





PUTTING YOUR *best paw* FORWARD:

5 TIPS TO TRAIN YOUR DOG TO RUN ON A TREADMILL

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Photography courtesy of DOGTROT FITNESS

YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED TO HEAR THAT DOGS *love to run* – A LOT! NOT ONLY IS IT A SOURCE OF GREAT FUN FOR THEM, BUT SOME STUDIES SUGGEST THAT REGULAR RUNNING EXERCISE CAN EXTEND A DOG'S NATURAL LIFE BY TWO FULL YEARS!

However, when the weather is horrific or you just can't make it out for a romp in the park what is a pup to do? The answer could be a specially designed dog-friendly treadmill – but only if you properly and safely train your dog to use the equipment. DogTrot Fitness (www.dogtrotfitness.com) specializes in dog-friendly treadmills and emphasizes knowledgeable training before use so that Fido can have as much safe fun as possible. Here is an easy to follow, step by step guide to help your dog put his or her best paw forward.

Step 1

Mutt motivation

According to professional dog trainer, Kathy Chou, it is important to find out what motivates your dog before even going anywhere near a dog treadmill. What is that thing that your dog will do absolutely anything for – is it a toy, kibble, a special kind of treat? Finding out what motivates your dog will help you to encourage and reward them for moving forward with the treadmill.

Step 2

Slow but sure

Introduce your dog to the treadmill idea slowly. Turn it on without your dog on it to allow him or her a chance to get used to the sound, movement and presence of the machine. Next place a few of your dog's favourite treats or their motivational object on the treadmill at standstill to let him or her get used to being on the machine. Be sure to stand in front of the treadmill as well so your dog is facing you.

Step 3

A gentle pace

When you and your dog are comfortable with the treadmill (and you have the remote control figured out, if applicable), begin with a very short running session set at a gentle pace. Chou recommends starting with the slowest speed possible for only a few minutes. For your dog's safety use a leash while he or she is learning how to run on a treadmill, but do not pull or yank your dog on the leash if they want to hop off of the treadmill. It is important to remember that the treadmill needs to be a positive place for your dog and that they need to build their confidence at their own pace.





Step 4

Be supportive

As your dog's caregiver and trainer it is extremely important that you always stand or kneel in front of the treadmill while your dog is using it. An unattended dog on a treadmill can get hurt if you aren't careful, so keep your eyes on them at all times. Keep your dog's attention forward, on you, and encourage him or her to walk towards you when the treadmill is operational. Having your dog's motivating object on hand can help with this.

Step 5

Repeat, repeat, repeat

Don't expect your dog to be able to manage a treadmill right away. In all likelihood it will take several short sessions and a lot of repetition before your dog feels confident and capable enough to handle a treadmill in motion. If you feel yourself getting frustrated or if your dog is getting anxious stop the exercise and return to it later. Above all it is important to keep your the treadmill experience as a pleasant one for your dog. With the proper training and encouragement they will be running along in no time!

Keep in Mind

- A** Chou advises that you always leave enough clearance behind the treadmill for when your dog slides off – and this will happen. “We would suggest that the clearance behind your treadmill be at least the length of your dogs tail (extended) plus 20%. We don't want any broken tails!” she says.
- B** “Placing a non-skid mat in that clearance area will also help to keep your dog safe and skid free,” recommends Mary Fisher, coowner of DogTrot Fitness.
- C** Also, before you even think about putting your dog onto the treadmill, be sure that you are completely familiar with the equipment. DogTrot Fitness treadmills come with a remote control feature that should be studied carefully as well before use so you can keep your dog as safe as possible. ✚