



NO TIME FOR MY DOG

We often hear from owners who say they don't have "time to give to their dogs." What you may not know is that you can work, play and have a dog with just about any amount of time. With just a little bit of effort you can improve the situation and not have to give up your pet.

We want to help you find a good balance that also allows you to spend time with your dogs...

Here are some thoughts and suggestions:

"I work too much or too long hours" –

Do you feel like you work too much and have too much to do in the evenings and cannot pay enough attention to your dog? Is your family too busy to take care of the dog? Does your dog get into trouble when you are out?

If so... **consider these tips:**

- **Chores** - Are you spending "quality" time with you dog when you do spend time together? Are you talking to them while emptying the dish washer or folding laundry? Can you pause and throw their ball down the hall while putting away laundry into drawers? Do you garden? If so, spend time throwing a ball or Frisbee while working in the garden. Your dog doesn't even have to know you're multi-tasking.

- **Exercise** – Do you enjoy exercise? If so, maybe you can find a way to include your dog. Could you include a short run or walk in your routine so they can participate?

- **Dog Park** – Let's face it – going to the dog park means different things for different people. Do you talk to neighbors the whole time? If so, break away and bond with your dog. Let them socialize, but you should definitely spend quality time engaging with your dog when you're away from home.

- **Running errands** – Dogs are welcome at many pet stores and some restaurants and hotels. Take them with you so they can enjoy spending time with you and getting to ride in the car. (NOTE: Never leave a pet in your vehicle unattended and make sure they are secure while riding in your vehicle)

Resources:

- [Restaurants that are dog friendly](#)
- [Greenville specific pet friendly places](#) (restaurants, hotels, parks, & more)
- [Dog friendly restaurants & bars](#)
- Check out our Dog Park Regulations section for parks that allow pets

- **Short training sessions** – do you have ten minutes a day? If so, you can have an amazing bonding experience with your dog in just ten minutes. You don't even need to leave your living room. There are TONS of online training guides that will allow you to self-train.

If you combine playing/exercise and training, you will come out ahead with your dog. Once you have a well-mannered dog, it is much easier to include them in your other activities. Think about it... need to take the kids to the little league game? Bring the dog! Dropping off your daughter at dance? Bring the dog! Waiting for your teenager in the car while they go to the dentist? Bring the dog and go for a walk while you wait.



- **Short vacations** – Take the dog! So many hotels allow dogs now.

Resources:

- [Pet's Welcome](#)
- [Bring Fido](#)
- [Vacation Rental By Owner](#)

- **Weekend fun** – Did you know that several national parks, hiking trails, monuments, vineyards, etc. in the DC metro area allow dogs? Yes, even Mt. Vernon estate or the National Mall or Northern VA vineyards are dog friendly. Take some time to do a quick internet search and include your dog in your weekend plans!

Resources:

- [Dog Friendly Places](#)
- [Hiking trails](#)

- **Doggie daycare** – Sure, it's not free, but, even one or two days a week will help your dog substantially! Or try half days if you can. Find a daycare on the way to your work and let your dog have Tuesdays be their day with canine friends!

Remember – your dog loves you! They would rather be with their family than left at a shelter or adopted to someone else. So consider these easy alternatives to incorporate your dog into your life and spend some good, quality time with them. It doesn't have to be hours of your life dedicated to your dog. You would be surprised how easy it is to include them in your daily life!

TIPS FOR DOGGY ALONE TIME

If you spend hours away from your pet and there is no one else at home, certainly one excellent option is to foster or adopt another pet to keep them company. It is important for you to bring your pet to Greenville County Animal Care to meet her soulmate and find the perfect playtime match.



If this won't work out for you, the next best thing is to have a pet sitter come in or to have your pet enjoy her day at a friend's home or at a doggy daycare. See our info on doggy daycare below for important information on finding the best one for your pet. Sometimes that won't work either, but there are still options, such as allowing your dog to work on some "brain games" while you're away.

We all lead busy lives and sometimes our pets may end up spending periods of time home alone. If you give your pet "jobs" to do when they're by themselves, they'll be less likely to come up with their own ways to occupy the time, like un-stuffing your couch, scratching the furniture, raiding the trash or chewing on your favorite pair of shoes.

