

Whole Dog Journal™



Training a Hyperactive Dog to Calm Down

Your high-energy, hyperactive dog can learn calming behaviors. Here's how to help him relax...

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA

[Updated Feb 19, 2016]

Boy, do I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard someone say their dog was “hyperactive” or “ADHD” – I’d be a wealthy woman. In fact, those are clinical terms referring to very specific behavioral disorders (canine and human) that are relatively uncommon in dogs. In reality, most “hyper” dogs are just under-exercised. A couple of days hiking at the Peaceable Paws farm and you’d hardly know them.

Not every dog owner has access to large tracts of acreage upon which to exercise their unruly canines, and in any case, “wild child canine syndrome” (WCCS) is more than just lack of exercise; it’s also lack of appropriate reinforcement for calm behavior – i.e., training. Unfortunately, all too often a dog loses his happy home – maybe even his life, as a result of his high-energy behavior.

We’ve seen several of these WCCS dogs at the training center in recent weeks. One private client decided to return her Shar-Pei-mix to the rescue from whence the pup came. Despite her best intentions and efforts, the client had mobility challenges that made it impossible for her to provide the pup with the exercise and management she needed. As painful as it was for the owner, returning the pup was the right decision.

WCCS dogs often include inappropriate biting in their repertoire of undesirable behaviors. We currently have a temporary foster resident at the training center: a 13-week-old high-energy Jack Russell Terrier who failed his assessment at the shelter for using his mouth in protest when restrained. Little Squid is a perfect example of the kind of dog who needs to learn self-control and the art of being calm.



Like many young dogs of active breeds, Squid needs a lot of intense exercise in order to be capable of focus and participation in training. Walking around the block doesn't cut it for dogs like this.

A successful WCCS behavior modification program contains three elements: physical exercise, management, and training. While any one of these alone can make your high-energy dog easier to live with, apply all three for maximum success. Let's look at each of these elements in greater detail.

Exercise and Activity is Key for Managing Hyperactivity

Squid's day begins with an hour of barn-play while we do chores. He delights in harassing our dogs (and our pig). He gets at least one long hike around the farm per day, preferably two, or even three. He also gets one or more sessions of ball/toy fetch in the training center, and some puppy socialization/play time when there's a class going on. Finally, he wraps up his day with evening barn chores. Does it tire him out? No. I have yet to see him tired. But it does take the edge off, so that when I work with him to teach calm he is able to focus and participate in the training. The physical exercise sets him up for training success.

Not everyone has an 80-acre farm to play on. If you're farm-deprived, there are other ways to provide exercise for your WCCS dog. A placid walk or three around the block won't do it. Nor will leaving him on his own in your fenced backyard. He needs to be actively engaged.

Outings to your local well-run dog park can be a good exercise option. If you don't have one in your area, invite compatible canines over to play in your dog's fenced yard. If you don't have one, invite yourself and your dog over to your dog-friend's fenced yard for play dates.

Absent any access to a dog-friendly fenced yard, play with your dog on a long line. A 50-foot line gives him a 100-foot stretch to run back and forth and work his jollies off.

Caution: Work up to 50 feet gradually, so he learns where the end of the line is. You don't want him to blast full-speed to the end of his long line and hurt himself. Also, wear long pants. A high-speed long-line wrapped around bare legs can give you a nasty rope burn.

If none of those work for you, having him wear a pack when you walk him, or even better, pull a cart (which takes significant training), or exercising him (safely) from a bicycle may be options for using up excess energy.

The Best Games for Hyperactive Dogs

If outside exercise is simply out of the question, here are some indoor activities that can help take the edge off:

Find it. Most dogs love to use their noses. Take advantage of this natural talent by teaching yours the "Find It!" game:

1. Start with a handful of pea-sized tasty treats. Toss one to your left and say "Find it!" Then toss one to your other side and say "Find it!" Do this back and forth a half-dozen times.



The Manners Minder enables you to dispense a treat to your dog some distance away from you.

