



Absolute Dogs.

SECRETS TO RAISING A PUPPY

The AbsoluteDogs Way

10 Foundation Games

What Games-Based Training Is All About



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The number of games available is insane. Name your struggle and there's a game for that!

Whether your puppy is an actual puppy, or your puppy is an 8+ year old senior dog... Every "puppy" can benefit from going back to foundation games.

They are the reason every strong behaviour you expect from your puppy as they grow and mature will continue to be a strong behaviour.

Foundations guide your dog training experience. A great puppy doesn't have to know how to sit to be a great dog. In fact, a great dog just needs to know how to make the best decisions. Anything else is extra awesomeness. Why are games essential to raising your puppy?

EVERY PUPPY HAS A BRAIN

Sometimes, your puppy will seem like they don't have one, that they're out of their mind... But they'll grow out of their impulsiveness and you'll be absolutely enamoured with the adult dog that you helped to grow into a well-behaved companion.

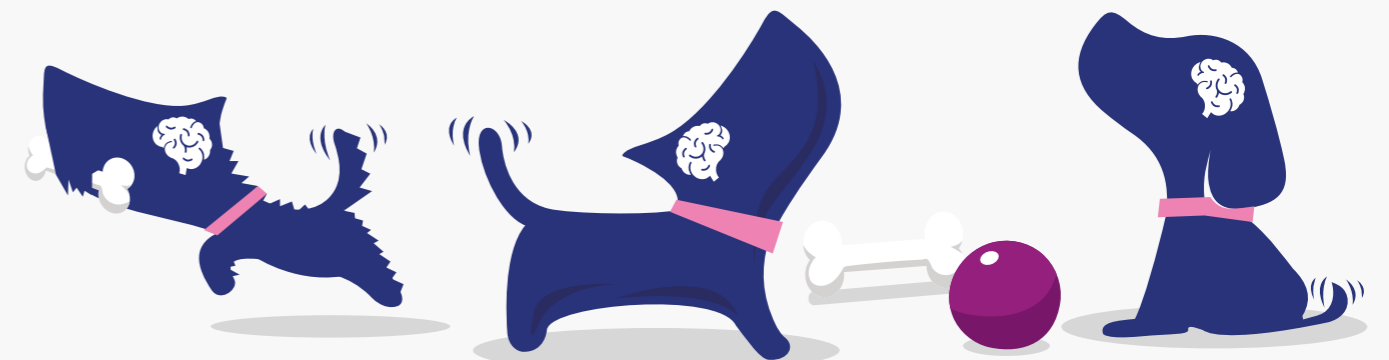
Your puppy's brain is made up of building blocks. Each of these building blocks can be seen as skills, or what we will call Concepts. Those skills could be Calmness, Focus, Disengagement, Optimism... there are so many skills and concepts you can grow. All of these

concepts can be grown and developed through games. If your puppy struggles with self-control, that's a concept to enhance.

Skills are mouldable and capable of being reshaped. The way to do this is to train for the situation, being proactive so that when you and your puppy find yourself in a new, novel situation, both of you have the games to pull from, the games you have rehearsed consistently. Train for the situation so that it's all about muscle memory that feels good, fluid, and dynamic to the situation.

Why isn't there just one game to fix every problem? We have to teach our puppy that there are different variables at play. Different pictures and situations will occur, and you are the most valuable part of your puppy's life. Teaching them and reshaping their brain in this way can help them to truly achieve real-life results and reliability.

Every puppy will have a unique baseline of skills/concepts. Your role as their best owner is to promote and encourage growth in the areas they are weakest.



CONCEPTS INTRODUCTION

There are many concepts. These can be shaped, nurtured, and developed by playing games. For each concept, there are games that can help your puppy perform better within that skill or concept.

For example, if your puppy is not as able to rehearse self-control, then you would select games that grow that concept and that encourage your puppy to understand in a way that not only sets them up for success, and also encourages them to transfer that concept to real-life situations for long-lasting, real-life results.

