

## 25 Enrichment Games!



Engaging your dog in 'thinking' activities has so many great benefits! Enrichment 'games' meet many of your dogs needs: socially, nutritionally, mentally and physically. These activities can give your dog appropriate outlets for natural behaviors, and prevent behaviors that you may find to be a nuisance in your life together. Enrichment games are confidence building as they can be an excellent way for your puppy or dog to 'take in' information about their environment, without fear. Enrichment games also provide dogs with a 'job', that often uses their nose and their brain, and their body so that they are fully exhausted after playing. Finally, enrichment gives your dog 'choice' and 'control' in their environment, which is a powerful reinforcer in their life with you.

We brought together just some Enrichment Games, from 'Spirit Dog's 'Days of December' 2023. But, the activities you provide for for your dog's enrichment are only limited by you creativity!

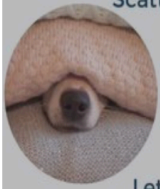
Have fun and reap the benefits of a more calm, social and well-mannered dog!

### #1 SNIFF BLANKET

Great for puppies, anxious and high-energy dogs

Take a blanket or tarp, put it on the ground and "bunch it up".

Scatter your dog's kibble or some treats in the folds of the bunched up blanket.



Now you got yourself a huge sniff mat for your dog!

Let them use their nose to find the treats in the blanket.

### #2 SURFACE GAME

Great for proofing and generalizing cues

Today, pick a simple cue (like Sit, Spin, Hand Touch) and have your dog do it on **4 unusual surfaces/places**.

Get creative!

You can practice it in the snow, on/in a cardboard box, in the bathtub, behind the Christmas tree ...

**Rehearsing skills in unusual settings** helps dogs further understand that no matter where they are, **they can always listen to us** & earn rewards!



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### #3 WHAT FOCUS LEVEL CAN YOUR DOG GET TO?

Great for gradually advancing foundation skills

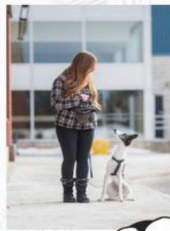
Take a lot of treats.

Ask your dog to **sit, count to 1** & reward. Have your dog **heel** for a count of 1 & reward.

Now ask your dog to **sit for a count of 2** & reward, then have them **heel** for a count of 2 & reward.

After this, do it for a **count of 3**, 4 and so on ...

**What number can your dog reach without losing their focus on you?**



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### #4 THE BOX CHALLENGE

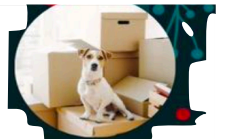
Everyone has plenty of cardboard boxes lying around this time of the year, right?

Let your dog see how you put a treat under a small box. Release them to get the treat. (This one should be easy!)

Now put a treat under a small box, and add a slightly larger box on top. Release your dog to get the treat.

Time for 3 stacked boxes, then 4, then 5 ...

**HOW MANY CAN YOUR DOG DO?**



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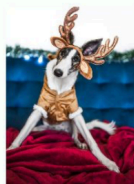
### #5 TEST YOUR DOG'S HEARING! -THE WHISPER GAME

Today, have a training session in which you **only whisper cues** to your dog.

Ask your dog to perform easy behaviors he already knows (such as Sit, Down or Spin) - but do so as quietly as you can!

You will be surprised how well your dog can listen.

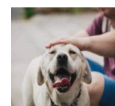
**Many dogs can respond to barely audible cues!**



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### #6 Giving your dog a say! 'The 5 Second Rule'

Letting your dog have a choice in as many situations as possible in his life, builds confidence & trust. Teaching him how he can move away to say, 'No', is a powerful reinforcer for your dog. When you respect that communication, your dog trusts you much more.



Here's the 'game': Pet your dog for just 5 seconds. Stop, take your hands away, wait to see what your dog does.

If she nuzzles your hand or looks at you, she might want more. But, if she stays still away from you, turns or moves away, she is saying, 'No, Thanks'. Respect her choice to say, 'No'.



"More, please!"



"No, thanks!"

\* When petting, use wiggly fingers, i.e., massage versus short strokes. Reach to touch the body where it is closest to you, rather than reaching over his body. Crouch down & turn sideways to the dog, rather than leaning over him. These are much more comfy & inviting ways to interact with your dog.



