

See Spot Walk!

Exercise motivation waning? Let your pet renew your fitness mojo.

No Dog? No Problem.

Visit aspca.org to find a local animal shelter that offers volunteer dog-walking opportunities.

Talk about good press for pups: New research suggests that dog owners have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and that walking a dog can reduce stress, boost self-esteem, and even burn over 900 calories a week. Read on to see why Fido is your best fitness buddy.

→ **He's always ready to go!** It's tough to skip a walk when a dog is depending on you. Studies suggest that people who walk dogs are more consistent exercisers and show more fitness improvement than people who walk with a friend. "Your dog never has an excuse for why it's not a good time to go," says Dawn A. Marcus, MD, creator of fitasfido.com, a pet fitness Web site.

→ **He pushes you to improve.** Dogs are naturally curious, so they'll give you a reason to walk farther or try a different route, says Dawn Celapino, owner of Leash Your Fitness, a pet-focused fitness company in San Diego. You may even walk faster: A University of Missouri study found that the speed of walkers with dogs increased by 28 percent over 12 weeks, compared with 4 percent for those with human companions.

→ **He's the best wingman ever.** Having a dog with you can make it easy to start a conversation with fellow walkers. Dr. Marcus says that adding a social aspect to your walk and being involved in your community can improve your health in many ways, including warding off loneliness and lowering stress levels.



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FOR A WALK-THE-DOG WORKOUT AND TIPS, SEE P. 151. »