2. Then have your dog sit and wait or stay, or have someone hold his leash. Walk 10 to 15 feet away and let him see you place a treat on the floor. Walk back to his side, pause, and say “Find it!” encouraging him to go get the treat. Repeat a half-dozen times.

3. Next, have your dog sit and wait or stay, or have someone hold his leash and let him see you “hide” the treat in an easy hiding place: behind a chair leg, under the coffee table, next to the plant stand. Walk back to his side, pause, and say “Find it!” encouraging him to go get the treat. Repeat a half-dozen times.

4. Again, have your dog sit and wait. This time hide several treats in easy places while he’s watching. Return to his side, pause, and say “Find it!” Be sure not to help him out if he doesn’t find them right away.

You can repeat the “find it” cue, and indicate the general area, but don’t show him where it is; you want him to have to work to find it.

5. Hide the treats in harder and harder places so he really has to look for them: surfaces off the ground; underneath things; and in containers he can easily open.

6. Finally, put him in another room while you hide treats. Bring him back into the room and tell him to “Find it!” and enjoy watching him work his powerful nose to find the goodies. Once you’ve taught him this step of the game you can use it to exercise him by hiding treats in safe places all over the house, and then telling him to “Find it!” Nose work is surprisingly tiring.

If you prefer something less challenging, just go back to Step 1 and feed your dog his entire meal by tossing pieces or kibble from one side to the other, farther and farther, with a “Find it!” each time. He’ll get a bunch of exercise just chasing after his dinner!



The “find it!” game can be played indoors or outside. Nose work is surprisingly tiring for dogs.

Hide And Seek. This is a fun variation of the “Find it” game. Have your dog sit and wait (or have someone hold him) while you go hide yourself in another room of the house. When you’re hidden, call your dog’s name and say “Find me!” Make it easy at first so he can find you quickly and succeed. Reinforce him with whatever he loves best – treats, a game of “tug,” petting and praise, a tossed ball – or a combination of these. Then hide again. As he learns the game, make your hiding places harder and harder, so he has to really search. A trainer friend tells me she has hidden in bathtubs and closets, under beds, and even inside a cedar chest.

Manners Minder. If you are into higher-tech exercise, use a treat dispenser called the Manners Minder that spits out treats when you push a button on the remote control. A Maryland trainer friend, Elizabeth Adamec of Sweet Wag Dog Training, shared her exercise secret with me for her high-energy adolescent Golden Retriever, Truman. This one is especially useful if you don’t feel like exercising along with your canine pal or can’t, due to physical restrictions of your own:

Teach your dog to use the Manners Minder, by showing him several times that when he hears the beep, a treats fall out of the machine. You can use his own dog food, if he really likes his food.

1. Set the machine a few feet away and have your dog sit next to you. Push the button, and let him go eat the treats. Repeat several times, encouraging him, if necessary, to go get the treats when he hears the beep.
2. Put the machine across the room, and have your dog sit next to you. Push the button, and watch him run over and eat the treats. If he's not doing this with great enthusiasm, repeat Steps 1 and 2 several more times with higher value treats, until he really gets excited about the treats when he hears the beep.
3. Set the machine in the next room, and repeat the exercise several times. Call him back to you each time, so he runs to the Manners Minder when he hears the beep, eats the treat, and runs back to you to wait for the next beep. Gradually move the treat dispenser into rooms farther and farther away from you, until your dog has to run all the way across the house, or even upstairs, when he hears the beep. Now you can sit back with the TV remote in one hand, your dog's remote in the other, and enjoy your favorite show while canine pal gets exercise and dinner, all at the same time.

There are tons of other ways to provide your dog with indoor exercise. Play tug. Teach him to bowl. Teach him to catch, then repeatedly toss him his ball 10 feet away and have him bring it back to you. Some trainers use treadmills and canine exercise wheels to exercise their dogs. (These must be carefully trained and supervised.) Get creative. Get busy. Have fun. Let the indoor games begin.