## # 7 POSITION GAME



Today we will try to cue our dogs to do a behavior while we are in an unusual position.

How about asking your dog for an easy behavior while you are:

- Sitting in a chair
- Standing on one leg
- Facing the wall
- Holding your arms over your head
- Running in place
- Doing jumping jacks
- In a plank position
- ...



## #8 PEEKABOO GAME



Can your dog perform cues (such as Sit, Down, Spin) if you cover your eyes as you tell him what to do?

It can be surprisingly hard for dogs to respond to us if we are not looking at them!

The less your dog can read your face, the more he has to listen just to your words (this is harder than you might think)!



## #9 THE BLA-BLA GAME

Today we will test if your dog is actually listening to your cues or mostly predicting what you will say.

Tell him several nonsense words, and then insert a cue.

"Car ... apple ... train ...down"

"Red ... sit ... action ... leg"

Reward him for responding to your actual cues, but not for responses to the nonsense words.

This is an especially valuable exercise for dogs that tend to "throw their whole repertoire" at you.

It teaches them to listen attentively to your cues and respond to exactly what you ask.



## #10 THE COME-TO-HAND GAME

Take a couple treats in each hand. Stand in front of your dog with your back facing your dog.

**Without looking back** over your shoulder at him, glance at one hand. You can wiggle it a bit, too. Does he come to the correct hand? If yes, give him a treat.

Now take a step forward and see if he will come to the other hand! You can move like this until the treats in your hands are gone.

If your dog is good at this, **make your signals more and more subtle.**

Stop wiggling, and glance only very slightly.

This will teach your dog to **pay attention to small and quiet signals** instead of you having to use big gestures and loud words.



## #11 LEG HOP GAME

Great for getting rid of excess energy **FAST**

**Teach your dog to jump over your leg today!**

Sit on the ground facing a wall and put your foot against it. Your leg is lying on the ground – it will be the dog's hurdle.

Have your dog stand on one side of your leg. Now toss a cookie over your leg to make your dog step across it. Then toss a cookie to the other side and so on, so that your dog is stepping back and forth across your leg on the ground.

Now gradually sit up and raise your leg. You can first sit on a pillow, then a stepping stool, then a chair etc.

**The higher your leg gets, the harder this will be.**

Advance slowly and don't overdo it – it's very tiring for your dog!



**This game absolutely needs to be played on a soft, non-slip surface!! Do NOT do this on tile, hardwood or laminate.**

## #12 THE NO NAME GAME

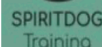
Today you will practice training your dogs without saying their names at all.

We tend to over-use names a lot!

If your dog is attentive and focused on you there is no reason to say his/her name before every cue.

I used to play this game in my group obedience classes and it was amazing how quiet and calm everything got once owners stopped using their dog's name all time time.

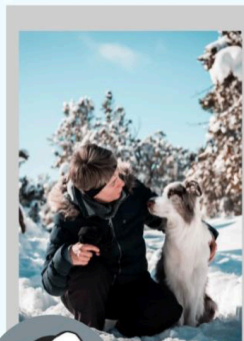
Try a session without using the name at all and see how well your dog will still listen!





## #14 THE "GET LOW" GAME

Great for strengthening position cues!



Ask your dog to hop onto some kind of elevated object (stool, chair, training platform etc.). Now, standing in front of him, ask for a simple trick: Sit, Down, Spin or similar. Can he do it? Nice!

Now you make yourself lower. Sit or kneel down as ask for another trick.

If he is successful, get even closer to the ground, lying on the ground and having your dog on the object above you doing his tricks.

This can be really challenging as even large dogs are always used to looking up at us.

Looking down at us changes the whole picture for them!



## #13 THE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT GAME



Did you know that we tend to give our dog a lot of subconscious cues - such as subtle hand gestures, head turns or even eye movements?

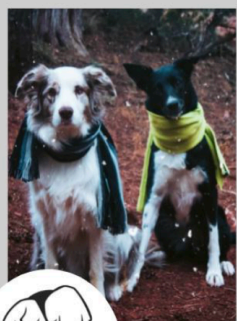
Today we want to find out if your dog is looking at you for these subconscious cues.

Stand in front of your dog and think really hard about a cue. Visualize very clearly how you would give the cue except you don't actually say it. Does your dog respond?

Many dogs will respond to the "thought experiment" because their owners actually give body language cues without knowing it!

