

## Play These Nine Fun Games with Your Dog – Energizing for Him, Entertaining for You

Have you tried these nine fun doggie games yet? They'll challenge his mental and physical abilities, and are sure to be entertaining for you, too. Ideas for all dogs and all seasons, so why not pick one to do today? You never knew playing with your dog could be such fun.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Enriching your canine companion's life with a variety of games and activities can be fun for both of you, and extremely beneficial for your dog's overall well-being
- Games such as hide-and-seek, word recognition, step aerobics, obstacle course, and nose work can be played indoors, rain or shine
- For outdoor fun, try playing "find-it" on walks with your dog, Frisbee fetch, or flirt stick. And when the weather turns warm, you can use the hose to exercise water-loving dogs

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Variety is the spice of life, not just for us humans, but for our four-legged family members as well. Neighborhood walks and dog park visits are fine, but for his overall well-being and quality of life, your canine companion should be offered a wide range of games and activities that challenge his mental and physical abilities.

Rather than the same old boring daily walk with your dog, why not incorporate a few of these simple, fun activities into your routine? You can do several of them indoors, so winter weather is no excuse!

### Nine Games and Activities You Can Do with Your Dog

1. **Hide and seek** — A game of hide and seek doesn't have to be limited to the two-legged kids in your family, as many dogs enjoy playing, too. Hide and seek challenges your pet's obedience skills and provides both mental and scent stimulation. 'Here's how to do it: grab a few treats, and give your pet a sit-stay command. Go into another room to hide, and once you've tucked yourself out of sight, call your dog. When he finds you, reward him with praise and treats.

If you've taught your dog a find-it command that sends him in search of something, you can also play hide and seek with objects or food treats. To play, show your dog what you're about to hide, and then do a sit-stay or put him behind a closed door so he can't see you. Hide the object or treat, then go to your dog and tell him to find it.

Unless your pup is whip smart or has played the game awhile, you'll probably need to give him verbal cues as

he gets close to, or farther away from the object. You can also give physical hints by pointing or moving toward the hiding place until your dog catches on to the game. When he finds the hidden object or treat, be sure to make a huge deal out of it with lots of praise and a few additional treats.

2. **Word recognition** — With time, patience, and plenty of practice, most dogs can learn to associate certain words with certain objects. Here's how to start. Give two of your dog's favorite toys a name — something simple, like "ball," "bear," or "baby." Remove all other toys from sight to help your pet focus. Say the name of one toy and throw it so she can retrieve it. Do this a few times, repeating the name of the toy as you toss it. Then do the same with the other toy.

Now put both toys on the ground, and say the name of the first toy. Each time she goes to it, reward her with praise and treats. If you want to add a level of difficulty, have her bring the toy to you for her reward. Repeat this with the other toy. When you're sure your dog is consistently identifying the right toy by name, you can try expanding her vocabulary using additional toys or other objects.

3. **Play find-it on walks** — On your daily walks with your dog, after he's done his business and checked his pee-mail and the two of you are just strolling along, you can use the time to stimulate his mind. Give him a sit-stay, show him a treat, and then place it on the ground out of his reach. Return to your dog and give him a treat for holding his sit-stay, then give him the find-it command to get the other treat.

Repeat this a few times, and then make the challenge a bit more difficult. Place the treat under some leaves, behind a tree, or on a rock. Stop at several spots as though you're hiding the treat there, but hide only one treat. If you're playing the game off-leash, make sure you're in a safe area, and don't hide treats beyond your line of vision. Keep your dog in sight at all times.

4. **Frisbee fetch** — Agile, athletic dogs can be taught to catch flying discs. It's a good idea to start small, by rolling the Frisbee on the ground toward your dog. Once she's picking up the disc as it's rolled to her, try tossing it to her at a very low level. If she's able to catch or at least stop it in mid-air, you can gradually increase the height and distance you throw it. If the Frisbee seems to hold your dog's interest and focus, you'll obviously want to teach her to bring the disc back to you so you can continue throwing it for her.
5. **Step aerobics** — If your dog is fully-grown (her joints are fully developed) and you have stairs in your home, this game is a good way to get her heart pumping. Go to the bottom of the stairs and put your dog in a sit-stay. Throw a toy up to the landing, then give your dog the nod to go after it, ascending the steps as fast as her legs will carry her. Allow her to come back down the stairs at a slower pace, to reduce the risk of injury. Ten or so repetitions of this will get your dog's heart rate up and tire her out.
6. **Flirt stick** — Also called a flirt pole, it's a simple pole or handle with a length of rope tied to one end, and a toy attached to the far end of the rope. You can buy one or make your own homemade version, just be sure to use regular rope and not flexible or bungee cord.

Flirt sticks appeal to the prey drive in dogs, and they're a fun way to exercise your pet in your backyard (or in the house if you have the space or your dog is small) without overly exerting yourself. The game is simple — you drag the toy on the ground in a circle, and your dog chases and tugs at it.

The flirt stick can be a fun way to help your dog with basic commands like sit, down, look, wait, take it, leave it, and drop it. It's also useful for helping him practice listening while in a state of high arousal, and cooling down immediately on command.

7. **Water hose fun** — If your dog isn't afraid of spraying water or getting wet, on warm days you can turn your backyard hose into a fun chasing toy for your dog. It's best to have a nozzle on the hose that shoots out a jet

of water.

Make sure the force of the jet isn't too much for your dog, and take care not to spray her in the face. This can be accomplished by standing a good distance away from your pet. Move the jet around for your dog to chase.

8. **Obstacle course** — If you're up for it, setting up an obstacle course for your dog and teaching him how to navigate the course can be very mentally stimulating for your pet, and fun for you.

Items to consider include a sturdy crate or stool, a chair to jump on or run under, a box with open ends to crawl through, a pole attached to two stools or boxes to jump over, a hula hoop to jump through, and a disc or ball to catch.

Tailor the course to your dog's physical ability, focus, and attention span. Teach him to handle one obstacle at a time, and make sure to offer lots of praise, treats, and other high-value rewards each time he conquers an obstacle. This should be all about fun, not work.

9. **Nose work with treats** — Your dog, like all dogs, has an incredible sense of smell, so teaching her to find treats using only her nose is wonderful stimulation for her. Place four or five boxes or opaque containers on the ground upside down and next to each other. Place a treat under one of the containers while your dog isn't looking, then bring her to the boxes and encourage her to smell them. When she (hopefully) stops at the one containing the treat, lift up the box, praise her enthusiastically, and let her eat the treat. Keep adding more boxes and place them farther apart to increase the challenge as your dog's **nose work** abilities improve.

## Sources and References

[VetStreet March 20, 2014](#)

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