Here are some great idea for incorporating games and jobs:

Food puzzle toys



Food puzzle toys are sturdy containers, usually made of hard rubber or plastic, that hold food or treats inside, but don't give dogs easy access to the food. They usually have holes on each end or on the sides, and dogs must work by shaking, pawing, rolling, nibbling or licking the toy to get the food to come out. Food puzzle toys require time, patience and problem-solving—all skills that are good for your dog and will help them enjoy quiet time alone. Since our dogs' wild counterparts spend much of their time scavenging for food, food puzzle toys offer a natural solution to pet-dog boredom. Puzzle toys also encourage chewing and licking, which can have a calming effect on dogs.

Examples of food puzzle toys include KONG® Toy, the Buster® Cube, the Tricky Treat™ Ball, the Tug-a-Jug™, the Twist 'n Treat™, the Atomic Treat Ball™ and the TreatStik®. You can

find these toys online or at most major pet stores. Feed your dog at least one meal a day in a food puzzle toy to give her brain and jaws a great workout. You can also stuff these toys with your dog's favorite treats or a little peanut butter, cottage cheese, cooked oatmeal or yogurt.

When you first introduce your dog to a food puzzle toy, make it really easy for them to empty it. They're probably accustomed to getting their food served in a bowl, so they have some learning to do! Choose a toy with a large dispensing hole and make sure the goodies you put inside the toy are small enough to come out easily. As your dog becomes an expert, you can make it harder and harder for them to get food out of their toys. Use bigger pieces of food or, to provide an extra challenge, freeze the toys after stuffing them. You can also place the frozen toys inside of a cardboard box or oatmeal tub so that your dog has to rip through the cardboard container to get to their meal.

Hunting for Dinner

You can make your dog hunt for their meal by hiding stuffed food puzzle toys or small piles of kibble around your house. Hide one of your dog's meals right before you leave them home alone, and they'll have great fun hunting their chow while you're away. To try a variation on this activity when you're home, scatter a couple handfuls of kibble around your yard so your dog can search for the pieces in the grass. Most dogs love this game!



Chew Time



Dogs of all ages need to chew. Both wild and domestic dogs spend hours chewing to keep their jaws strong and their teeth clean. They also chew for fun, for stimulation and to relieve anxiety. Whether you have a puppy or an adult dog, it's important to provide a variety of appropriate and attractive chew toys, like Nylabones® and hard rubber toys, natural marrow bones, rawhide and pig ears.

Although chewing behavior is normal, dogs sometimes chew on things we don't want them to. Giving your dog plenty of their own toys and chewies will help prevent them from gnawing on your things. Be very careful providing dogs with bones and such while you aren't at home to supervise. They can easily choke and you'll want to be there to help if such a thing should occur.

DAYCARE FOR DOGS

Dog daycare providers can help you meet your dog's needs for attention, activity and supervision. They provide a great antidote for bored, lonely or high-energy dogs with busy guardians who work away from home all day and don't want to leave their dogs alone. Daycare isn't for everybody—or every dog—but if yours enjoys playing and socializing with other dogs and the cost is appropriate for your budget, it can be a great option for your home-alone pal.

Daycare for dogs works similarly to daycare for children. You drop off your dog in the morning and they get to play, socialize, snack and nap while you're off working. Then you pick them up at the end of the workday. Instead of your dog greeting you at the end of the day with loads of pent-up energy, they'll be pleasantly tired and ready to relax with you all evening.



Most daycares offer half-day or full-day options and everything from daily and weekly to occasional care. Dog daycare is offered at facilities that are specifically designed as daycares as well as at traditional boarding kennels.

Most are open 12 hours a day (from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.), Monday through Friday. Some businesses also offer training, grooming services, dog pickup and delivery, and even transport to veterinary appointments.

Benefits of Dog Daycare

You could think of most dogs today as “unemployed.” Dogs have been traditionally bred for jobs—typically in hunting, livestock herding, protection or guarding. But their main job today is Couch Potato! Unfortunately, boredom and excess energy are two common reasons for behavior problems in pet dogs.

The main benefits daycares can provide are:

- Relief from boredom
- Relief from loneliness and the anxiety that loneliness can cause in dogs (including separation anxiety)
- Socialization with people
- Much-needed exercise and socialization with other dogs
- Prevention of destructive behavior in the house when unsupervised
- Relief from guilt for pet parents who feel badly about leaving their dogs home alone all day

Is Daycare Right for Your Dog?

