

Playing With Your Dog

Dogs (and people) love to play! Playing with your dog is one of the best ways to reward him for a job well done. Done correctly, play can help a stressed dog relax and a distracted dog focus.

Every dog is different, so get to know what sort of play your dog enjoys. Just like some people enjoy wrestling and roller coasters while others enjoy reading and board games, different dogs will have different preferences. Try to find the level of excitement that's "just right" for your dog. Avoid play that gets your dog so amped up that he can't think or calm down. On the other hand, if your dog is bored by your attempts to play, try upping the level of excitement or changing to a different game. There are lots of different ways to play with your dog! Here are a few common favorites:


One-on-one games



CHASE is a great one-on-one game! Just make sure to have your dog chase you instead of chasing your dog. You don't want to accidentally teach your dog to run away from you.

TAG, YOU'RE IT!
Many dogs like gentle tag games, where you tap, poke, or push your dog away from you, then run in the opposite direction, encouraging him to catch up.

toy games



FETCH! is a fun option. If your dog likes to play "keep away" once you've thrown the ball or Frisbee, try playing with two toys. As soon as your dog drops the toy in his mouth, throw the second toy for him.

Contrary to the popular myth, **TUG** won't make your dog aggressive. In fact, playing tug is a great way to teach your dog to control his mouth when he's excited! Just make sure to teach your dog to start and stop the game on cue so that you can control the fun and he doesn't think your winter scarf or bag of groceries is a potential tug toy.

If your dog isn't interested in toys, don't worry... there are lots of other fun games the two of you can play, and just like not all people enjoy video games, not every dog gets the allure of the tennis ball.

food games
For less-playful dogs, food can be stuffed in hollow toys like **KONGS** and **BUSY BALLS** for home-alone fun.

Nose games
Dogs have a great sense of smell, and letting your dog use his nose is a great game! Toss a piece of food on the ground in front of him and tell him to **FIND IT!** As he gets better at the game, you can start tossing the food farther away, into grass or carpet, or even hide it ahead of time for a doggy scavenger hunt.



training games



Training can be a great way to play with your dog. Approach training sessions as games. The more you smile and laugh while you train your dog, the more your dog will love listening to you!

CLICKER TRAINING is one example of a fun and effective dog training method.