THE CONCEPTS 101

Arousal Up

Arousal Up is defined by your dog's state of arousal being in an increased state of excitement or fear. Arousal is your dog reacting and doesn't necessarily indicate the underlying emotion. It could be frustration, fear, excitement, or over stimulation (inability to think!). Often to get speedy responses in games, our dog's arousal needs to go up in excitement and higher motivation! If your focus is Arousal Up with your dog to create more speed and flash in their behaviours, we recommend working on Arousal Down simultaneously to balance the two.



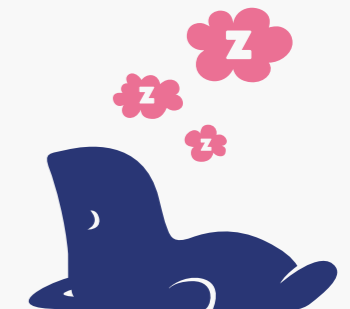
Arousal Down

Can your dog, after experience an emotional high or having kicked into high gear, come down and be calm, while still able to maintain a thinking brain? Arousal Down can't happen without Arousal Up, and vice versa!



Calmness

Calmness is king! A calm dog is a well-behaved dog. We stress Calmness because too often we find that lack of calmness is the root of most behaviour struggles. A dog that cannot be calm or understand how to regulate their emotions will have a difficult time when any situation calls for them to think clearly or not respond at all. For example, your dog is on a walk and typically reacts poorly when another dog comes into view. However, if your dog has embraced the concept of calmness, they are better able to make the right decision because they're better able to regulate themselves in that moment! It's a game changer!



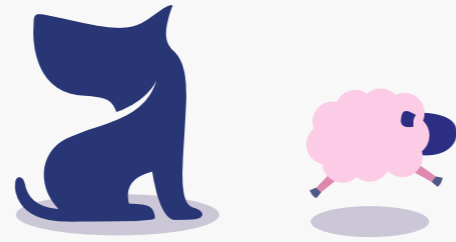
Confidence

Your dog's ability to handle novelty in their world with a quick recovery rate and without overthinking it! Confidence is when your dog is certain they CAN do whatever obstacle stands before them.



Disengagement

Disengagement is so, so powerful! Can your dog disengage from YOU or from the environment (dogs, people, bikes, etc) without having to react? Sometimes our dogs need to learn to disengage from us (think separation related behaviours where dogs struggle to not be in our presence or demand behaviour like barking at us to demand we do something – such as toss a ball for them). There is so much more to disengagement and it's one of our favourite concepts to discuss!



Engagement

Your dog's ability to remain focused on you no matter what is happening around you. They find joy in playing games with you and think you're the best! No squirrel, bird, sheep, or other dog is going to entice them away! This concept works best when combined with other concepts, such as Self Control and Disengagement.



Flexibility

Can your dog adapt, think quickly on their feet, or recover quickly if there is change in their life? Do they go with the flow and adjust accordingly, or do they respond with anxiety, pushy behaviour, or in some cases, are they able to take instruction they weren't anticipating and be flexible within a training session or competitive course? This is true flexibility!

Focus

Your dog's ability to stay committed to a task or you. This can be handler focus (focus on you) or forward focus (focus ahead while still being able to think clear about the instruction you are providing).

Grit

Get Really Intense Training... Basically, how long can your dog work for without reinforcement, knowing that it may become available at any time? Are they willing to push through boxes, obstacles, to get to what they desire? GRIT training is FUN!



Independence

Independence in dog training is multi-faceted. Can your dog work away from you and still respond to instruction? Can they relax calmly in another part of your home without having to follow you around? Can your dog function away from you just as well as they do in close proximity? Are they just as responsive, just as capable, even when there are layers of space, and sometimes, complexity, involved?



