

8

# Playtime Ideas



## How Do I Play With Thee? Let Me Count the Ways.

Playtime is a much-anticipated activity for your cherished canine companion. Active play bears several benefits towards your dog's overall **wellbeing, positively affecting** both their **physical and mental health**. Some physical benefits include **weight maintenance, a healthy heart, strong joints and muscles, and improved agility, balance, and coordination**.

When it comes to your pet's mental health, **playtime helps keep your dog's mind sharp**. Certain games, especially those involving commands and rules, help develop your dog's ability to focus, while increasing their level of alertness. Moreover, playtime with furry, four-legged forever friend is fun, fun, fun! Not just for your pet, but for you, as well.

Here are **8 excellent ideas** to level-up playtime with your pooch.



# 01

## Teach Your Pet To Play Fetch



This doggy game is a classic, for good reason. **Fetch is almost instinctive to dogs**, being part of their nature as hunters—something humans trained their canine counterparts to do thousands of years ago. Centuries ago, in the days of the hunter-gatherers, humans trained their dogs to help them during the hunt.



As such, most dog breeds now have an instinctive disposition for running and chasing after things, and a game of fetch ticks all the boxes. Fetch leaves your dog with a feeling of exhilaration, much like a **“runner’s high”** in humans. It is also an excellent way for you to bond with your pet.

Of course, certain breeds, like Labradors, spaniels, and terriers, are more predisposed to quickly learning and enjoying a game of fetch. But, most any type of breed can be trained to play the game. Select a good toy for your pet to fetch. Among the most popular ones are a **tennis ball, an old shoe, a squeaky toy, a stick, a rubber or rope toy, a flying disc or Frisbee, and a plush toy**. Just make sure the toy is the right size, so that your dog can easily pick it up in their mouth, but without choking on it.

# 02

## Make a **DIY** Agility Course in Your Backyard



Agility courses are a great and fun way to get some active playtime in with your dog, while teaching them **obedience** and increasing their **limbness and alertness**. You can construct one in your own backyard using varying sizes of PVC pipes, as well as other household objects like laundry baskets, old tires, blankets, and broomsticks, among other things.



Always keep in mind that the most important aspect to consider is the safety of your pet, when making a **DIY agility course**. Some important dos and don'ts to remember:

# 02

## Make a **DIY** Agility Course in Your Backyard



Do start small. Consider your dog's size and current ability. Don't push your dog beyond their ability, lest you run the risk of injuring your pet.

Do inspect your materials for safety. Make sure to use sturdy materials of good quality. Don't use unsafe materials that are old and brittle, or have sharp edges that your dog can wound themselves on.



Do make sure that the ground is flat. Inspect your backyard for holes and ditches that could prove harmful to your pet as they run through the course. Don't set the course on uneven ground. Fill up or level any holes and mounds in the soil before setting up your DIY course.

Do supervise your pooch when using the agility course. Keep an eye on your pet as they learn and use the course. Don't allow your dog to play unsupervised, to avoid any untoward incidents.



Do practice positive reinforcement. Reward your dog for their progress through the agility course. Don't yell at or punish your dog for not being able to make it. Remember, this is supposed to be a fun activity for you both!

# 03

## Hide-and-Seek



Dogs love a good game of Hide-and-Seek as much as their human counterparts. Start in your home by simply going to another room and calling your dog to come and “find” you. Reward them with their favorite treat, when they do. Then, you can progress to outdoor settings. Start with an easy enough hiding spot, and then gradually build up to more difficult ones.



This is best done with a friend or family member who can distract your dog while you go hide. Your dog will not only have fun with this game, but will also learn a vital skill: to find you when they are lost. Teaching your pooch to play Hide-and-Seek is an excellent way to train them to make their way back to you, should you ever be separated from each other.

# 04

## Guess Which Hand



Your dog will love this old school game of having them guess which of your closed hands conceals a particular object. Start with their **favorite treat**, and then work up to a small object or one of their toys. Close your hand around the treats or toy and move your clenched fists side to side, round and round before allowing your pet to “guess” where the surprise is hidden. This game helps to improve your dog’s alertness and focus, as well as helps to **heighten their sense of smell**.