Managing Hyperactivity with Positive-Reinforcement Training

Successful positive training, especially for high-energy dogs, relies on the appropriate use of management tools to prevent the dog from practicing – and being reinforced for – undesirable behaviors. In between his many daily exercise and training sessions, Squid is either parked in an exercise pen in the barn tack room (with plenty of bathroom breaks outside), or in an outdoor kennel off the side of the training center.

Here are examples of when to use various management tools for your wild child dog:

Crates and Pens. Use crates and exercise pens when you can't directly supervise his energy to consistently reinforce appropriate behaviors and prevent reinforcement for inappropriate ones. The best times for the appropriate use of crates and exercise pens include:

- When you can provide adequate exercise and social time in addition to his time in the crate or pen.
- When your dog has been properly introduced to the crate or pen and accepts it as a good place to be. Note: Dogs who suffer from isolation or separation distress or anxiety often do not crate or pen well.
- When you know you'll be home in a reasonable period of time so you don't force your dog to soil his den – no longer than one hour more than your pup's age in months, no more than an outside maximum of eight to nine hours for adult dogs.



Squid has learned a modicum of calm behavior, and now offers a calm sit or down when he wants something, such as the opportunity to go outside. This is quite a contrast to his previous behavior of frustrated jumping and mouthing.

Leashes and Tethers. Leashes and tethers are useful for the “umbilical cord” technique of preventing your wild child from being reinforced for unwanted behaviors. With your dog near or attached to you, you can provide constant supervision. Also, with your dog tethered to your side, you should have many opportunities to reinforce him for appropriate behavior.

The leash can be hooked to waist belts that are designed for that purpose, or clipped to your belt or belt-loop with a carabineer. Your WCCS dog can't zoom around the house if he's glued to your side.

If inappropriate mouthing behavior is included in his high-energy repertoire, however, this may not be the best choice. Tethers are better for keeping this dog in view, with easy access for reinforcement of calm behavior, while keeping his teeth from your clothing or skin. Appropriate situations for the use of leashes and tethers include:

- For dogs who get into trouble when they are unsupervised.
- **Leashed** when your activities don't preclude having a dog connected to you – okay for working on the computer; not okay for working out.
- **Tethered** when you want to keep your dog near but not directly connected to you, to teach good manners and/or prevent inappropriate behaviors.

Baby Gates and Doors. Baby gates and doors prevent your dog's access to vulnerable areas when he's in wild child mode. A baby gate across the nursery door keeps him safely on the other side while you're changing diapers, but still lets him be part of the “baby experience.” Not to worry if the older kids left their stuffed toys strewn across the bedroom floor; just close the bedroom door when your dog is in a “grab toy and run” mood. The most appropriate uses of baby gates and doors include:

- To prevent your dog's temporary access to areas during activities you don't want him to participate in.
- To prevent your dog's access to areas when you can't supervise closely enough, to prevent inappropriate behaviors such as counter surfing or getting on forbidden furniture.

5 Training Exercises for Your Hyperactive Dog

The final element of your WCCS behavior modification program is training. The more training you do the easier it is to communicate with your dog. The better he understands you, the more easily he can follow your instructions and requests. With a high-energy dog, in addition to basic good manners training, invest a lot of training time in impulse-control behaviors.

Click for Calm

Start by simply clicking your dog for calm behavior, beginning with clicks and treats for any pause in the action. One challenge with a high-energy dog is that the instant you try to praise or reward, he's bouncing off the walls again. With the clicker, an instant of calm elicits a "click" during the calm behavior. Even if the delivery of the treat causes excitement, your dog still understands it was calm that caused the click-and-treat to happen. An added advantage of the clicker: when they hear the click, most dogs pause in anticipation of the coming morsel, drawing out the brief period of relatively calm behavior even longer.

The goal of clicker training is to get your dog to understand that he can make the click happen by offering certain behaviors – in this case, calm. At first you won't get long, leisurely stretches of calm behavior to click. Begin by giving your dog a click and treat just because all four feet are on the floor at the same instant. Be quick! You want him to understand the behavior he got rewarded for was pausing with all four feet on the floor, so the click needs to happen the instant all four feet are down. If you click late, you may reinforce him for bouncing around – the exact opposite of what you want!

