

Foul Weather Games!

When the weather outside is fit for neither man nor beast, your dog can get very restless without a proper outlet for her energy. Behaviors can range from being clingy and trying to get your attention, to a more destructive behavior, like shredding your child's favorite toy. One of the best ways to expend that pent up energy, is to play indoor games with your dog!

Playing interactive games is a lot of fun for both dogs and their humans. It also serves some practical purposes, too. Structured games can give your dog a great mental and physical workout, teach her useful new skills, and strengthen your relationship with her.

1. Hide and Seek!

It's easy to train your dog to hunt for you when you're hidden. The key is to teach her how rewarding it is to find you. This game is not only great fun for your dogs, but children too. Giving them interactive games to play with your dogs not only increases their bond, but teaches them how to have constructive fun with their four legged companions.

Playing this game can enhance your dog's problem-solving skills, and help her learn to come when called. This game will also give her a chance to use her powerful nose, which is satisfying and most importantly, tiring.

How to Play

- First, get some tasty treats or your dog's favorite toy.
- Ask your dog to sit-stay or down-stay. If your dog doesn't know how to stay yet, have a helper hold her collar for you.
- Go to another room and find a hiding place. Remember to take your dog's treats or toy with you so that you can reward her immediately when she finds you.
- When you're in your hiding place, call your dog to come to you—just once. (If you have someone helping you, ask them to release your dog's collar as soon as you call her.) Then wait while she searches.
- As soon as your dog finds you, throw a party! Praise her enthusiastically and give her several treats, or toss her favorite toy and play a quick game of tug or fetch if she enjoys these games.

Tips

When you introduce hide-and-peek, choose hiding spots that will allow your dog to find you easily. Begin by hiding just out of your dog's sight. Hide right around the corner in an adjoining room. Be totally visible when your dog enters the room where you're "hiding," so she'll have immediate success. After a couple of repetitions, hide behind a piece of furniture in the adjoining room making sure some part of you is still visible.

When your dog has successfully found you partially hidden two or three times, you can make the game a little harder by hiding yourself completely so that you're completely hidden when she enters the room. Darken the room to increase the difficulty and encourage her to use her nose. Your dog will quickly learn to rely on her nose instead of her eyes and discover that it's actually easier and more engaging for her.

You can hide in more difficult places, like underneath furniture or blankets and in closets. ***Be creative!***

2. Find It

Similar to Hide and Seek, Find It relies on your dog's incredible nose to find hidden objects. "Find it" teaches your dog focus, attention and to listen for your command before acting.

How to Play

Begin by using a favorite toy. Start playing with your dog getting him excited and focused on the toy. After a few moments of playing with the object, place the dog on a sit, stay (you may want to ask someone to hold the dog) and put the object on the floor across the room in plain sight. Place a few treats on the toy and return to your dog. Hold the dog with some resistance as if holding him back. This will actually excite him and make him want to move forward. Count to 3 before releasing the dog to "FIND IT." When the dog gets to the object cheer and make a big fuss over his success.

Holding your dog back helps create drive for the toy and induce forward motion. As the game progresses your dog will be looking ahead, raring to go and you really will have to hold him back until you give the command.

Repeat until the dog has clearly mastered the game. (3 or 4 times should be enough) Increase the difficulty by placing the toy further away. Continue to increase the difficulty, by placing it in the next room or under cushions with the toy mostly exposed. Follow each find with a rousing game of tug and soon your dog will love playing "Find it" with you and will likely begin bringing you the toy to receive his reward.

Tips

Don't advance too quickly for your dog. Take your time and enjoy the process. If your dog is having trouble, take the difficulty level down to the last successful find. When successful, make it an extra special celebration with chicken, hot dogs or cheese. Repeat. Before moving to the next level where he failed, introduce 2 or 3 steps between his point of success and failure. For example, if your dog had great success finding the toy on a chair, but when placed under a pillow on the chair, he was unable to find it. This time when repeating, place the toy under the pillow but mostly exposed. Decrease the visibility slowly until the object is completely covered again. Remember, always end with **success!**

3. Tag You're it

This game requires a partner, but it's a great way to create a lightning fast recall, as well as burn off that extra energy your dog might otherwise be using to chew up that new dog bed instead.

How to Play

Each person grabs a pocket full of treats and a toy. Start across the room from each other. One person calls the dog and rewards her with a treat. Then the next person calls the dog and rewards her. Begin moving further apart so that soon you're in different rooms and your dog is racing between you. Introduce a game of tug after the treat so that finding each of you is a super fun. Soon your dog will be racing between the two of you and the more she runs, the better. Fade the treats and only give them every so often, so she's burning off more energy than she's taking in.

Tips

Make this game even more exciting by calling your dog and start to run away so your game of recall becomes a game of chase too! When the weather is better, you can move this game outside. This is a great way to reinforce the recall with more difficult distractions in the mix.

Bonus:

Muffin Time

Using a muffin tin, place two or three treats in random spots in the tin. Cover each muffin with a tennis ball and place on the floor. Let your dog sniff and find the treats by nosing the balls out of the way. Once he has all of his treats, refill the treats in different muffins and repeat!