

Exercises for the four-legged work out

Maintaining an active lifestyle through daily physical exercise may be the No. 1 thing you can do to promote muscle strength, joint flexibility and overall health in senior pets. Try these exercises to keep your pets moving.

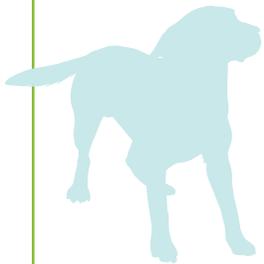


> Step-ups.

Encourage your pet to put both front feet up on one step. Doing so will shift his weight to the hind legs. Hold this position for up to 60 seconds. As your pet becomes stronger and more comfortable with this exercise—and if his size allows it—see if he can reach the next step up to increase the level of difficulty.

> Three-legged stands.

With your pet in a standing position, gently pick up one limb and hold it for 10 seconds, eventually working up to 20 seconds. This forces your pet to shift his weight onto the remaining three limbs, improving strength and balance. Do this with each limb, working your way around to all four limbs.



> Sit to stands.

Ask your dog to sit, and then have him stand up, and repeat. Build up to 10 to 15 repetitions twice a day, and reward your pet every few reps to help keep him engaged.

If your pet is a cat, exercises may need to look a little different. Try these exercises for cats:



> **Play time.** Use cat toys to get them moving.

> **Hide and seek.** Hide food in small bowls around the house and push them by placing food on elevated platforms.

> **Dine and dash.** Toss food kibble by kibble across the floor to encourage your cat to get up and walk for his meal.