Novelty

New. It's new! New objects, sights, smells. Sometimes it isn't new and sometimes the picture has just changed slightly. For every dog, what they consider to be novel is different. Your dog's ability to respond to novelty and recover quickly and move on (Disengage) is valuable. This concept is typically worked on in conjunction with other concepts (Confidence, Optimism, Flexibility, Fitness, Disengagement, and more!)

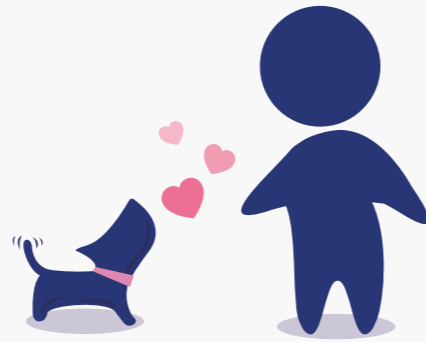
Optimism

Can your dog approach a situation and expect the best outcome? Everything is going to be just fine, and they have the tools they need, the concepts they need, to respond in the best way possible without batting an eyelash.



Proximity

Your dog's value in hanging out with you in close proximity. It's that simple! How close can they get to you? Are they comfortable with being close and near, and are they confident and safe in proximity? Proximity is an incredible concept that is a gamechanger for recall training and so much more.



Self-Control

Your dog's ability to control themselves around resources (toys, food, you, passion rewards, distractions). This is a great concept to work on if your dog is over-exuberant, excited, or struggles with disengagement. Self-Control often leads in as a superb foundation layer into Disengagement Games.



Thinking in Arousal

Can your dog respond even at their highest state of arousal? A dog that can think can regulate! This leads to Arousal Down and Calmness!

Tolerance of Frustration

Is your dog able to tolerate not having immediate access to something they desire – food, toys, you, etc. Building this tolerance of frustration is a great concept that complements other concepts brilliantly.



