

## Everything I Know About Running I Learned From My Dogs

by John Farrow

I admit it. I'm a dog lover and this article probably won't sit well with my opposite number. It's not that I have anything against our friends of the feline persuasion, it's just that sometime back, I developed a strong aversion to anyone and anything whose outlook on life consisted of a prolonged snide indifference to the world around them.

Not so with a dog. Restraint is simply not in their nature. About a quarter-mile from home I begin to prepare my defenses for arrival, like stowing anything fragile in a secure place and removing articles of good clothing for later retrieval. Then open the door and it's crunch time. Wham! "Hey, girls! I'm glad to see you, too! Now, could you both get off my chest and maybe lick something else for a while?" Of course, it's really true what they say about cold nose, warm heart, but I would prefer the cold nose bit someplace other than my face.

And even hint that you might be thinking about going out for a run and these two energetic Labrador retrievers immediately head for their leashes, bounding around like crazed Chihuahuas. I've even taken to putting on my shorts and running shoes behind closed doors to minimize collateral damage. However, they have picked up on that and now assume that behind every closed door is me getting ready to take them out on a run.

It's hard to fault such unbounded enthusiasm for the simple pleasures of life. In this increasingly complicated world we live in, I sometimes wish that I could share their outlook more often. But there are a few tips that I've picked up from these two, as well as their predecessors.

**Run hard and fast.** If you're going to become a strong runner and stay that way, there is simply no substitute for hard, fast running. Plus, it's fun to stretch out and feel the wind flow by as you draw down deep breaths of fresh air. It also helps if there is a rabbit or two along the trail.

**Rest.** The body will serve you well if you take care of it, and it needs time to recover after a work-out. Energy comes not only from the food we eat, but also from rested muscles. After a hard, fast run, these guys are so inert that I have actually

touched them to make sure they were still alive and breathing. No problem. After a nap, they're ready to go again, whether I am or not.

**Play.** Maybe this doesn't have anything directly to do with running, but it certainly can improve one's general outlook on life. Don't take things too seriously or personally. Lighten up and learn to enjoy the little things in life and it's amazing how the bigger things also start to fall into place.

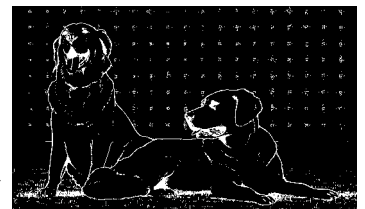
**Eat well.** Okay, this is one area that we can easily over-do, but if we are going to function at our best all day long and have the energy to run the way we want, the body must be well-fueled with a balanced diet. Labs have no problem here. They tend to be the billy goats of the canine world, with a diet that can also include dirty shoes and socks if you're not careful.

**Stretch.** As we age, our muscles lose elasticity and are in constant need of stretching. Do it often during the day to keep them supple. You'll feel a lot better, too.

**Keep a sense of adventure.** Take that trail you've always wondered about. So what if you get lost. Think of what you might find! For me once, it was a great little strudel bakery on a winding back street in Munich. And with my dogs, it's possible to be eternally inquisitive and blissfully clueless all at the same time.

**If you don't get what you want - beg.** The oldest trick in the books. Funny how often it works. Just don't over-do it.

**Happiness is an inside job.** Always strive to be the kind of person your dog thinks you are. In the words of Kinky Friedman, that eccentric Texas song-writer, "Money will buy you a fine dog, but only love will make his tail wag." Just rub my tummy and I'm yours.



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