If your timing is good and you click for four-on-the-floor several times in a row he'll start to stand still deliberately to make the clicker go off. This is one of the most exciting moments in dog training –when your dog realizes he can control the clicker. Your clicker is now a powerful tool; you can reinforce any behavior you want, any time it happens, and your dog will quickly start repeating that behavior for you.

How does "pausing briefly on all four feet" translate into calm? Very gradually. You will "shape" the pause into longer periods of stillness, by extending the time, in milliseconds at first, that he stands still before you click and treat. As he gets better at being calm for longer periods, be sure to reinforce randomly – sometimes for shorter pauses, sometimes longer. Do the same thing with "sit" and "down." Down is my favorite calm position: the very act of lying down evokes relaxation.

Do several short training sessions every day. You'll have the most success if you practice "clicking for calm" right after one of your dog's exercise sessions when he's tired anyway. When he understands that "calm" is a very rewardable behavior, it will work even when he has more energy.



Make sure your dog's crate is comfortable and equip him with a nice chew or food-stuffed Kong.

When your dog will remain still for several seconds at a time, add the verbal cue of your choice, like "Chill out," that will eventually cue him into calmness. Over time you can phase out the click and treat for calm behavior and use other rewards such as calm praise, a gentle massage, or an invitation to lie quietly next to you on the sofa.

"Sit" As Default Behavior

"Sit" is one of the first behaviors we teach. Even after the dog knows it well we reinforce "sit" so heavily that it becomes his "default behavior" – what he does when he doesn't know what else to do. Teach your dog to sit by holding a treat at the end of his nose and moving it slowly back a few inches, clicking and treating when his bottom touches ground.

Alternatively, shape it by clicking and treating for slightly lowered hind end until touchdown, and/or click for offered sits. Then shape longer sits. If he already knows sit, start reinforcing it every time he does it until he sits for anything and nothing. When you have installed “sit” as his default, things like the “Wait” exercises (below) and “Go wild and freeze” (See “More Steps to a Calm Dog,” page 19) happen very easily.

Wait

“Wait” is especially useful for dogs who are short on impulse control. I teach it using food bowls and doorways. “Wait” then easily generalizes to other situations.

Wait for Food

With your dog sitting at your side, tell him to “Wait.” Hold his bowl (with food in it, topped with tasty treats) chest-high, then move it toward the floor 4 to 6 inches. If your dog stays sitting, click and feed him a treat from the bowl as you raise it back up to your chest. If your dog gets up, say “Oops!” and ask him to sit again. If he gets up several times in a row, you’re asking for too much too soon; lower the bowl in smaller increments.

If he remains sitting, lower the bowl 4 to 6 inches again, and click and treat for his continued sitting. Repeat several times until he consistently remains sitting as you lower the bowl. Gradually move the bowl closer to the floor with succeeding repetitions until you can place it on the floor without your dog getting up. Finally, place the bowl on the floor and tell him to eat. After he’s had a few bites, lift the bowl up and try again. Repeat these steps until you can easily place the bowl on the floor and he doesn’t move until you give him permission.

Caution: If your dog guards resources such as his food bowl, consult with a qualified positive behavior professional before trying this exercise.

Wait at the Door

With your dog sitting at your side, tell him to “wait.” Reach for the doorknob. If he doesn’t move, click and treat. Repeat this step several times. Then jiggle the doorknob. Click and reward him for not moving. Repeat this step several times. Slowly open the door a crack. Again, click and treat if he doesn’t move, and repeat. Gradually open the door farther, an inch or two at a time. Do several repetitions at each step, with clicks and treats each time.

Eventually you’ll walk all the way through the door, stop, and face your dog, without having him move. Wait a few seconds, click, then return and give him a tasty treat. Of course, occasionally you’ll actually give him permission to go out the door!