OBSERVATION IS POWERFUL

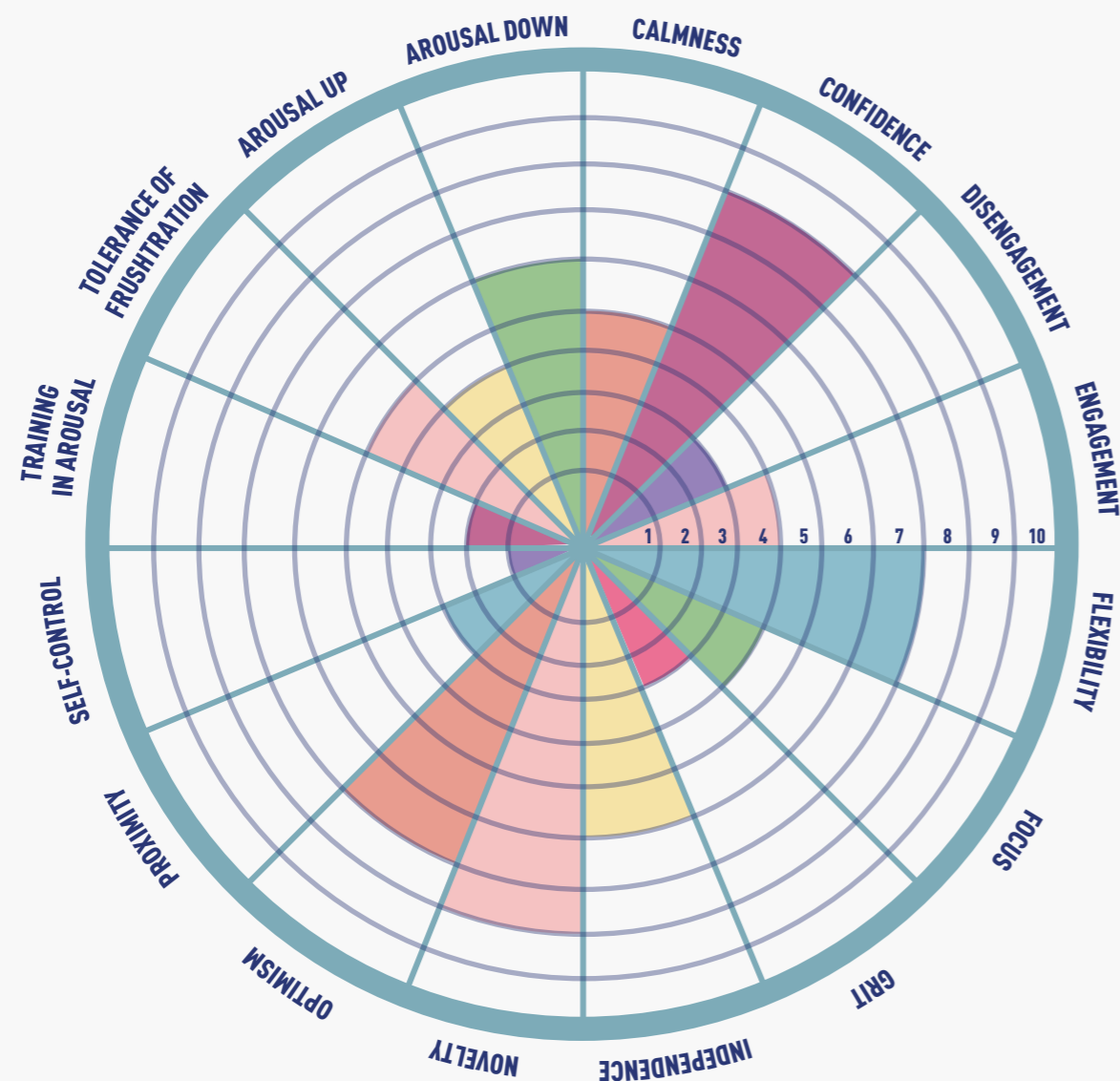
WHEN YOU TRAIN YOUR PUPPY

Now that you have an idea as to how games-based training works and what the concepts involve in this Concept Introduction 101, consider the weaker concepts that your puppy may have, as well as the stronger concepts. Make a chart and re-evaluate that chart on a weekly basis. We have provided you with an example, as well as a blank chart.

EXAMPLE CONCEPT CHART BREAK DOWN

CONCEPT	1-10 RATING
AROUSAL UP	3
AROUSAL DOWN	6
CALMNESS	5
CONFIDENCE	8
DISENGAGEMENT	3
ENGAGEMENT	4
FLEXIBILITY	7
FOCUS	4
GRIT	3

CONCEPT	1-10 RATING
INDEPENDENCE	6
NOVELTY	8
OPTIMISM	7
PROXIMITY	3
SELF-CONTROL	1
THINKING IN AROUSAL	2
TOLERANCE OF FRUSTRATION	4



EXPLANATION OF THE EXAMPLE CONCEPT CHART

As you begin to understand how the concepts allow your puppy to interact with you and the world in more appropriate ways, your chart will allow you to see the progress you're making. Our Training Academy, which is a monthly subscription-based service that opens up a few times a year, gives you access to a 225+ video library of games so that you are able to come up with your puppy's individual recipe.

Each concept in this Concept Map is rated with a score of 1 to 10, with 1 being that the concept needs a LOT of growth, and 10 being perfect and has an excellent understanding of the concept. It's okay if you're not quite on target. In fact, this is entirely subjective. You know your puppy and you can guess where they're at for each of the concepts and go from there. It's a great way to see a visual map of progress. As your knowledge of games-based training grows, so will the accuracy of your chart and your puppy's progress will soar.

YOUR TURN!

We are providing you with a blank Concept Map. We recommend printing this out and having some fun with it. This can be used for both puppies and dogs of any age.

“Everything I know I learned from dogs.”

Nora Roberts

YOUR PUPPY'S CONCEPT MAP

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH A STRONG FOUNDATION OF GAMES?

Aren't concepts really cool? When you look at your puppy's weaker personality traits as opportunities for growth it doesn't feel as much like an uphill battle. Games are cooperative. They are relationship boosting. The relationship that grows through playing games is unlike anything else.

