

# Exercise Guidelines for Puppies

**These are our best recommendations based on the available studies and our 32 years of experience with Bull Terriers. Best practices for different breeds may not be the same.**

**I am not a veterinarian and this is not intended as veterinary advice. You should always consult your breeder and veterinarian about the best exercise program for your puppy.**

**There will be a differences in recommendations based on your dog's breed. Giant breed puppies' growth plates tend to close later and small breed puppies' growth plates close earlier.**

**There are also breed-specific orthopedic concerns which are not addressed here.**

**If your puppy was neutered before 18 months old he will have some delay in growth plate closure, so you should adopt more conservative guidelines.**

**For any dog that you wish to enroll in a strenuous performance career, we highly recommend doing x-rays to confirm growth plate closure before proceeding with any intense training.**

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|   | 8-12 Weeks  | 12-16 Weeks   | 4-6 Months  | 6-12 Months   | 12-18 Months  | 18 Months to 2 years  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Sustained and Continuous Walking</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50-200 feet at a time</li> <li>Break up with sniffing and noodling around</li> <li>Formal heeling/leash walking training limited to 2 minutes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually increase duration and length of walks - Probably going to be between 100-200 feet by the time the puppy is 16 weeks old.</li> <li>Let the puppy volunteer to keep going and stop if he shows reluctance to go further.</li> <li>Keep formal training under 2 minutes per session.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually increase duration and length of walks - Probably going to be between 200-400 feet at a time by the time the puppy is 6 months old.</li> <li>Let the puppy volunteer to keep going and stop if he shows reluctance to go further.</li> <li>Keep formal training under 2 minutes per session.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walks on pavement should be kept short, but duration of walks on dirt or turf can be increased and more "hiking" type activities can be introduced.</li> <li>Again, best to keep do these walks as "sniff and strolls" but you can increase sustained walking to up to 20-30 minutes on a relatively level, soft, surface by the time the puppy is a year old IF the puppy volunteers to go that far.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walks on pavement should be kept short, but duration of walks on dirt or turf can be increased and more "hiking" type activities can be introduced.</li> <li>Again, best to keep do these walks as "sniff and strolls" but you can increase sustained walking to up to 20-30 minutes on a relatively level, soft, surface by the time the puppy is a year old IF the puppy volunteers to go that far.</li> </ul>   | Hikes and walks can be gradually increased to as long and as rigorous as you and your dog both like, but remember that a dog's soft tissue is still maturing through about three years old. Increases should be gradual and you should back off if your dog appears tired or reluctant. |
| <b>Sniff N Stroll</b>                   | Informal "sniff and stroll" sessions can be up to about 10-15 minutes.  | Can be increased to 15-20 minutes   | Can be increased to as much as 45 minutes by the time the puppy is 6 months old, provided you are moving at a very slow pace with lots of opportunity for the puppy to stop and noodle around.  | Can be increased to as much as 60 minutes by the time the puppy is 12 months old, provided you are moving at a very slow pace with lots of opportunity for the puppy to stop and noodle around.   | OK to do 60 minutes provided you are moving at a very slow pace with lots of opportunity for the puppy to stop and noodle around.   | Sniff and strolls can be gradually replaced with more sustained "walks" but remember that sniffing is the primary way dogs relate to the world, so be a sport and continue to give your dog to stop an sniff from time to time.   |
| <b>Noodling and Kibble Trails</b>       | Puppy can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.   | Puppy can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.   | Puppy can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.   | Puppy can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.   | Puppy can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.   | Your dog can go out in a safe yard and explore at his own pace or do a "Kibble Trail" as long as he likes.  |
| <b>Running</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No directed running except for very short spurts in play</li> <li>Puppy can run as much as he likes on his own</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No directed running except for very short spurts in play</li> <li>Puppy can run as much as he likes on his own</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No directed running except for very short spurts in play</li> <li>Puppy can run as much as he likes on his own</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No directed running except for very short spurts in play</li> <li>Puppy can run as much as he likes on his own</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No directed running except for very short spurts in play</li> <li>Puppy can run as much as he likes on his own</li> </ul>  | Running and endurance training can gradually be introduced at this time   |