Squid does a variation of “Wait at the door” in his pen and kennel. With the dog on the inside and human on the outside, I reach for the latch. If he jumps up, I pull my hand away. If he sits, I continue with the gate-opening process. Each time he jumps up, the process stops. If he exercises self-control the gate opens and he earns his freedom.

A Happy Future

Using a combination of exercise, training, and management, I am wildly optimistic that I can help Squid chill out, pass his shelter assessment, and find his forever home. If, after reading all this you still think your dog suffers from clinical hyperactivity or ADHD, then it's time to visit a qualified behavior professional for help. More likely though, using the same combination of exercise, training, and management, perhaps with a sprinkling of additional tools from "More Steps to a Calm Dog" (page 19), you can ensure your own dog's calm and happy future in your family.

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Comments (22)

I have a very active Golden Retriever – not at all like my previous Golden. I love all of these suggestions and am already playing "find it" with her ball. We desperately need suggestions on how to teach her to "greet" people appropriately. She is SOOO happy and jumps, licks, carries on in spite of our attempts to ignore, make her sit, etc. We can't have anyone come to the house. Help please!

Posted by: Lola 01 | October 30, 2016 1:01 PM

I am shocked that this article did NOT cover or even touch on food (i.e., diet) being at least a possible culprit in some dogs' ADD or/or hyperactivity & in some cases, training difficulties, or lack of ability to focus. Studies on children have proven this to BE an important factor (with their problems in these areas) & the jump is not that difficult, as a number of dog behaviorists and dog trainers have found out, from personal experience and even trial & error testing in dog training classes, with willing participants.

One of the biggest problems in the HIGH amount of high glycemic carbohydrates (and even more hidden carbs including peas) in most dog foods, even in some cases – if you are feeding a non-grain food. While you do not have to feed raw, or home cooked, it is an important and often over-looked holistic factor (with "problem" dogs –what they are EATING). Yet it is one of the easiest things to INSTANTLY change. Let's face it, the food donated to dog shelters, is generally at the bottom of the barrel, in quality.

Dog trainer & behaviorist, and author William (Bill) Campbell "Behavior Problems in Dogs" (3rd edition published 1999) believes that high glycemic carbohydrates (junk type, not the fibrous, slow to digest complex carbohydrate) ingredients found in many commercial dog foods ARE directly related to hyperactivity and to hypersensitivity to normal stimuli in the environment.

Posted by: Betsy | August 31, 2016 9:17 AM

I wish I'd had this article 9-1/2 years ago. I adopted a 10-11 month old sheltie/shepherd/whatever mix in early 2007 and she was constant motion incorporated. Taking her for a walk was like trying to walk a giant flea--boing, boing, boing-- this way and that.

Fast forward to the present, we've made some mistakes--found what worked but generally tried to be positive (though I admit to giving in to frustration now and then). I have subscribed to WDJ almost since its inception and credit the within for much of my (ultimate) success with Sasha.

At about 10+ years of age, Shasha is now a pleasure (usually--there are still moments....) to take for a walk. She knows a gazillion "commands" and I try to keep her brain active by always teaching more.

She is vocal but that is her nature and I allow her comments on the state of things. She is a very smart dog and I'm glad I had the help of WDJ along the way. Thank you for being there.

Posted by: PJKutscher | August 28, 2016 5:53 PM

This is a great, and much needed article. Thank you! Changes (and weather) can happen to anyone that can challenge their ability to exercise their dog as they have in the past. These ideas should be in everyone's tool box to help keep both dog and people happy.

Posted by: Alice R. | August 15, 2016 7:34 AM

Re the letter about the BC with Addison's. My Addisonian dog was never asked to slow down, just stay out of stressful situations until dosage was stabilized. Double check about the exercise restrictions, since I would think not exercising would be very stressful for a BC. I am not a vet nor a medical person, but have found much information about Addison's on the yahoo group. Please check them out. My vets made some costly mistakes which were caught because of articles I read on that group. My dog is now functioning normally and is quite active, though a poodle is nothing like a BC!