Your puppy will feel connected to you because understanding who they are to their core through the concepts, and nurturing their growth in a supportive, understanding way that games-based training allows, will make you the most valuable person in their life.

The impact of games on the relationship is so powerful. If you want to truly be able to provide your puppy with a training experience unique to who they are, games-based training is the way to go.

Games allow you to train in an effective and fun way. Not only does it cultivate the concepts we've discussed in this resource... it also enhances the relationship in such an empowering way that achieving real-life results becomes even more possible to achieve.

Now let's get to the foundation games! For all of the games, it is best to start in a low distraction environment where your puppy is sure to be paying attention to you. Keep in mind that if they aren't paying attention, they may need a good rest, or a potty break.

THE 10 FOUNDATION GAMES YOUR PUPPY **WILL LOVE**

GAME #1 TWO FEET ON

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- A secure platform of some kind (a stable box, upside down bowl that won't slide, etc.)
- Yummy daily rations
- A lead on your puppy if you think they'll wander off.

GAME EXPLANATION

With the object in one hand and your food in another, wait for your puppy to offer you attention. This game helps to grow confidence in new environments, can help with proximity, optimism, and focus.

Place the object down and patiently wait for interaction.

When your puppy sniffs or even looks at the object, say "Yes" and toss a piece of food away from the object (not far!).

Keep your eye on the object. As soon as they interact with it again, say "Yes" and toss food away. Expect a little more effort each time until they are putting their front feet on it (one or both!).

Feed your puppy directly when they place feet on the object. Woohoo! Feed generously and then toss a piece of food off so they can reset and try again. It's a fun game!



GAME #2 POSITIVE PAIRING

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- If outside, a lead and collar and/or harness.

GAME EXPLANATION

This game is a great optimism booster!

What does positive pairing mean? This means that when your puppy acknowledges anything in the environment, good or bad, and you can capture them being calm, reward them. No need to say Yes, or anything else. Simply reward them for acknowledging that things are happening around them.

For example, if you were out in your front garden and another person with their dog walked by. Your puppy's interest was piqued, and they stood still, observing. You would then reinforce and then step back to see if your puppy will follow (without prompting them). If they do, cheer. If they then choose to look back toward the distraction, reward again and repeat adding distance until they only want to focus on you.

Any time your puppy gets the opportunity to observe from a distance is an excellent time to play this game. This will help them feel safe in the world.



GAME #3 I LOOVE MY NAME

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- A lead on at first if anywhere other than inside the safety of your home
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

We LOVE this game. This game introduces your puppies name to them. This game grows focus and engagement concepts.

With your puppy ready and rearing to go, hold them and then toss a piece of food ahead of them. This encourages them to be able to track the piece of food. When puppies are young, they aren't as able to locate where food goes. Starting in this way sets them up for success.

After your puppy has eaten the food, say their name if you are 100% confident that they are going to orient back to you. As soon as they do, say "Yes" and reward them directly. Reward them generously. That was awesome!

This is a game that you do not want to play on repeat. After just a few repetitions, take a break.

To up the challenge a tiny bit if your puppy is really having a great, successful time playing, just toss a tiny bit further and see if you can increase the enthusiasm when your puppy responds to their name by cheering them in. Training should be a fun time, not a long time.



GAME #4 NOSE TOUCH

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

This is a great game with many practical uses. We love to play this game to get the process of retrieve started. If your puppy has an amazing nose touch, they are more likely to be able to figure out how to deliver an object to your hand. This game can grow confidence, as well as optimism.



With your puppy's attention on you, extend your palm out to the side at your puppy's eye level, perhaps 2-3 inches away from their nose. If they move toward your hand and touch your palm with their nose, say "Yes" and then toss a piece of food away. Remove your hand and as soon as they have eaten their reward and turn back, offer your hand again.