Good candidates for daycare are healthy, spayed or neutered and well-socialized dogs who really enjoy other dogs and seek interaction with them at every opportunity. Young dogs often adjust to the daycare environment better than older ones. If your dog is a regular at dog parks, and she plays a lot and enjoys herself there, then daycares are probably ideal for her.

However, some dogs do better sleeping at home alone than spending the day in the company of other dogs. If your dog has ever bitten another dog; is regularly aggressive toward other dogs (snarling, growling or snapping); is fearful, tense or anxious; or tends to avoid or just tolerate other dogs, then daycare is probably not right for her. Hiring a dog walker, asking friends or neighbors to visit your dog in the middle of the day, coming home at lunch, or taking your dog to a boarding kennel may be better options for you.

Other unsuitable candidates for daycare include:

- Unvaccinated puppies
- Females in heat and unneutered males
- Bullies who tend to pick on other dogs

If you decide your dog is a good candidate and has been evaluated and accepted into a daycare, it's a good idea for you to pay attention after the first few visits as to whether your dog seems happy and pleasantly tired afterward or stressed and overwhelmed. Another good way to decide whether they're enjoying daycare is to observe them closely the next time you drop them off. Do they show any signs of stress or avoidance as you approach the daycare? Are they reluctant to enter? Or do they approach and enter the building looking happy and relaxed or excited?

What to Look For in a Dog Daycare

Staff

Knowledgeable personnel are crucial to a safe, professional and enjoyable daycare business. Ask whether your daycare's employees have received professional training from seminars or videos by experts with academic credentials in the field of animal behavior, such as those with a doctoral or master's degree in animal behavior, Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists (CAABs) or, at minimum, Certified Professional Dog Trainers (CPDTs). Your daycare's employees must understand basic canine communication, including body postures and signals. If employees are unable to accurately interpret dogs' body language and social communication, then they won't know



what's going on among the dogs. Lack of such awareness is risky and could be downright dangerous. It could lead to chronic stress for dogs who are scared or overwhelmed but forced to continue to interact with other dogs because the staff don't recognize their discomfort. And it could lead to serious fights breaking out because employees don't see tensions rising among the dogs and, therefore, don't intervene to calm things down. Having daycare employees who don't understand dog communication would be like trying to run a business with staff who speak a different language than your customers!

You also want to look for employees who are well trained in dog handling and behavior management and who closely monitor dog activity at all times. Ask about the daycare's relationships with local Certified Professional Dog Trainers. Did the daycare consult with a reputable professional trainer or behaviorist to develop their playgroup guidelines or staff training programs? Ask for details about the facility's dog handling and training methods to confirm that you're comfortable with them. You might ask several "what if" questions like: What would you do if my dog barks too much? What would you do if another dog keeps bothering my dog? What would you do if my dog growls at another dog? A rule-of-thumb for adequate staffing is to have, at minimum, one employee per 10 to 15 dogs.

The Facility

- The daycare should be compliant with Occupation Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines and regulations, and it should have emergency training and plans.
- The daycare's play area should ideally provide 75 to 100 square feet per dog. For example, if there are 25 dogs, the play area should be about 2500 square feet.
- The daycare should be clean, sanitary and organized. It's advisable to visit it more than once. The first time, you may come at a good or bad time. It should be cleaned daily—or twice daily if the facility also offers boarding. There shouldn't be any lingering odors, and dog waste should be removed immediately. It should be free of debris and clutter. Ventilation is a critical disease prevention measure.

Enriched Environment

The dogs should have equipment to play with or on or under. They should be given access to safe, comfortable napping spots. Staff should interact with the dogs and walk them outdoors routinely to maintain house training.