| <b>Jumping and Impact activities</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bars on the ground to wrist height</li> <li>No more than one or two obstacles in a row</li> <li>Wobble boards and unstable surfaces, but but very low</li> <li>Carpet all indoor stairs and never allow puppy to go up and down stairs unsupervised</li> <li>Put up gates at top/ bottom of stairs</li> <li>Consider carrying puppy if your he needs to do more than one or two stair steps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bars on the ground to wrist height</li> <li>No more than one or two obstacles in a row</li> <li>Wobble boards and unstable surfaces, but but very low</li> <li>Carpet all indoor stairs and never allow puppy to go up and down stairs unsupervised</li> <li>Put up gates at top/ bottom of stairs</li> <li>Consider carrying puppy if your he needs to do more than one or two stair steps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bars on the ground to wrist height</li> <li>No more than one or two obstacles in a row</li> <li>Wobble boards and unstable surfaces, but but very low</li> <li>Carpet all indoor stairs and never allow puppy to go up and down stairs unsupervised</li> <li>Put up gates at top/ bottom of stairs</li> <li>Consider carrying puppy if your he needs to do more than one or two stair steps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jumps can be gradually raised half way to elbow height between 6 and 12 months old, with correspondingly more challenging ramps, wobble boards, and teeters</li> <li>Platform work for rear end awareness can be introduced at this time very carefully and slowly</li> <li>This is also the time when we see the most spiral fractures happen because the wherewithal to get up on high couches and beds - be extra vigilant about not letting puppies up on high furniture without very close supervision!</li> <li>Stairs are always a hazard and should have good traction - carpet indoors, non-skid surface outdoors</li> <li>Although the puppy may start doing stairs with good traction at this time, you should still supervise and don't let him run down the stairs with other dogs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jumps can be gradually raised half way to elbow height between 6 and 12 months old, with correspondingly more challenging ramps, wobble boards, and teeters</li> <li>Platform work for rear end awareness can be introduced at this time very carefully and slowly</li> <li>This is also the time when we see the most spiral fractures happen because the wherewithal to get up on high couches and beds - be extra vigilant about not letting puppies up on high furniture without very close supervision!</li> <li>Stairs are always a hazard and should have good traction - carpet indoors, non-skid surface outdoors</li> <li>Although the puppy may start doing stairs with good traction at this time, you should still supervise and don't let him run down the stairs with other dogs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually raise jumps and contact obstacles to full competition height between 18-24 months old</li> <li>Stairs are always a hazard and should have good traction - carpet indoors, non-skid surface outdoors</li> </ul>                         |
| <b>Swimming</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puppy should ALWAYS wear a life jacket</li> <li>Wading and playing on the shoreline</li> <li>Climbing on and off low platforms and rafts in shallow water</li> <li>Retrieves/tossing toys in shallow water parallel to shoreline, never into deep water</li> <li>Normal puppies should be allowed to swim if they volunteer to do so, but never forced</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puppy should ALWAYS wear a life jacket</li> <li>Wading and playing on the shoreline</li> <li>Climbing on and off low platforms and rafts in shallow water</li> <li>Retrieves/tossing toys in shallow water parallel to shoreline, never into deep water</li> <li>Normal puppies should be allowed to swim if they volunteer to do so, but never forced</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puppy should ALWAYS wear a life jacket</li> <li>Wading and playing on the shoreline</li> <li>Climbing on and off low platforms and rafts in shallow water</li> <li>Retrieves/tossing toys in shallow water parallel to shoreline, never into deep water</li> <li>Normal puppies should be allowed to swim if they volunteer to do so, but never forced</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puppy should ALWAYS wear a life jacket</li> <li>Wading and playing on the shoreline</li> <li>Climbing on and off low platforms and rafts in shallow water</li> <li>Retrieves/tossing toys in shallow water parallel to shoreline, never into deep water</li> <li>Normal puppies should be allowed to swim if they volunteer to do so. Limit swimming to a few minutes at a time.</li> <li>Very short swim out to retrieves in the water.</li> <li>Keep the toy close to shore. High toy-drive dogs will swim further after a thrown toy than they can or should.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puppy should ALWAYS wear a life jacket</li> <li>Wading and playing on the shoreline</li> <li>Climbing on and off low platforms and rafts in shallow water</li> <li>Retrieves/tossing toys in shallow water parallel to shoreline, never into deep water</li> <li>Normal puppies should be allowed to swim if they volunteer to do so. Limit swimming to a few minutes at a time.</li> <li>Very short swim out to retrieves in the water.</li> <li>Keep the toy close to shore. High toy-drive dogs will swim further after a thrown toy than they can or should.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competition swimming behaviors can be introduced and dog can swim for as long as he volunteers to</li> <li>Life jackets are always a must</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Chasing</b>                          | Roll balls and drag toys on the ground in gentle circles  | Roll balls and drag toys on the ground in gentle circles  | Roll balls and drag toys on the ground in gentle circles  | Roll balls and drag toys on the ground in gentle circles  | Roll balls and drag toys on the ground in gentle circles  | Gauge your play style by your dog's common sense. If you throw a ball and your dog tumbles head over heels to get it, don't throw the ball, roll or lob it  |