Posted by: DonnaE | August 14, 2016 7:08 PM

Oh yeah, I completely agree with MLeary on the importance of a good diet. For a lot of reasons besides keeping behavior under control.

Posted by: GiftofGalway | August 14, 2016 4:45 PM

Finding things is a wonderful exercise, but I suggest you go one better and join a Nosework class. Just finding treats is fine, but making it all about food is only one step. Training them to find a specific odor and getting rewarded for it is even better. Actually, my boy is more excited about the search than he is about the reward. Plus you can compete and get titles if you want, and make lots of friends with dogs and people along the way. Dogs were bred to DO something, not just walk around the block or play with a toy or hang out on the couch. They get just as bored as we do. So why not pick something they can really excel at and feel good about. Plus the two of you become partners...it's a great bonding experience (actually that's true of any dog sport). The sport came from search and rescue, and bomb or drug sniffing dogs, something dogs can do better than anyone else.

Posted by: GiftofGalway | August 14, 2016 4:43 PM

With all this wonderful advise, you leave out a very important aspect in calming a hyperactive dog and that is diet. If you feed your children a poor diet such as sugars, carbs, non vital nutrients; McDonalds, packaged foods, etc. often that child will have behavior problems and learning difficulties. Same with ALL animals. In order for them to function well, both physically and

mentally, they need to be on a species appropriate diet. Here at Star-Mar Rescue we've found that just the switch from dry food (even the very expensive, no grain food) to a raw balanced diet can stop unwanted behavior. Often the very behavior that the dog was released due to. Diet is the bases for everything. Hard to read an article helping people with "busy" dogs and never address a core issue – the diet.

Posted by: Mleary | August 14, 2016 10:48 AM

I have a 6yr old Border Collie bred by farmers with thousands of sheep. They have bred Nels family for generations to work, and they are in high demand. I acquired Nels from them at 5 months old after the family that bought him as a pet couldn't cope. The breeder was my hay supplier and rang me to say she had 6 people after this dog to work sheep, but she wanted me to have him. Dubiously I went to see him and of course brought him home. Instinctively he herded the horses for me and loved his life on the farm and very quickly turned into the most amazing dog, despite my initial concerns about being able to give him the exercise he needed. Nels was trained within 3 months and I would be rich if I had a pound for every comment on how beautifully he was trained, he is feisty though and I will always have to keep my finger on the pulse and never let him get away with anything, at the same time, once work was done for the day, he is the most loving, soft dog I have ever owned. My problem now he is 6yrs old, is that he has just been diagnosed with Addisons disease and until he has the medication balanced and the checks done to his heart the vet seems necessary, he has to stay on a lead with no frantic exercise! Day 3 today, I have had him on a long line, but there is no way I can walk the 30 or so miles a day that he has got used to running, its what he is programmed for and to him, the best bit of life. My normally happy boy has taken to literally screaming at the top of his voice whenever he feels energy building and there is no consoling, calming or distracting him (except liver) and obviously as he feels well in himself most of the time, he cant understand why he being punished by not being allowed to run. I would appreciate any ideas to keep my boy happy, he is already pushing his luck and getting frustrated. I have been working at teaching him new things, such as picking tricky things up for me and involving him in different areas of training, but as he is so programmed to run, he is very quickly going to get depressed, he is the epitome of a working dog, with an amazing pet nature and I want to keep his balance.

Posted by: Judith111 | August 14, 2016 10:37 AM

we found a small skinny near death dog. we saved her life, she is now about 2 years old, we believe she is a min terror, she got into a fight with on of my other dogs and dislocated her hip and knee, she gets so excited and want's to play but i can't control her, we have tryed everthing, we have 4 other small dogs under 5 lbs. she runs out side and plays but she is still so hipper, any segestions and how i can calm her down, i can't let her hurt my other little ones. help what can i do?

