



Potter League

Enriching Lives

Training Games: Teaching Through Play

Teaching your dog how to behave doesn't have to be a chore. Using treat-based training makes training a lot more fun for both you and the dog. We can teach our dogs a lot of things through various games.

How Can Games Help My Dog?

There are all sorts of training games that help teach your dog to listen more reliably, to stop and pay attention to you, and to control himself in exciting situations. Try making time for five minutes of training games per day, and you'll see a big difference in no time!

Training games are a great way to spend time with your dog. Their benefits include:

- ❖ Improving how quickly and reliably your dog responds to commands
- ❖ Bonding time with your dog
- ❖ Mental and physical exercise for your dog
- ❖ Bettering your dog's impulse control (ability to think clearly and listen to you when excited)
- ❖ Trainers' Favorite Training Games
- ❖ There are tons of different training games out there. A quick Google search will come up with many ideas. Here are a few of the Potter League's favorites:

| Name of the Game | Rules and How to Play | Benefits |
|------------------|---|---|
| It's Your Choice | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Put some tasty treats in your hand and place your hand near your dog.2. Keep your hand closed as your dog sniffs, nibbles, or paws at your hand.3. Open your hand when your dog sits back to wait.4. Close your hand if your dog immediately dives back in for the goodies.5. When she stays away for a second or two, place one treat on the ground.6. Gradually build up time between opening your hand and delivering the treat. | Improve Impulse Control |
| Exchange Games | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give your dog something he likes.2. Approach your dog and offer some really great treats.3. Pick up the object she had as she eats the new goodies.4. Give her back the object when she's done eating. Repeat. | Learns to trade objects (great for shoe stealers). This is a great introduction to Drop It. |



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| Name of the Game | Rules and How to Play | Benefits |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Nothing in Life is Free | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make a list of everything your dog likes: treats, petting, putting the leash on, going outside, games, attention, etc.2. Cue your dog to "sit" before giving him whatever it is that he wants. Make sure that he's very familiar with the cue that you use before implementing this exercise.3. Soon, your dog will start to sit automatically whenever he wants you to put on the leash, open doors, or give him attention! | Improves impulse control, improves obedience |
| Relax on Your Mat | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pick out a new blanket, towel, or mat. This should not be a bed.2. Place the mat on the ground in front of your dog.3. Reward her for any interest in the mat—looking at it, moving towards it, sniffing it, putting paws on it. Keep giving treats if your dog stays on the mat.4. Gradually narrow your criteria. Work towards only rewarding your dog for lying down. It's okay to just cut to the chase and cue your dog to lie down, if you'd like.5. Use Karen Overall's Relaxation Protocol as a way to solidify mat training.6. Once you're doing well, try new places and distractions! | Learns to relax in increasingly distracting situations |
| Red Light, Green Light | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have your dog on leash. (We like to use a dog's flat buckle collar for this exercise. Do your normal walks on a harness in the meantime.)2. Start walking forward. When your dog hits the end of his leash and pulls, stop.3. Wait for a "J" to appear in your leash. Marking it with a word ("good" or "yes") often works.4. Start walking again. | Improves impulse control, improves leash manners. Your dog will quickly learn that he can only move forward when there's a "J" in the leash. |



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| Name of the Game | Rules and How to Play | Benefits |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Ready, Set, DOWN! | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="537 430 1096 520">1. Excite your dog by running around, making fun noises, or playing with a toy.<li data-bbox="537 529 1096 619">2. Say, "Ready, set, GO!" Run away from your dog. Let him chase you for five strides or so.<li data-bbox="537 627 1096 718">3. Say, "Ready, set, DOWN!" (or "SIT!"). Then stop and act really boring until he complies.<li data-bbox="537 726 1096 802">4. Give your dog a bunch of treats when he complies. Then start over! | Learns to obey commands when excited, improves ability to think and calm down when excited |