If, for some reason, your puppy is hesitant to touch their nose to your palm, that's okay. Offer your hand and then with your other hand deposit a piece of food into your palm. This should encourage them to interact. Quickly fade this out once their confidence in moving toward your hand grows. Alternate hands and then, when your puppy is doing really well, delay your "Yes" and reward to see if they'll press even harder.

GAME #5 ORIENTATION

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

Orientation is such a supercharged game and begins the process of a reliable recall (without your puppy's name). You are recreating the picture of your puppy going away from you and then returning (and that's recall!). This game increases value in proximity and can also be played as an Arousal Up game.



The objective of the game is that your puppy picks you without you calling them to you.

Place a piece of food on your puppy's mouth and then bowl it away from you, making sure that their head moves with your hand so they can see where you are bowling the piece of food.

After they race (or walk casually for some) to get it, wait. Remember to breathe. They will eat it; they may sniff, or they may immediately turn to you. It may take a little and that's actually really good information. That says your environment isn't as low distraction as you may have thought. As soon as they turn to you, say "Yes", cheer them in, and bowl a piece of food in the opposite direction, making sure it's within their eyeline of sight.

Woohoo! You are rewarding them for choosing you with running and fun! You don't necessarily have to join in on the running (that's for them). Repeat a few times, bowling back and forth. As they grow more confident, so will their speed.

GAME #6 MIDDLE

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- Creativity and flexibility
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

This is such a fun foundation game that grows the concept of proximity.

A great way to teach this game is to place a piece of food on your dog's mouth with them facing you. Lure them slowly around one side of your body so that they are coming behind you, then with great coordination (or none whatsoever!) reach with your other hand between your legs to pull them through... This can look awkward at first, and yet it's a great once you get the hang of it. We use this game for recall, as a safety position, a vet handling position, and so much more.

Do you want your puppy to stay their longer? You can feed more and more in position between your legs before you toss a piece of food in front of you to release them.

Add a release cue if you'd like! We say "Ok Go" or something along those lines a second before we toss the food ahead to release our dogs from position. It's a great confidence building game for puppies and aides with socialisation as they get accustomed to you leaning over them.



GAME #7 CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- A long tug or dangling toy
- A large object you can run around like a barrel or something similar, maybe even a couple
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

With this game, you are working on your dog's value in staying closing to you... in their recall, and you are working on having your puppy "hunt you down". They just CAN'T wait to be with you.

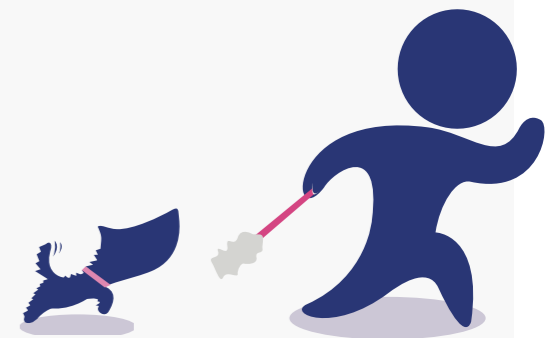
Set up a large barrel, chair, or something similar in the centre of a fairly open space.

You can have someone restrain your puppy (and only if they are okay with this) or you can toss a piece of food, so they go and get it. Immediately race away (for younger puppies, racing may look like a hesitant jog).

If your puppy is restrained, they should be released as soon as they get excited to chase after you. A puppy that is eating a tossed piece of food should turn around and chase after as soon as they realise you've gone crazy and are running away.

Race them to the object you've set up and try to see if they will chase you around it. At first, reward them for any effort! Gradually build up to a true race, where you're laughing and having the best time as you race your puppy around the object.

Drag the long tug toy or let them catch up to eat out of the hand that is closest to them. Woohoo! Most of all, have fun!



GAME #8 TOY SWITCH

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Two of the same type of long tug toys that aren't too fuzzy. Fleece or rope is good initially as furry or fuzzy can be too exciting to let go.
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

This is a great game to start teaching your puppy to think in arousal.

