

SELF-CHECK: HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD ACTIVITY FOR YOUR DOG

Put a if the statement fits your dog's activity, and a if it doesn't.

This reflection helps you see which activities truly support your dog's well-being and which might need adjustment.

GOOD ACTIVITIES – DO THEY FIT?

Natural needs & emotional balance

- Does this activity let my dog express natural behaviour in a *controlled and balanced* way?
- Does it involve sniffing, exploring, or calm searching rather than chasing?
- Does my dog seem satisfied and relaxed afterwards (not hyped or restless)?

Physical balance

- Does this activity include rhythmic, steady movement (e.g., swimming, calm trotting, climbing)?
- Does it help my dog move their body without pushing them into overarousal?
- Does it build coordination, confidence, and body awareness?

Off-leash opportunities

- Does my dog get regular chances to move freely off-leash in a safe area?
- If not, have I found fenced or enclosed spaces for free movement 2–3× per week?
- Am I creative in finding safe off-leash options (e.g., dog clubs, company lawns, friends' gardens)?

Cooldown phase

- Does the activity include a calm ending (licking, sniffing, slow walking)?
- Do I give my dog time to come down hormonally after stimulating work?

Everyday support

- Does this activity make everyday life easier – calmer walks, better focus, more connection?

Breed suitability

- Does the activity match my dog's genetic background (e.g., tracking, retrieving, stalking)?
- Does it channel natural drives into safe, satisfying outlets?

✗ NOT SO HELPFUL ACTIVITIES – SHOULD I RECONSIDER?

Overstimulation

- Does this activity repeat highly arousing sequences (like endless fetching or fast chasing)?
- Does my dog seem unable to settle afterwards if we skip a cooldown?

Constant “go mode”

- Does my dog stay in high arousal throughout the game or sport?
- Are there regular pauses for relaxation and recovery?

Impulse control overload

- Does this activity require long waiting periods or strict control (e.g., formal sports)?
- Does my dog have to watch other dogs working, leading to frustration?
- Do I provide calm breaks away from stimulation before and after their turn?

Emotional aftereffects

- After the activity, does my dog feel calm and connected – or tense and overexcited?
- Do I sometimes prioritise performance over emotional balance?

Breed suitability

- Could this activity teach my dog a behaviour that might later appear in situations where I don't want it – for example, tracking wildlife instead of a toy or food trail?
- Especially with young dogs, am I choosing activities that build skills useful for daily life rather than habits that could become problematic later on?

✨ PST PRINCIPLE REMINDER

- Do I remember that excitement itself isn't bad – only imbalance is?
- Do I provide both high moments *and* recovery time?
- Does this activity help my dog regulate, not just release energy?
- Does my dog end the session more balanced and content than before?

EVALUATION: COUNT YOUR ✓ AND ✗:

- **More ✓ than ✗:** Great – this activity fits your dog! Enjoy it.
- **Equal numbers:** Try it for 2–4 weeks and observe whether your dog's **overall behaviour** improves or worsens. Then reassess honestly.
- **More ✗ than ✓:** Caution – likely not a good match, especially if your dog struggles with predation, separation anxiety, reactivity or other behaviour issues. Consider choosing a different, more suitable activity.