

10 Ways to Show Your Dog Love, No Matter How Crazy Life Gets

Who says it has to take hours of attention for your dog to know she's loved and appreciated? When you really focus, she can get the message in minutes or even seconds. If you're feeling guilty about not spending enough quality time with your pet, pull from this bag of 10 creative dog-loving tricks.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- When life gets very busy and hectic, it's easy to overlook your dog's need for attention and affection
- With a little focus and creativity, you can find opportunities every day to spend quality time with your dog and show him he is loved
- Dogs in need of more human attention share certain characteristics, including sleeping a lot, depression and getting into mischief around the house
- Dogs naturally want to please their humans, so if your pooch is giving you attitude, it's a good bet you need to spend more time with her
- Following a very consistent "time for your walk" routine, crate training as necessary and positive behavior reinforcement are the keys to success in housetraining

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Most of us have gone through periods in life when the days or weeks are just one long, busy blur of work and other commitments. Eventually it occurs to us that we haven't been paying enough attention to our loyal four-legged companion, and yet there he sits, always loving, patient and ever hopeful.

One of the lovable things about kitties is that when they want or need affection they simply jump into your lap, making it clear it's time for some catch-up snuggles. Dogs, on the other hand, tend to curl up and sleep all day when they can see we're busy, or simply sit and wait until we acknowledge them. That familiar wave of guilt hits, and we vow to do something special with him tomorrow ... or just as soon as time permits.

During hectic periods, it can be helpful to think outside the box when it comes to giving your dog the time, attention, and affection he needs and deserves. Instead of trying to cram another hour into an already overscheduled day, consider making a few minor adjustments to your usual routine that allow you to include your dog.

With a little creativity and a conscious focus on your dog, you may be surprised how much quality time you can spend with him doing things that let him know how much you love him.

10 Quick Ways for Crazy Busy People to Show Their Dogs More Love

- **Snuggle in bed** — Wake up five or 10 minutes early each morning and cuddle or play with your dog before you get out of bed. Most dogs are ecstatically happy in the morning, and getting a few minutes of cuddle time with you will get your pup's day off to a blissful start.
- **Pal around together** — No matter what you're doing around the house, try to make your dog a part of it. Talk to her in soothing tones as she follows you around. Invite her to sit on your lap or lie at your feet while you work or read or watch TV.
- **Play** — Look for opportunities to play a quick game of tug while you're doing chores or getting ready for work. Play hide-and-seek with your dog while you're doing housework. Roll a ball down the stairs and have him retrieve it. When you bring home a new toy, make it extra special by spending a few minutes playing with it with your dog.
- **Give 30-second massages** — Dogs don't really understand pats on the head or hugs. Instead, spend 30 to 60 seconds gently stroking and massaging alternating areas of your dog's body, avoiding the paws, tail and backside. You'll know he's enjoying your loving touch when his body relaxes and his eyes close.
- **Do quick brush-outs** — Many dogs love a good brushing almost as much as a massage. Be sure to avoid the face and go easy on the tail and the tender skin across the belly.
- **Take mini-walks** — Dogs absolutely love walks, so even if you only have five or 10 minutes to spare, the more often you can **take your dog out for a walk**, the better. Of course, when you have more time, it's important to give him opportunities to sniff and explore on your walks.
- **Do five-minute training sessions** — This is a great way to reinforce or refresh your dog's obedience or trick training and provide her with mental stimulation as well. It's also an opportunity for you to give her praise, affection and a few yummy treats.
- **Tune in** — This is really just about remaining aware of your dog's presence and observing his actions, behaviors and emotions. Dogs are always communicating with us, and they feel loved when they know we're present in the moment with them.
- **Take him along** — Whenever possible bring your dog with you — to work, when you're running errands, on road trips, and in any situation where he'll be safe and welcome.
- **Minimize alone time** — Even the best housetrained, most placid, nondestructive dog will get lonely if she's left alone for eight or more hours a day several days a week. If you can't get home to walk and play with her for a few minutes during the day, enlist a friend or neighbor to do it. Another option is to hire a dog walker or consider a few days a week at doggy daycare.

8 Signs Your Dog Is Feeling Ignored

- **Your dog is sleeping his life away** — An otherwise healthy young or adult dog who sleeps the day away is bored and in need of physical exercise and playtime, as well as mental stimulation.
- **Your dog seems blue** — A healthy dog who is feeling depressed may lose interest in eating or playing, become destructive, have accidents in the house or stop running to greet you when you come through the door.
- **Your dog is getting into mischief around the house** — If your canine companion suddenly starts relieving himself indoors, it could be a sign he's stressed, but there might also be an underlying health problem, so visit your veterinarian to rule out a medical condition.

If he gets a clean bill of health, then it's probably safe to assume he's in need of more of your time and attention. If he's also starting to be destructive or disruptive around the house, it's almost a sure bet he needs more from you.

- **Your Pug is getting porky or your Maltese is obese** — Dogs in the wild spend most of their waking hours hunting down their next meal. Dogs in our homes spend most of their awake-time eating what we feed them and looking for a good spot to nap.

The result is an epidemic of overweight and obese canine companions, and we have no one to blame but ourselves. If you're overfeeding or overtreating your dog as a way to soothe your own guilt over not spending enough time with her, remember that food is a lousy substitute for your time and attention.

- **Your dog's nails look more like talons** — Overgrown nails are a sure sign your pup probably needs more walks and definitely needs more frequent nail trims. You'd be surprised how many foot problems and other health issues in dogs start with untrimmed nails.
- **Your dog starts turning up his nose at mealtime** — When a dog stops eating or his appetite drops off noticeably, it's time for a visit to the veterinarian. Usually there's a physical cause for loss of appetite, but some stressed out dogs will also stop eating. Most of us have heard stories of pets refusing to eat while boarded, for example. If your dog's lagging appetite isn't due to a physical problem, it's most definitely a sign he needs more TLC from his favorite human.
- **Your dog is disobedient** — Dogs naturally want to please their humans, so if your pooch is giving you attitude, it's a good bet you need to spend more time with her. It could be she needs an obedience refresher course, or it's possible you haven't discovered what truly motivates her. Some breeds are more eager to please than others, so if your dog has an independent nature, you'll need to learn how to get her attention.
- **Your dog is still not housetrained** — While it's true some dogs are easier to housetrain than others, an adult dog who has frequent accidents indoors isn't getting the time and attention he needs to learn that all peeing and pooping is done outside.

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Sources and References

[PetMD, January 29, 2024](#)
