flexion.

Then try uphill walking to improve rear leg strength and spinal extension.

2 Do the happy butt scratch dance



Vigorously scratch the top of your dog's rear end. Most dogs find this stimulating and will "dance" from side to side with the rear legs, shifting their weight and strengthening these muscles.

3 Try some paw power



Give your dog a High Five! The dog will reach up with one paw. Repeat 2 to 3 times on each side.

This movement exercises shoulders, front legs and elbows.

4 Make your dog athletically inclined



Get your pet to lift his front limbs from the ground by using a Physioball, going upstairs or even dancing. These exercises will strengthen the hind limbs. Repeat this exercise with the rear legs to strengthen the front limbs.

5 Stand on three legs



Lift one of your pet's legs off the ground. If it's the front leg, bring the leg forward. If it's the rear leg, lift it backwards. Support the leg lightly so your dog cannot use your grip to help support himself. This exercise helps to improve weight bearing and strength.

6 Rock on!



Grab a couch cushion, rocking chair, air mattress or commercial "bosu" — anything you can rock by hand. Stand the dog on what you've chosen and slowly rock. The dog will automatically shift weight to correct balance with every motion.

7A Do the roll over...



Start with your dog in the down/stay position, and hold a treat or toy near the nose as a lure. In a clockwise, circular motion, move the lure to the side of one shoulder, luring the head.

7B Roll over...



After repeating and rewarding that motion, pull the lure up to the spine. When the dog begins to lose balance, praise him.

7C Roll over



With practice, he will roll over onto his back and complete the roll over.

8 Join in a tug of war



Encourage the dog to pull straight back — not side to side.

A useful tip: hold the tug straight to the floor as this works the muscles in the front legs as well as the hind legs.

9 Stretch up, and then take a bow



Encourage your pet to stand on hind legs and stretch his front paws upward. If this is too difficult, have your dog rest his front paws on you. Later, when your pet stands after sleeping and stretches — by fully extending his front feet and raising his rear end — praise and reward him. Both positions provide needed extension of the spine.

10 Sit up and beg



Great for core conditioning. Using a healthy treat for reward, lure the dog's head up as far as it will go and hold that position for a few seconds.

Note: avoid this exercise if your dog has a history of back problems or if your dog is currently overweight.