## #15 THE STOP &amp; GO GAME

Great for dogs that need help calming down!

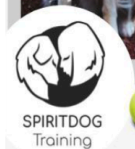


This game can be played with tennis balls for toy-motivated dogs or cheese balls for treat-driven dogs.

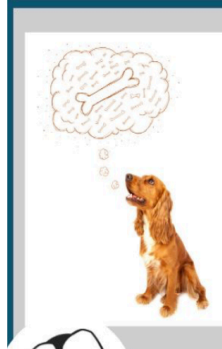
Take a couple balls. Throw one ball, let your dog chase it and have him race back to you. As soon as he reaches you, ask for a Sit and reward. Then release your dog and throw the next ball into the opposite direction.

The goal of this game is for your dog to switch quickly from running full speed to sitting still and back.

This is a great skill to teach, especially for dogs that struggle with "coming down" after being very excited.



## #16 HOW GOOD IS YOUR DOG'S MEMORY?



Let your dog watch as you hide a treat in a room of your house.

(You can either have him in a Stay or have a helper hold him)

Release him right away to get the treat.

Now let him watch you as you hide another treat. Take your dog to a different room for 30 seconds and then let him back in the first room to get the treat.

Does he remember where it is and race to the place right away?

Each time you repeat this, increase the dog's wait time - 2 minutes, 5 minutes ... or even 20 or 30 minutes!

How long can your dog wait and still recall the treat's location?



## #17 THE PROBLEM SOLVER CHALLENGE

Today we'll challenge our dog's ability for figuring out how to get treats from underneath everyday objects.

Show him a treat and then put it under:

- a cup
- an upside-down paper plate
- a kitchen towel
- a small cardboard box
- an aluminium pan

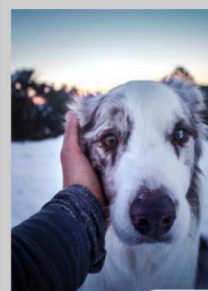


Can he figure out how to get it? Try out hiding one underneath multiple objects, too!



## #18 THE NO-BRIBE GAME

Great for dogs that only do tricks when you show them a cookie



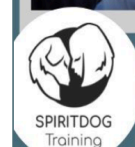
Show your dog a treat and put it on a table next to you. Ask for an easy behavior (such as Sit). Give your dog the treat.

Now show your dog a treat and put it on a table and walk a couple steps away. Ask for a trick, then walk to the table to get the treat with your dog.

Next step - put the treat on the table, walk to the next room with your dog, ask for a behavior and then go get his treat.

We want to show our dog that even if he does not SEE a reward, he can ALWAYS rely that there will be one.

Instead of bribing our dog, we build up his trust that his work will pay off.





## #19 THE CLAPPING GAME



Today, try if your dog can carry out cues as you are clapping your hands.

While clapping your hands continuously, ask for easy behaviors like:

- Sit
- Down
- Spin left/right

Can your dog do it?

This is a real challenge to their skills!

If your dog can do it without being distracted by your clapping, reward him very generously.

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## #20 THE MOTION CUE GAME



Today, see if your dog understands his position cues (Sit/Down/Stand) when you give them as you are in motion.

Walk very slowly with him by your side and ask for a position. Immediately reward it and repeat this a couple times.

Now let's see if you can take one small step forward after your dog assumed the position. This is hard as it is their natural impulse to follow us!



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Over time, increase both your speed as well as how many steps you take after your dog assumed the position.

This will really put your own reward skills to the test!

## #21 A RECALL GAME GAME



Today we'll play an easy game that builds a lot of value for coming to us!

Grab a handful of treats and drop one on the ground.

As your dog is busy finding and eating it, walk/run away and call him. When he catches up with you, reward him!

Drop another treat or two and run away into the opposite direction, calling your dog.

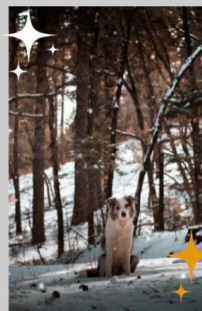


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When we are teaching recalls, it can be hard to get some distance between us and the dog.

Dropping a treat lets you get a head start. This will encourage your dog to run fast to catch up with you!

## #22 A GAME FOR PERFECT STAYS



Your dog's Stay will improve FAST if you reward very generously in position.