Posted by: wientjes | August 7, 2016 7:43 AM

My husband trained our germanshorthair pointer to catch a frizzbe in the yard, he loves it and it wears him down. It is a Dogzilla flying disk. You can buy these in the dog section .

Posted by: melody | March 5, 2016 11:13 AM

A friend of mine suggested this DIY video training course for dogs and new puppies. tinyurl.com/furrybff
I've been tempted to try it out. I noticed a huge difference with her dog, and she said she's been using the techniques for about 2 weeks.

Posted by: VinceV | December 10, 2015 11:00 AM

My children and I lost our yellow lab to cancer in Feb 2012. She was a mild mannered girl with an abundance of love and affection and incredibly easy to train. In Oct 2012 a family member was getting a divorce and was unable to keep her German Shepard mix of 3 years old; so the kids and I adopted him. He is so full of energy and has a real eagerness to please, but he had

only been crated and left outdoors in his prior home so he lacked inside manners. The kids and I were up to the task until we had a house fire in Dec 2012 that completely destroyed our home. Our boy was a hero that day and made sure everyone was out safe (the abundance of energy and loud barking was truly a lifesaver) until a police officer had to physically remove him from the property to keep him safe. He saved myself, my two children, my granddaughter, my niece, and finally my boyfriend that fateful morning after Christmas. I broke my leg and ended up in a wheelchair, my children and I living with my parents, with a father also in a wheelchair. The house was too small for all of us. My poor hero was rewarded by having to leave his home and stay with my sister for 3 months. Granted she has 5 acres and two other playful dogs, but he just endured so much change and heartache that it seemed so unfair. When he came home he was even more unruly, with so much energy, and an even greater need to please. He seemed to have forgotten all commands as we were trying to settle into our new home. We now had over an acre of yard for him to play in and a great little dog park down the road for him to run and socialize, but getting him to calm down for feeding or letting him outside seemed an impossible task. I got to a point that I wouldn't let the children let him outside because he would dance and jump so uncontrollably they would get knocked down or scratched. I've tried some different methods of training based on advice from the vet, family, and other dog owners to no avail. He is just so excited all the time, but it gets him in trouble. I was so glad to find this article because it is easy to follow and seems to be comprised of mostly common sense (which makes me feel a little sheepish) and has fun ways to try and "retrain" him that the kids can be involved in. He is our family and we don't want to fail him, he deserves all of our love and attention, and now I feel we are equipped with a great way to get him (and us) back on track!! Thank you so much for this article, I can't wait to update his progress because I just know he'll be as eager as we are to master this plan!

Posted by: mzcabby34 | June 28, 2014 10:03 AM

I saw a scooter that you could hook one to four dogs to and they could pull you as exercise for city dogs, the guy who came up with the idea also had a set up for a recumbent bike.

Posted by: CarolynAnn | May 12, 2014 2:08 PM

I have had three dobies and these dogs have NO stop. They can run anything into the ground. Games is a great way to deal with it and I have used all of it with them but hide and seek is a favorite inside game that is easy to teach. For mine finding the toy is only part of the reward, watching mom jump up and down and scream at the top of her lungs when they finds the toy is the best part for them. It is also a great way to teach stay.

Leave it and wait are also essential and should be used frequently. You know you have the command when all you have to do is stare and wait to get the behavior.

Posted by: CarolynAnn | May 12, 2014 2:05 PM

My wife is at her wits end with our dog. Not only is he overly hyper, the rescue we got him from told us that he would top out at 30-35 lbs.... he is now a trim 93 lbs. We just don't have the space for him, I'm on a 1/4 acre lot and he can't move like he wants too. I'm the only one that can walk him, my daughters want too, and have tried but he is far to strong for them and there has been plenty of road rash as he litterly pulls them off their feet and drags them down the sidewalk.

I've been able to train him to not jump on people as they walk into house, but now he gets right up on visitors and does this 90 lbs tap-dance on their feet, getting as close as possible without jumping. It's no better than the jumping in my opinion.

I'm torn now, had he ended up in the size range we were told he would be, I think we could manage him in our yard. I'm feeling like we can't give him what he needs to be a happy and healthy. Suggestions are welcomed.

