

Fun and Games with Your Dog



Play can be a great way to build your relationship with your dog, while you teach new skills and satisfy your dog's natural hardwired drives. In the dead of winter, Play helps you both cope with Cabin Fever.

Hide and Seek:

- Put your dog in a Sit-Stay out of visual contact of the room where you'll hide an object. Or just shut the door to the room to prevent peeking.
- Initiate the search by releasing your dog and asking him excitedly "where's your toy???" Prompt and coach him to search.
- The object can be anything—a biscuit, stuffed Kong, squeaky toy, ball, tug rope, whatever. It must be something the dog values so he has motivation to search.
- Celebrate the find with lavish verbal praise and some intense play or the chance to eat the treat.
- Start with easy finds and move up to more challenging searches.
- Play the game with YOU as the object to be found. Your dog searching for you, finding you and celebrating the find with you contributes to a great Recall, in addition to just being fun.

Retrieving:

Many dogs naturally find retrieving a great game, and you may tire of the game before them. If your dog is not a natural retriever, you may still be able to stimulate the "retriever within."

Method #1:

- First step is to get a little spark of interest in an object and reinforce that interest. Present an object to the dog by showing it, being overtly excited about it, and moving it around in front of the dog. Anytime the dog follows it with his eyes or makes even the slightest move toward it, CLICK or say "YES!" and treat him.
- Continue this process, rewarding the dog for successively more overt orientations (visual and physical) toward the object.
- Work up to "Take It" – "Give It" exchanges, and then to chases of the object. When the dog is actively chasing the item, lure them back to complete the retrieve sequence. If you get this far, the retrieve will become self-reinforcing and you won't need to use food rewards any more.

Method #2:

- Put your dog on a leash. Put a yummy treat on a piece of newspaper and put the paper on the floor.
- Put the treat on the newspaper, slightly crinkle up the newspaper, and put it on the floor.
- Progressively crinkle it more and let the dog take the treat out of the paper
- Crinkle the paper tightly around the treat and let the dog have it. The dog will likely have to put his foot on it and rip it apart to get the treat.
- Begin helping him tear the paper, but let him take the treat on his own.
- Put the treat in the paper, crinkle it tightly and tease the dog with it; throw the paper a short distance away.
- As the dog moves to pick up the paper, put slight pressure on the leash so he his only option is to pick up the paper; gently guide him back to you on his leash.
- Help him rip open the paper and find the treat.
- Progress to putting the treat in a sock and repeating the process of throwing the sock and guiding the dog back to you; take the treat out of the sock for your dog.
- Ultimately, toss the sock without a treat in it and then use other objects that you toss. Eventually remove the leash when your dog is reliably bringing the objects back to you.



Toys:

Toys, such as interactive puzzle toys for dogs are a great way for you and your pet to share a fun time. I recommend the puzzle toys offered by Nina Ottosson or Kyjen Company. They are sturdy and provide a fun problem-solving experience.

See our separate sheet on **Boredom Busters** for more information on these toys and where to find them.

Tricks Training:

Teaching your dog tricks is fun for both of you. You get to dream up fun tricks for your dog to perform and your dog will love the learning process. Clickers are a great tool for training tricks, speeding the learning while you shape the trick behavior in steps. Don't like clickers? Not a problem. You can still teach your dog tricks with a verbal marker.

See our separate sheet on **Teaching Your Dog Tricks** for trick ideas and how to get started.

Naming Toys:

You may have heard about the Border Collie who has a huge vocabulary of terms he recognizes for his toys. While the size of his vocabulary is extraordinary and maybe not something many dogs can master, your dog can come to learn the names of many of his toys.

- First, decide on a name for each of his toys—write the name on the toy to be sure everyone uses the same name.
- Hold the toy out and say the name of the toy. When your dog looks at the toy, CLICK or say “YES!” and give a food reward. Repeat until your dog looks immediately at the toy when you say its name.
- Take a second toy and repeat the previous step with that toy's name.
- Present both toys and say the name of one of the toys. CLICK or say “YES!” and give a food reward when your dog looks at the correct toy.
- Add toys gradually. When your dog has several toys named, go to the toy box with your dog and ask for a specific toy. Reward lavishly when your dog picks out the correct toy.

Acceptable Chewing and Tearing:

- If you don't give your dog acceptable things to chew on, something you value will become his favorite chew toy. So start early with your dog and interrupt any unacceptable chewing and redirect him to an acceptable toy (Nyla-bones, bully sticks, hard rubber Kongs, tug toys, etc.).
- Playing tug-of-war is a great way to establish an acceptable chew toy. Use a push-pull tug, rather than let the dog whip his head side-to-side. However, use a zero-tolerance policy. If teeth even barely touch your hand by mistake, end the game immediately. Your dog will quickly learn restraint.
- You can also take rags or remnant material and braid and knot them, and give them to your dog for something he can rip and tear to his heart's content. Be sure your dog is not swallowing the fabric.

Organized Dog Sports:

There are many sports to choose from these days, depending on your interest and your dog's ability. Explore Agility, Canine Freestyle Dancing, Flyball, K9 Nosework, Lure Coursing, and Rally Obedience. All sports are open to both purebred dogs and mixed breeds.

Here's a few websites with information on these sports:

Agility: www.akc.org/events/agility/index.cfm

Canine Freestyle Dancing: www.canine-freestyle.org/

Flyball: www.flyball.org/aboutflyball.html

K9 Nosework: http://www.c-wags.org/scent_detective.html

Lure Coursing: <http://www.akc.org/events/lure-coursing/>

Rally Obedience: <http://www.akc.org/events/rally/> OR <https://www.rallydogs.com/> OR <http://www.rallyfree.com/>

Cold Nose Companions, LLC Dog Training **855.286.DOGS (3647)** **www.ColdNoseCompanions.com**