

Fun Games to Play with Your Dog

Looking for a fun way to keep your dog entertained and out of trouble? Try playing some more games with your dog. Games are a great way to exercise your dog, and they help keep your dog busy, active and out of trouble. Not sure where to start? Don't worry, we've got you covered. Here's some fun games to play with your dog.

Use a Flirt Pole

A flirt pole (also called a flirt stick) is a long pole with a rope attached to the end. On the end of that rope is a lure that's used to entice your dog to chase. Flirt poles provide great exercise, and they're mentally stimulating. They're a way to let your dog use their natural prey drive in a non-destructive way. And they're a great for practicing some basic impulse control such as letting go on command.

When playing remember to let your dog 'win' or catch the lure on occasion as a reward. By letting them win you're making the game more engaging and fun, and that will encourage them to keep playing. If they don't get that chance to win they can become discouraged and uninterested in the game. You can make your own flirt pole with some pvc pipe, some bungee cord and a dog toy. If you'd rather buy one there's plenty available on amazon.

Remember to take it slow when starting out. Using a flirt pole with your dog is very high impact, and it can be rough on your dog's joints. If your dog isn't very active to begin with start with short sessions and work your way up to longer ones.

For dogs with arthritis or mobility issues: If your dog has any joint or mobility issues don't use a flirt pole. High impact exercises can cause further joint damage.

Play Tug of War with Your Dog

Tug is by far my dog's favorite game. It's fun, it's engaging, it's great physical exercise and it's a good way for dogs to practice good manners. And if you spent a lot of time training with your dog I've found it to be one of most motivating rewards around.

When playing tug just remember to follow this basic rule – the game stops if your dog's teeth touch your skin. Some dogs may struggle with this more than others since tug gets some dogs (puppies) pretty riled up. If you stop when their mouth touches your hand they'll catch on that 'the fun game stops when I mouth my person.'

And contrary to popular belief playing tug with your dog will not make him aggressive, nor will letting him win make him dominant. Letting your dog win makes the game more engaging, and it shows your dog that you're a lot of fun to be around.

Play Frisbee With Your Dog

Frisbee is a game I refer to as an advanced game of fetch because it promotes your dog to chase over long distances. A game of frisbee is great exercise, and it's a lot of fun for dogs that have a natural drive to chase.

If your dog doesn't know how to catch a frisbee I'd start out by using a soft disc. Traditional plastic frisbees are pretty hard, so if they hit your dog in the face they can discourage them from trying to catch it. Practice by getting your dog excited about the frisbee by tossing it short

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distances or rolling it on the ground. Encourage them when they start to follow it around and chase. Once your dog is excited to chase it you can increase the distance and start tossing it.

Teach Your Dog to Chase Bubbles

One of the easiest games to play with your dog is to teach them to chase bubbles. I had my doubts, but it's one of Laika's all-time favorite games. As soon as I start walking over to the kitchen sink where those bubbles are she starts to get excited.

If your dog doesn't know how to chase bubbles start by blowing a couple at a time. Point them out to them and encourage them to chase. Catch some yourself to show you dog that there's nothing to worry about, and that the whole point of the game is to get them before they touch the ground.

We use bubbles made for kids (they also make flavored bubbles specifically for dogs). They're nontoxic but can upset their stomach if they ingest too much. And be sure to wipe off your dog's face afterwards because they can irritate your dog's eyes.

Play Some Water Games with Your Dog

Going to the local beach can be a lot of fun for dogs, especially those that already love swimming. (don't forget a doggie life jacket for safety) You can bring along some dog toys and play a game of fetch in the water. Just remember to check if they float first – we've lost a few toys in the water much to Laika's dismay.

If your dog isn't a great swimmer, or if you don't have any beaches nearby you can play some water games in your own backyard. Get a plastic kiddie pool and fill it with water. Many dogs love splashing around and having a nice little pool of their own to keep cool in. Toss in some toys and turn it into a 'bobbing for apples' game.

Some dogs go crazy for the hose. I know all I have to do it get within 10 feet of the hose and Laika's by my side waiting for that fun stream of water to begin. But the hose is intimidating for some dogs. If your dog isn't into the hose, they might prefer playing in a sprinkler that doesn't let off such a strong stream of water.

Play Find the Treats with Your Dog

My dog never gets tired of the find the treats game. It doesn't matter that I pick the same 20 hiding spots and that we always play with chopped up carrots – she loves it every single time. My lack of creativity doesn't bother her at all. Find the treats, like all nose work games, are mentally stimulating and a fun way to let our dogs hone in on their natural sniffing abilities.

To play find the treats you'll want to start by putting some treats on the ground while your dog is in the stay position. Give your dog their release command and encourage them to 'find the treats.' Point to them and help them along if they're struggling. Encourage them along the way by praising them each time they find one.

Once your dog understands what 'find the treats' means you can slowly start to increase the difficulty of where you're hiding them. And once you've practiced enough in one room you can move onto hiding treats throughout the house