

# Canine Water Sports

## *What is Canine Water Sports?*

Canine Water Sports is an organization dedicated to promoting fun, safe water work activities for all kinds of water-loving dogs and their people. Watersports behaviors can be taught for enrichment, education, exercise and to earn recognition awards with your dog. Canine Water Sports created water test protocols for dozens of water skills and we issue awards for excellence in achieving and qualifying in those skills.

## *Why watersports for my dog?*

Watersports can help make your canine athlete a better, more versatile working dog. Watersports training complements many of your favorite land sports by expanding vocabulary, developing new targeting skills, intensifying teamwork and adding a new context -- water -- to established behaviors.

You can't beat it for conditioning. Five minutes of continuous swimming is equal to almost twenty minutes of running and you can do it on the hottest days of the summer. A cool sport indeed!

Swimming works different muscles than those used during running and jumping, and swimming can build stamina, strength and aerobic capacity with less risk to weight bearing joints.

Because CWS is based on skill and directional control, not speed, it is a sensible sports alternative (with veterinary approval) for dogs with structural issues or joint damage. This is also a great venue for trainers who wish to reduce the risk of injuries common to dogs who engage in speed or intensity-driven sports.

## *What do dogs do in watersports?*

**Swim** with you over a course that may include swimming around swimmers, boats and course markers.

**Retrieve for you**, on or beneath the surface.

**Carry and Deliver objects for you**, to remote destinations such as swimmers and boats.

**Tow you**, swimmers, floats and boats.

**Nautical Nosework** -- use their nose to find scent objects in the water.

**Work off boats** - jump off to retrieve and deliver.

Canine Water Sports tasks evolved from the activities working dogs perform in real-life: ship-work, rescue-work, and hunting. Then we added fun things and made the behaviors attainable for all kinds of dogs.

### ***Do I have to be a good swimmer?***

No. Handlers are always required to wear personal flotation devices, so you always have flotation for safety and support. Most team training takes place in water no deeper than the shallow end of a pool. When you are ready for deeper water, team swim work is based on control and teamwork, not swim speed or style. You may always elect to have someone else swim with your dog to qualify for a team swim test. In most watersports behaviors, the handler directs the dog from shore or from a boat.

### ***What if my dog doesn't swim?***

When approached with joy and motivation, most dogs come to love the water. That's our primary goal. Dogs wear life jackets too, so they are safe and supported as they experiment with buoyancy and swim posture. With fun, safe exposures, patience, easy, enticing steps, and yummy reinforcers, your dog can have a great time exercising, learning, and relaxing in the wet zone. Joyful swimming happens when the dog feels safe and water experimentation is highly pleasurable. Then it's on to building swim confidence, strength, endurance and cooperation with the handler.

### ***When and where do we swim?***

Watersports training begins on land where the dog learns a vocabulary for behaviors that include moving with you, around you and away from you at your direction. In-water training can begin in a canine training pool or any safe body of water, such as lakes, rivers and ponds. Watersports testing takes place in approved lakes and rivers that provide a safe, gradual entrance to the water. Training centers and pool facilities offer the opportunity to train year-round, while lake training will depend on weather, temperature and team tolerances.

### ***More?***

If you want to learn more about the sport, rules and regulations for tests, and how you can start training Canine Water Sports with your dog, visit [www.caninewatersports.com](http://www.caninewatersports.com) or email founder, Deborah Lee Miller-Riley at [K9WaterFun@aol.com](mailto:K9WaterFun@aol.com), P.O. Box 842, Monroe, CT. 06468  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CanineWaterSports/>

**Professionals & groups:** We welcome and support canine “choice-based” trainers who would like to bring watersports to their clients or form CWS groups. Fleet Membership to Canine Water Sports is granted to approved clubs and groups who wish to learn, teach and test CWS behaviors.