4 Paws Marathon

Training Plan #3
10k Run/Walk

The 10k distance is my favourite because it's just long enough to be a challenge for most dog parents and dogs. But, it is also easily achievable with the right preparation.

This is an 8-week training plan for the 10k run/walk event and it assumes you've followed the initial steps to start training (see Training Plan #1).

A word about toilet breaks

One of the aims of this plan is to get you and your dog moving more often. Consequently, in addition to twice daily walks, I'm also recommending that you outlaw the 'quick fix' of letting your dog outside in the yard to go to the toilet.

Instead, I want you to snap on the lead and stroll around the block (or for a least a few house lengths) for toileting. Every little bit of exercise helps!

Benchmark now and start tracking

Benchmark your walking pace with a fitness tracker like a Garmin watch or an app such as Map My Walk and start a log of your training. This log should be filled out daily and will keep you motivated as your and your dog's fitness increases.

New locations each week

From Week 2 onwards, I'm recommending that you walk in a new location for at least one walk each week. The sights and smells of a new location offer enrichment for our dogs—mental stimulation that keeps them interested and motivated in exercise. A change of scene is also good for you.

Week 1

You should be walking twice per day for 20 minutes each at this point.

Week 2

Build to 25 minutes for each of your daily walks.

For strengthening, you are going to institute sit-to-stand exercises. Give your dog the cue to sit and check that they have a nice tight sit without the legs flopping to one or both sides. Then reward for the sit and release them to stand. Give another cue to sit, reward and release. Do this for 5 repetitions every day this week. Sit-to-stands are the doggy equivalent of push-ups for humans!
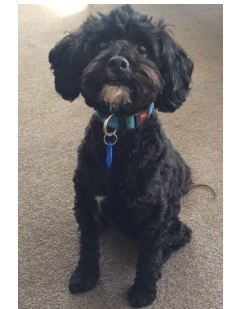
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Week 3

This week we start interval training. Interval training means changing pace during a walk to a jog and back again (e.g. walk for 2 blocks and then jog for the next 2). Dogs typically think interval training is a great game.

Increase your sit-to-stands to 8 repetitions per day; your walks remain at 25 minutes each.

From Week 3 onwards, one walk per day will use interval training and the other can be accomplished at your normal pace. Jogging will help prepare you and your dog for running, rather than walking, the 10k.

Week 4

Increase one walk per day to 30 minutes and leave the other at 25 minutes (your choice as to which of these walks will use interval training). Retain your sit-to-stands at 8 repetitions per day.

This week, we're adding treat stretches for spinal mobility. With your dog in a standing position, hold a high value treat like a piece of roasted chicken in front of your dog's nose and move it purposefully towards the direction of their hip. Your dog will turn its head and stretch to reach the treat. Repeat on the other side for a total of 5 repetitions each side.

Week 5

In week 5, both of your daily walks should be 30 minutes in duration. You'll increase your treat stretches to 8 repetitions per side; matching the 8 repetitions of sit-to-stands you will do each day.

Week 6

Two walks over the course of this week should be 40 minutes each.

The remainder of the walks will be 30 minutes each (same as Week 5). Treat stretches and sit-to-stands will remain at 8 repetitions per day.

Week 7

Two of your walks this week will be 40 minutes in duration; another will be 35 minutes, with the remainder at 30 minutes each. Treat stretches and sit-to-stands will remain at 8 repetitions per day.

Week 8

Two of your walks this week will be 45 minutes in duration, with all others in the 30-35 minute range. Treat stretches and sit-to-stands will remain at 8 repetitions per day.

Keep up the Week 8 regime until the event on 22 September 2019!

Dog training plans for this event are sponsored by:

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