Health Policies

- Ask about the daycare's vaccination policies. Policies and veterinary recommendations are changing across the country, and the facility may have its own. Ensure that the daycare will abide by your veterinarian's vaccination protocol. Most veterinarians recommend puppies have at least two rounds of their vaccination series before going into daycare. Most veterinarians also recommend that dogs who go to kennels, daycares or dog parks get vaccinated for bordetella, the most common cause of tracheobronchitis (kennel cough) in dogs, at least one week in advance. (Some veterinarians recommend yearly bordetella vaccinations; others recommend biannual vaccinations. Consult with your veterinarian to find out what's right for your dog.)
- Ask about the daycare's flea-prevention plan. Canine clients should be required to be reasonably flea-free.
- Ask if employees are trained in animal First Aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Also ask what the daycare's protocol is in the event of emergency illness or injury. Does someone on staff know how to administer first aid? Will your dog be taken to a veterinarian or emergency hospital if necessary?



Safety Policies

- Toys and other objects that a dog may value can be problematic for resource guarders (dogs who are aggressively possessive of things). If the daycare's intake evaluation screens for resource guarding and doesn't accept dogs who are possessive of things they value, having toys and objects around during play is probably fine.
- The floors should have wall-to-wall, washable rubber mats. The dogs should not have direct access to doors that lead to unfenced outdoor areas. All fencing should be in good repair and high enough to keep dogs safely contained. Fencing barriers should be used when adding new dogs to the main play room to prevent new additions from being mobbed when they first enter.
- Some facilities remove all collars (flat, choke, prong, martingale, etc.), while others just remove choke chains and prong collars. This is done to eliminate the danger of dogs accidentally choking each other or getting a paw or jaw stuck in a collar. Both have been known to happen.
- Many daycares conduct an initial behavior assessment to determine how a dog behaves around other dogs and people. An assessment may give staff a rough idea of a dog's behavioral tendencies—but it's important to acknowledge that a single, on-the-spot behavior test can't definitively determine a dog's temperament or personality. An assessment should not be used to label your dog or to identify their personality traits. Traits are characteristics and behaviors that are consistent over time and in various contexts, so a short one-time test can't accurately identify them.
- A thorough interview with you is more important than your dog's assessment since it covers your dog's behavioral history. Known behaviors that have occurred over time in a dog's history provide more solid information about their temperament than an artificial one-time test can. The facility operator should thoroughly question you about your dog's behavior in various situations, including aggressive and fearful behavior. Paperwork should elicit solid information as well.
- Some facilities ban certain breeds, while others evaluate dogs based on their individual merits. The latter is preferable.
- Introductions to other dogs should be done slowly, one at a time, starting with the most congenial dog. Ideally, your dog should first be introduced to one older, socially experienced, gentle female. Several more one-on-one introductions with other dogs should follow. Then more dogs can be added to the group until there's a small group of about 7 to 10 dogs milling around. Finally, your dog can be taken into the main play room with all the daycare dogs.
- Many daycares require that all dog clients be spayed or neutered. If that's not the case at your daycare, verify that employees understand that intact males are more likely to behave aggressively toward each other, and even well-behaved intact males may provoke aggression from other males simply because of their hormones. (Other males can detect an intact male dog's high level of testosterone, which may excite or upset them.)



What to Avoid

- Overcrowding. A good rule of thumb for the optimal size of a dog daycare facility is 100 square feet per large dog, and 50 to 60 square feet per small or medium dog. It's well documented in psychological research that overcrowding leads to aggression in most animal species, including human beings.
- Limited access. Avoid any daycare that prohibits dog guardians from visiting their dog at any time, with or without advance notice. Also avoid daycares that do not allow you to tour the entire facility and observe playgroups before signing your dog up.
- Unwillingness to meet your dog's needs. A conscientious daycare will accept and honor your request that your dog receive a special diet or medication that you provide.
- Poor customer service. Loving dogs is not enough. Staff should also be courteous and friendly to human clients!

- Dogs left unattended. Dogs should never be left unattended. If a second person is not available at all times for back-up, the daycare should have arrangements for another employee to arrive quickly if an emergency requires the regular attendant to leave.

First and foremost, we recommend that all pet owners consult with their veterinarian. The information contained herein is meant to be a resource. It is not exhaustive, nor does it indicate an endorsement or recommendation from Greenville County Animal Care.

Please use your own due diligence in researching these sources and making the best choice for your pet(s).

We'd like to give thanks and credit to the following organizations, whose published resources were utilized in addition to staff research for this compilation:

ASPCA www.aspca.org
Best Friends Animal Society
www.bestfriends.org HSUS
www.humanesociety.org
Operation Paws for Homes www.ophrescue.org