- Take a handful of treats and ask your dog to sit. Feed him one treat after the other, every second your dog should get a treat.
- Grab another handful and ask your dog to sit. Feed him 3 treats, then lean back and immediately reward him again.
- If your dog can do this with you just shifting your weight, take 1 step back, immediately return and reward. Now take 2 steps, immediately return and reward.
- Advance 1 step at a time ... to which number can you get?

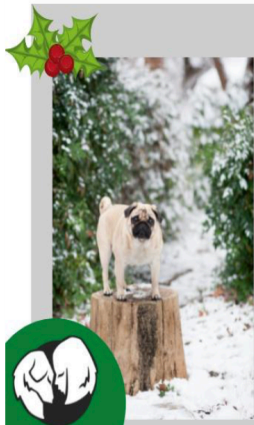


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Do NOT recall your dog to reward him (that doesn't attach value to the Stay but to getting up).

By making sure all good things happen while staying, your dog won't see a reason to get up!

## #23 THE UP UP GAME



Today we will teach our dog hop up onto objects from increasing distances.

Use a stable object with good traction.

Lure your dog up and reward him very generously on it. Repeat this a bunch of times.

Now let your dog watch how you place a treat on the object and release him to it from 3 feet away. He should run right to it and jump up. Reward!

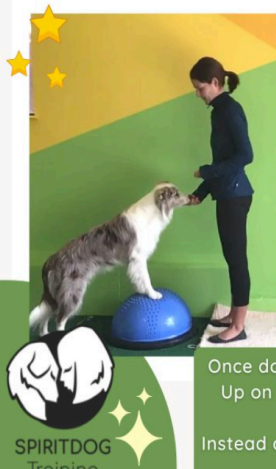
Next, pre-place a treat and walk 5 feet away. Release your dog and reward him generously when he runs to and hops up!

How far away can you get? 10, 15, 20 feet ... or even more?

**This is a great game to play on walks!**

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## #24 PAWS UP GAME



Paws Up is easy and fun for dogs of all ages. Stand facing your dog and lure him up onto an object with his front feet. Reward!

Do this on at least 5 different (stable, non-slip) objects today.

This is also a great game to take on walks (on rocks, tree stumps, park benches ...)

It will encourage your dog to interact with the environment with you as a team (rather than just running off and doing his own thing).

Once dogs understand this game, they will offer Paws Up on different objects to earn your attention and rewards!

Instead of you fighting for their focus ... they will strive to get yours!



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## #25 THE BOX HUNT GAME

Do something fun with all those boxes!



I am sure you all have a lot of boxes today ... let's make a big maze out of them.

You can either put boxes upside down and have treats underneath them, or drop treats in boxes with the opening facing upwards.

Put up as many as you like - the more you got, the longer your dog can play. Big ones, small ones ... be creative and mix it up.

Now let your dog work his way through the maze! It will be a fun way for him to earn his meal.

The greatest gifts you can give your dog are fun, rewarding activities with you: his best friend in the whole world!



PUTTING YOUR  
DOG'S NOSE TO  
WORK!



(source: Victoria Stillwell, 'Scent Trails')

Dogs love to sniff! Sniffing releases 'feel good' dopamine. So, let's give him 'feel good' activities with that nose!

### 'SCENT TRAILS'!

Begin, out of view, so the dog can not see you.

Tie a large piece of cooked chicken (or other super tasty treat that your dog loves!) to the end of a line or lead.

Drag the chicken in a straight line along the ground.

Put some chicken at the end on the 'trail'.

Bring the dog out to the beginning of the 'scent trail'.

Tell the dog to "FIND IT".

Let the 'sniffing games' begin!

Work up to:

- a.) dragging the chicken (or scent) in a zig-zag line
- b.) just rubbing the ground in a few spots that are on the path to the 'treasure'
- c.) hiding the chicken without dragging it along the ground at all
- d.) change up the chicken, and use a favorite toy!

### 'Scenting Indoors':

Ask your dog to hold a sit out of sight, maybe in your bedroom or bathroom.

Hide 20-30 treats around the house.

Hint: put treats under cups, or in cardboard boxes, or tupperware bins, etc. (confidence building!)

Tell the dog to "FIND IT".

Let the 'sniffing games' begin!

\*you can play the same game with his favorite toy, etc.

### Stackable Solo Cups!

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1562198514425744>