



THE WORLD OF DOG SPORTS

When a dog breed was being created, characteristics were chosen based on the breed's intended work, and breed mixes carry the traits of each of the breeds, to a greater or lesser degree. But nowadays it's rare that we ask our pet dogs to do the work for which they were intended, which can lead to a lot of troublesome behaviors in the home. The trick is to tap into those natural tendencies of your dog, channeling them in positive, creative games and tasks, while discouraging some of the more bothersome aspects of their behaviors. Becoming involved in canine sports can be a great way to tire them out while also giving them the joy of practicing the jobs they were bred to do!

Herding dogs were bred to herd, so the sport of sheep herding can be

great fun for them, though it can be expensive. As an alternative, herding behavior can be redirected to other outlets, such as the sport of Treibball, moving or "herding" large inflated balls around, or even just herding the waves at the beach!

There are dogs bred for pulling large loads, like Newfoundlands and Bernese Mountain Dogs, and the Northern working dogs, like huskies, samoyeds, and malamutes. These breeds can enjoy many canine sports that exist today, like carting, weight pulling, sledding and skijoring.

Scent hounds like bassetts and beagles were bred to follow a scent, so getting involved in the sport of tracking can satisfy their desires, though it can be a difficult sport to practice without a private yard. Nose work is

a variation on the theme that is easier to do in smaller spaces. Even [games](#) such as "go find it!" are great activities you can do at home with your nosy pooch.

For sight hounds like greyhounds, the sport of lure coursing is a great option. For some fun on your own, you can simply buy a lure course whip from a tack shop, attach a squeaky toy to the end of it and take your pup out into a large fenced-in area for some fun.

As the name implies, the retriever loves a brisk game of retrieve. The sport of dock diving – where a toy is thrown into the water and the dog dives in to retrieve it – is fun for these water-loving dogs.

There are more general sports like competitive obedience, rally obedi-

ence, agility, adventure course, free-style, and flyball that can be great fun for both dog and handler! Ultimately, you know your dog better than anyone. Pick something you think you'll both enjoy!

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CBC, led behavior departments in animal shelters for over a decade. Her

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