With two tugs, one in each hand, keep one behind your back and the let the other drag in a creative, prey-like way to entice your puppy to engage. Think kitten play more than puppy play and don't tug too hard! Your job is to make the toy exciting.

As soon as your puppy grabs hold of the tug, let them tug on it for just a couple seconds, and then stop tugging with that toy (even bringing it close to your leg to make it not so fun) and dangle the other, making it alive and fun, making it wriggly and exciting. Ideally, your puppy should release the first tug to go after the second. Woohoo!

As soon as your puppy lets go of the first, bring it behind your back so that you avoid any confusion with it dangling nearby and encourage your puppy to tug for a few seconds on the second. Then, stop tugging with the second toy (just like you did with the first, just before) and present the first toy again.

Make sure when presenting that either the toy is very long and easy to grab for your puppy or that you can present it horizontally. To free your hands, you can drop the toy that isn't active and step on it so that it still isn't fun to tug.

GAME #9 PAINT THE TOWN RED

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

GAME EXPLANATION

This game grows flexibility as a concept and encourages your puppy to have a fun outlook on the reward experience. Sometimes it's just more fun to feed this way than just handing over the food. Let your puppy work for it a little (only a little at first, and then more and more as they grow desire to chase!)



With this game, imagine that you are painting. You have the piece of food in your hand, and you have it within an inch of your puppy's mouth (they can even be nibbling or licking the entire time).

Then in sweeping painting-like strokes, you have them follow your hand in a lovely pattern. This does require rotating your wrist. Keep your hand puppy eye level to the floor, and "Paint the Town Red".

Experiment with how you move your hands. Make sure the food is always just within reach and take it slow if you need to before speeding up. You're just encouraging a new and fun reward experience and flexibility in how your puppy moves and thinks. You too!

GAME #10 SIDE

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Yummy daily rations
- Good humour and the willingness to have a good time and a laugh

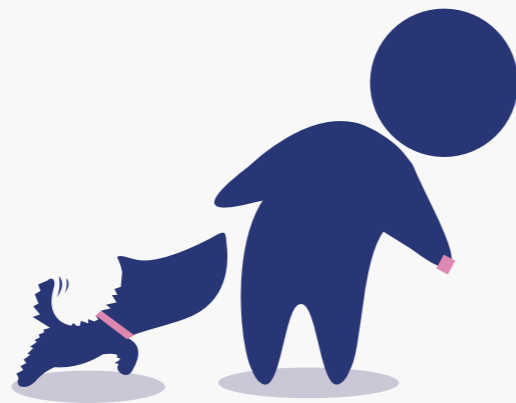
GAME EXPLANATION

This game grows proximity. This is a great game to practice when you're working on lead training (but first without the lead!).

With a focused puppy, toss a piece of food out and turn away from your puppy, looking over your shoulder. After they've eaten the food, lower your hand to just below your knee (puppy eye level) so that when they come in, they come close into your side. Feed them generously there. Reset simply by tossing a piece of food in any direction, then set your up so that you're facing away again.

In each repetition it doesn't hurt to alternate which side your puppy is coming to because flexibility is key! Whether it's your left or right side, reward them for getting as close to your leg as possible, feeding so that you can almost touch your leg with your thumb.

You want to grow as much proximity as possible. When feeding, their shoulder should be in line with your leg.



Those are the 10 Foundation Games we would encourage you to try with your puppy (or older dog even!).

There is never too much foundation work and these games can be taken out and about to grow reliability both on lead and off-lead. Take your time and make sure that as you gradually grow the distractions, that your puppy is successful at every increment.

You are the best dog owner for you puppy! Keep being amazing and let us know how you get on with these 10 foundation games.

“I THINK DOGS ARE THE MOST AMAZING CREATURES; THEY GIVE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. FOR ME, THEY ARE THE ROLE MODEL FOR BEING ALIVE”

GILDA RADNER