Posted by: Davis008 | February 13, 2014 8:50 AM

Thanks for the great tips. Our Jack Russell x Chihuahua Lexi is definitely on the spectrum of WCCS! We try run her for at least a half hour a day. and by run, I mean RUN! I jog at a decent pace and she runs rights along side me. Usually for at least 3-5km. This makes the biggest difference in her behaviour, as she likes to bark at birds is an indoor dog, exercise is a must. We still have a lot of socialising work to do, but WAIT is a great command we use when we reach a street that needs crossing as well as when feeding her. Another great command that she has taken to with flying colours is "back up". As a puppy se use to run out the front door to get to the park across the road. Clearly not a safe behaviour we wanted to enforce, so we started back up, and she literally reverses away from the door and waits for the ok! We use it for food, toys and when playing in the park. Get her to back as far away as possible when waiting for her toy to be thrown. It's great :)

Posted by: EllieD | July 1, 2013 7:07 AM

When the weather is bad or I can't otherwise keep my two dogs--(a sheltie/whatever mix and a "giant"--30+ pound-- Boston Terrier) both rescues with unknown history, adequately exercised--I toss bits of kibble down the hall and send them after it alternately. They get both exercise and practice on "stay" commands.

Posted by: PJKutscher | June 8, 2013 5:23 PM

I love everything except for the treat machine, but I like to be a little more hands on with my dog.

Posted by: Tekia G | June 8, 2013 10:48 AM

"Wait" is the single most valuable behavior I have taught our Lucy. She is a very energetic Cavalier/Cocker mix and she wants to be best friends with every person, dog and cat she sees.

One day last week we were in the park with another dog friend, so I was letting Lucy run around dragging her leash. She was about 100 feet away from me when she and her dog friend saw another dog being walked on the sidewalk outside the park. Of course, they began heading toward the exit. Instead of shrieking "come, Lucy, come" and being ignored, I yelled, "Wait, Lucy, wait!" To my absolute delight Lucy stopped short where she was, at which point I told her, "Sit!" She sat! OMG! It was a miracle!

She stayed seated until I got to where she was and picked up her leash.

What a good dog!

Posted by: karen marie | August 7, 2011 11:00 AM

Sorry, I have no idea why this reposted????

Posted by: PaulaL | May 10, 2011 2:41 PM

Great article! I'm currently working with a 6 yr old yellow lab/pit mix who is one of 5 dogs in the home. Sinead is the problem child. Her excitability over visitors and the door have caused injuries to several people and incited dog fights. Her owner is a frail, but determined lady about 60 years old whose exercise is limited to yoga. She does have a full acre back yard which the dogs utilize to the fullest and has many activities for them.

Sinead knew down, so that was an asset. First we started with "wait" at the door. The door didn't open til she was sitting...she got that pretty quick, however, she still proceeded to mug people once they entered. I taught her owners to cross arms and look at the sky when she jumped up or mugged for attention, then a YES! and treat for sitting. It took a while, but she got it. It was at that point I decided to use massage to try to get her into a calmer state of mind, because you could tell that a mugging was just a smile away.

Our next training session began with 15 minutes of slow, firm, relaxing, massage. While I massaged and Sinead was calm the owner treated and praised her. She was MUCH calmer during the rest of our session while we worked on door manners and "Leave It".

The next week we repeated the 15 minute massage, and again a great training session.

The next week Sinead met me at the door and immediately laid down and rolled over for a belly rub with a BIG doggy grin on her face!

Last week she continued to show me her calmer behavior and we went for a walk to visit her favorite human friend, an elderly man who adores her but has been scratched several times by her antics. I asked her to sit as he approached and she complied, grinning and wagging, and allowed him to reach out and pet her without any antics! I was so proud of her! What a great day! Bravo to her owners for keeping consistent and practicing daily! She has a great chance now to keep her home.

Posted by: PaulaL | May 10, 2011 10:15 AM