| <b>Tugging</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the toy low so the puppy's neck is in a straight line</li> <li>Don't pull on the toy - allow the puppy to tug against you</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the toy low so the puppy's neck is in a straight line</li> <li>Don't pull on the toy - allow the puppy to tug against you</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the toy low so the puppy's neck is in a straight line</li> <li>Don't pull on the toy - allow the puppy to tug against you</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the toy low so the puppy's neck is in a straight line</li> <li>Don't pull on the toy - allow the puppy to tug against you</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the toy low so the puppy's neck is in a straight line</li> <li>Don't pull on the toy - allow the puppy to tug against you</li> </ul>  | You can start to generally it's best to let the dog tug on the toy rather than you pulling on it  |
| <b>Fast Turns</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fast turns or sudden stops</li> <li>No <b>fast</b> weaves or lure coursing</li> <li>We do begin <b>slow</b> shaping of weave poles but discontinue if the puppy shows any signs of speeding up or really "weaving" through the poles</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fast turns or sudden stops</li> <li>No <b>fast</b> weaves or lure coursing</li> <li>We do begin <b>slow</b> shaping of weave poles but discontinue if the puppy shows any signs of speeding up or really "weaving" through the poles</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fast turns or sudden stops</li> <li>No <b>fast</b> weaves or lure coursing</li> <li>We do begin <b>slow</b> shaping of weave poles but discontinue if the puppy shows any signs of speeding up or really "weaving" through the poles</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fast turns or sudden stops</li> <li>No <b>fast</b> weaves or lure coursing</li> <li>We do begin <b>slow</b> shaping of weave poles but discontinue if the puppy shows any signs of speeding up or really "weaving" through the poles</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fast turns or sudden stops</li> <li>No <b>fast</b> weaves or lure coursing</li> <li>We do begin <b>slow</b> shaping of weave poles but discontinue if the puppy shows any signs of speeding up or really "weaving" through the poles</li> </ul>   | Full weave pole training and other activities that involve twisting and turning can be introduced.  |
| <b>Free Play With Other Dogs</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10-15 minutes for formal "play dates,"</li> <li>Puppy can have free access to other puppies and adults in the household (so long as the puppy is not harassing the adults.)</li> <li>Keep bags of small dog treats on hand and throw handfuls of food down to interrupt rough or overly fast play</li> <li>You may have to enforce rest periods by putting puppy away for naps</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10-15 minutes for formal "play dates,"</li> <li>Puppy can have free access to other puppies and adults in the household (so long as the puppy is not harassing the adults.)</li> <li>Keep bags of small dog treats on hand and throw handfuls of food down to interrupt rough or overly fast play</li> <li>You may have to enforce rest periods by putting puppy away for naps</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 20 minutes for formal "play dates,"</li> <li>Puppy can have free access to other puppies and adults in the household (so long as the puppy is not harassing the adults.)</li> <li>Keep bags of small dog treats on hand and throw handfuls of food down to interrupt rough or overly fast play</li> <li>You may have to enforce rest periods by putting puppy away for naps</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your puppy's increased body mass can make him more liable to injury if he engages in body-slammings play or a lot of fast sprints and turns.</li> <li>Keep bags of small dog treats on hand and throw handfuls of food down to interrupt rough or overly fast play</li> <li>Up to 20 minutes for formal "play dates,"</li> <li>Puppy can have free access to other puppies and adults in the household (so long as the puppy is not harassing the adults.)</li> <li>You may have to enforce rest periods by putting puppy away for naps</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your puppy's increased body mass can make him more liable to injury if he engages in body-slammings play or a lot of fast sprints and turns.</li> <li>Keep bags of small dog treats on hand and throw handfuls of food down to interrupt rough or overly fast play</li> <li>Up to 20 minutes for formal "play dates,"</li> <li>Puppy can have free access to other puppies and adults in the household (so long as the puppy is not harassing the adults.)</li> <li>You may have to enforce rest periods by putting puppy away for naps</li> </ul>   | Always be vigilant when your dogs are playing and intervene by throwing handfuls of food down if there's a lot of body slammings or the play just gets to crazy.  |