



BEHAVIOR & TRAINING



DOG FOR HIRE: ENRICH YOUR DOG'S LIFE!



This guide will teach you tips to enhance your dog's life through mental and physical games!

Originally, dogs survived without the help of humans. Wild dogs spent most of their time scavenging or hunting for food, protecting territory, caring for their young, and interacting with one another. They led busy, social and complex lives!

Nowadays, most canines are “employed” as companions. This often means they have to cope with our more sedentary lifestyle; they no longer have to “earn their keep”. Humans provide their food, and most dogs do not get the exercise they need. When dogs lack proper outlets for their natural tendencies, problems may arise. **Without a job or task to keep them busy, dogs will find ways to entertain themselves...and we may not always like it!**

The most common examples of behavior problems we see are:

- Destructive chewing, digging or scratching
- Investigative behaviors, like garbage raiding
- Hyperactivity, excitability and night-time activity
- Unruliness, knocking over furniture and jumping up on people
- Play biting and rough play
- Attention-seeking or demanding behaviors like barking and whining

Engaging your dog in interactive games will decrease the unwanted behaviors listed above, help him/her focus, problem solve and expend energy that could otherwise be redirected into negative behaviors. There are plenty of options to get your dog moving, here are some ideas:

• **Roundhouse Recall:** Call your dog back and forth between family members. Start out easy with each person standing 5-10 feet away. Use treats and reward your dog each time (s)he arrives at whomever is calling. Begin increasing the distance each time you play. Before long you can be in different areas of the house, and your dog will come find you!

• **Hide and Seek:** Begin the same as Roundhouse Recall but as you move farther apart begin to hide behind doors or furniture. As always, start easy at first and help your dog out by whistling or making kissy noises to clue her/him in on your location.

• **Playing Fetch:** Some dogs are natural retrievers. Others may need some encouragement. If your dog doesn't seem ready to chase the toy, try wiggling it around and teasing him a bit first. **Continued...**



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Then, toss the toy only a few feet. Remember to praise your dog (a lot!) when (s)he moves toward the toy. If your dog didn't get the memo about fetching, try calling your dog and running in the opposite direction. Another option would be to reward your dog with a yummy treat when (s)he comes in your direction!

- **Playing tug:** Tug is a great game. Use a sturdy toy designed for tugging such as a rope toy. Wiggle the toy around to entice your dog to grab on. Once your dog has latched on, allow your dog to tug and pull! When you are done with the game, you can simply release the toy. Your dog will then have a great time playing with this new treasure (s)he worked so hard to get! If you would like your dog to release the toy, trade for a treat or another toy; pulling the toy away will make your dog think you've initiated another game.

- **Be social:** For dogs that enjoy the company of other dogs, playing with other canine friends is a great way for them to practice their social skills! Socializing will help tire them out both mentally and physically. Local dog parks or doggy daycares may be a good option. But, some dogs may prefer a smaller crowd. Try to find neighbors or friends with dogs who are open to play.

Don't forget the mental exercise! Dogs need both physical and mental stimulation to keep them happy!

- **Find it!** Have your dog search for his/her dinner, just as he would in the wild! Start by placing small handfuls of kibble around the room on the floor in plain view. Call your dog in and encourage him/her to use that nose! Begin increasing the difficulty by changing the location of kibble piles each day, spreading them farther apart, or hiding them near furniture. If you want to make it even more challenging, try hiding the kibble in an empty cereal box (plastic removed), under a washed yogurt cup or in an empty toilet paper roll. Once (s)he gets the hang of this, hide these items throughout the house. You can also use a Kong! See Handout: [The Kong: Your Puppy's Pacifier](#)

- **Practice obedience:** Dogs enjoy interacting with people and teaching them a new skill allows them to practice better social skills, and have better relationships. Simply sitting is a great way to get your dog to be focused! Plus, there's food involved! Begin by practicing the skills your dog already knows. See if your dog can perform commands in every room of the house. How about in the back yard? What about while on the bed? Once your dog has mastered the basics, try something new!

- **Nose Work:** Modern dogs have puzzle toys to keep them entertained. These toys allow your dog to employ their natural scavenging skills. Choose a toy with a large dispensing hole and make sure the treats and kibble are small enough to easily fall out. Once your dog becomes an expert you can experiment with larger treats and different puzzles!

It is important that you provide your dog with the mental and physical stimulation that s(he) needs to be happy, healthy and your best friend! For more information about Dog Training, visit us on the web at www.eastbayspca.org/dogtrainingclass.