# 05

## The Cup Game



This is a leveled-up version of the Guess Which Hand game, and is also a great way to develop your dog's olfactory acuity (which is a fancy way of saying to sharpen your dog's sense of smell). Again start with dog treats and gradually transition to small objects and toys.



Conceal the surprise underneath upside down opaque cups or glasses, and move the cups around for your dog to guess which one contains the treats or object. Begin with two cups, increasing the number of cups as your pet gets the hang of the game. Remember to reward each correct guess with a treat and some praise. Positive reinforcement will make all the difference in how quickly your dog aces this interactive game.



# 06

## Find the Surprise



This hybrid of Hide-and-Seek and fetch is also a good way to develop your dog's nosework and ability to sniff things out. A good way to initiate this fun activity is by allowing your dog to smell a treat in your hand, and then tossing the treat a distance away from your pet, with the command to "Go find it!" or "Go get it!"

Be sure not to toss the treat into the air, as you do not want your dog to try and catch it mid-air—that presents a choking hazard.



Then, you can transition to hiding your pet's favorite treats somewhere around the room, releasing them to find the treat stash with the same command. Make the hiding place more difficult as your dog catches on. Progress to toys and other objects, and always reward your dog for their success.

# 07

## Get In on Some Tent Time



Remember how, as a kid, you loved to hide out in a tent or underneath a blanket? Do you recall that feeling of snug security you would get, hiding out in your makeshift fortress?

### Cozy!



- 🦷 Dogs feel pretty much the same way. Hiding out in a cozy tent or burrowing 'neath a blanket is actually very instinctive, for dogs.
- 🐾 This behavior goes back to the days when dog packs would live in a den, such as a cave.

Allow your dog to revisit those days and get in touch with their primal self by providing them a doggy tent to play in. Better yet, if the tent is big enough, spend some time in it with your pet. This signifies to your dog that you are part of their “pack” and makes for great

# 08

## Tug of War



Another dog game that brings out the instinctive behaviour of your pooch is **Tug-Of-War**. There is no truth to the belief that playing this game causes aggressive behavior in dogs; on the contrary, it **helps them release any pent-up emotions** they may have. Sure, your pet may growl in excitement as you play, but that is where the release command comes in. A game of tug allows your dog to express their predatory nature in a healthy, non-threatening way. For the game to be safe and fun for both you and your dog, **keep these dos in mind:**



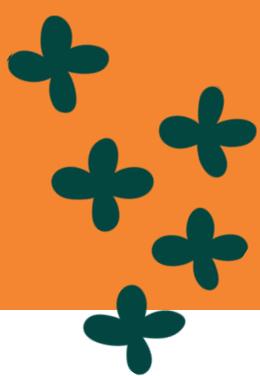
# 08

## Tug of War



Do teach your dog the appropriate commands for the game. Establish a release command with your dog (like “Let go” or “Drop it”) before really getting into the game. Give your dog some time to master the command before you play. Start by allowing the dog to bite the tug toy in your hand, then training them to let go.

Do choose a good tug toy. Pick a durable and sturdy, but soft and flexible-enough toy. One that won't hurt your dog's mouth and teeth, but won't break in the process of the game, either. Make sure the toy has no small parts or anything that may detach during the game. Many dog toy manufacturers make tug toys for sale, specifically for this purpose.



Do initiate the game. Let your dog know that there are rules to the game; set the terms and pace for the activity.

Do take breaks during the game. If you see that your dog is getting too excited or worked up (something they typically express by growling), put the game on pause. Use the release command you have practiced with your dog, and have them stop and sit for about half a minute before resuming.





There are many fun ways to play with your dog; these are just a few tried-and-tested ones. Playtime with your pooch is beneficial to your dog, and to you, as well. It is good exercise and a great stress reliever for you and your pet. As you both realize how much fun there is to be had and how playtime deepens the bond you share, you will look forward to the hours spent tossing that Frisbee, kicking that ball, running and romping around together.

**What better way to spend a few hours than in active fun and frolic with your best friend, after all?**