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Tips from a professional Chicago dog runner

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David Hill has quite the selection of running buddies. Some prefer long, easy-paced jogs, while others would rather race around the block a few times and call it a day. For Hill, it's all about making them happy. The founder of Chicago Dog Runner, LLC began collecting four-legged running partners in January 2007, after seeing the positive effects running had on his own dog, Flynn.

"I have a Border collie mix – he's very high energy. I just noticed that when he would go running, he was calm and relaxed and easier to be around," Hill says.

He believes there is a big difference in taking your dog for a nice stroll and giving him the opportunity to run. For one, running elevates his heart rate and improves his fitness level, which results in a healthier, potentially longer life.

Of course, getting your dog to heel at an 8-minute pace is not always easy. Some of us runners would love speed it up, but our partners seem to prefer sniffing patches of dirt and lunging at pedestrians. Hill offers some tips for a smooth ride.

Pictured: David Hill takes client Butters for a ride. Photo courtesy of Chicago Dog Runner, LLC

Getting started

Before you run with your dog, it's important that the dog has a physical exam and the vet gives the OK, Hill says. While most dogs are capable of running to some extent, you should be aware of your dog's limitations. For example, boxers and other short-snouted dogs don't cool as efficiently as other breeds, so pet owners must take extra precaution.

On your first attempt, choose a day when the weather is cooler and keep the distance short to see how easily your dog fatigues. You should spend the initial three to six weeks gradually building up your dog's endurance.

Keep it cool

Just as humans do, dogs get hot when they exercise. But canines cool through breathing and panting – they don't sweat – so it is not always obvious when they are overheated or dehydrated. Furthermore, Fido isn't going to tell you to stop for a water break. Studies have found that dogs lose up to 6 percent of their body weight before they are stimulated to drink.

It's important that your dog is adequately hydrated before she even steps outside. And be sure to stop for water frequently – once or twice per mile if you have the chance. "Carry a water bottle or buy a collapsible bowl and fill it up at a water fountain," Hill says. "Even spraying your dog with a water hose before [you run] is a good idea."

Leash lurchers

What about those dogs who have the energy and ability to keep up with you, but they just want to do their own thing? Hill recommends purchasing something called a [Gentle Leader](#), which is a head collar that works similar to a bridle for a horse. "We use it on a lot of dogs. It's really effective in preventing jerking and lunging," he says.

If you don't have a dog, but are in the market for a four-legged running partner, Hill suggests the following breeds: Vizsla, German shepherd, Weimaraner, German pointer and Rhodesian ridgeback. In general, he says, larger, shorthaired dogs do well with longer distances.

David Hill and Chicago Dog Runner, LLC will be featured this Sunday, May 17, on the program [190 North](#), which airs at 10:35 p.m. on ABC Channel 7. For more information on Chicago Dog Runner, LLC, visit [www.chicagodogrunner.com](#)



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