



10 Indoor Games For You and Your Dog

- Food Dispensing Toys** - Food dispensing toys are invaluable boredom busters. Rubber kongs are probably the most well known and are great for stuffing with peanut butter, cheese whiz, canned food, cream cheese, and a variety of other tasty items. Better yet, freeze the stuffed kongs for a longer lasting treat. There are a variety of other food toys including puzzles by Nina Ottosson, Aikiau toys, Kibble Nibbles and tug-a-jugs from Premier, Busy Buddy toys, Orbee treat toys and Buster Cubes. You should always supervise your dog with any toy to ensure that they will not chew and ingest pieces. You can even make your own food toys using paper bags, boxes, 2-liter bottles, anything you can think of! Be creative with your recycling pile and provide your dog with a new kind of interactive food puzzle each day! Remember, never leave your dog unsupervised with a homemade food toy (especially a plastic-based one) as she may ingest pieces in her excitement.
Physical Energy Burned: 1 out of 3
Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3
- Kibble Hunt** – Make meal times fun and put that kibble to work by having your dog hunt for it with her nose. Instead of dumping the food in her bowl, hide small piles of food in the house then release her to "kibble hunt." Initially, make the piles very easy to find. As your dog gets better at this game, practice hiding the food in more difficult spots. This is a great way to distract your dog while you leave the house or help her to learn to love her crate or bedroom. You can also scatter her kibble in the yard for an even bigger challenge!
Physical Energy Burned: 1 out of 3
Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3
- Tug and Fetch** - Tug and fetch are classic dog games that do not require a lot of room. Hallways tend to be great for fetch games, and tug can be played virtually anywhere. Tug is a ton of fun but it is important that your dog knows the rules. Be sure to teach her to “drop” or “give” the toy and abruptly end the game if she becomes too aroused or uses her teeth on skin or clothes.
Physical Energy Burned: 3 out of 3
Mental Stimulation: ½ out of 3
- Memory** - Ask your dog to sit and stay while you hide a few treats around the room, then, using a release word such as “okay”, signal her to find all of the goodies. Your dog will have to locate all of the treats from memory. To increase the difficulty, take your dog into another room for a few minutes after you’ve

hidden the treats. Distract her by asking her to do a few tricks and then see if she can remember the location of the treats in the other room.

Physical Energy Burned: 1 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 2½ out of 3

5. **Trick Training** - Old dogs *can* learn new tricks! While “sit” and “stay” are very valuable behaviors to teach your dog, there are many other things you can teach once she has learned the basics! Teach her to take a bow, crawl, give you a high-five, stand on her hind legs, flip a light switch on and off, and even to clean up her toys! When teaching new tricks you are asking your dog to try something new which is great mental stimulation and a fun way to bond! Teach your dog to **shake** by following the directions below. Once your dog knows how to shake you can teach left and right paw, high five, and other paw-sy tricks!

1. Hold a desirable treat in your closed fist in front of your dog’s chest.
2. Ignore your dog licking your hand, offering known tricks, or anything else.
3. As soon as she paws your hand to get at the treat say “yes” or click your clicker and give her the treat.
4. Repeat! Be patient, she is likely to lick at your hand for a while the first time but as soon as she realizes that pawing your hand gets the reward she will start to try that sooner and sooner.
5. After using a food lure 3 times, simply close your hand without a treat and reward her when she paws the closed hand.
6. Now you can offer a flat palm and she should paw it as well. Be patient, let her think it through. Once she offers a shake for the hand signal 8 out of 10 times you are ready to add the verbal cue.

Physical Energy Burned: 0 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 3 out of 3

6. **Three-Cup Shuffle** - Place three upside down cups on the carpet and tuck a treat under one of them. Ask your dog to sit and stay while you rearrange the cups. Give her a release word (such as “okay”) and see if she can sniff out which cup the treat is hiding under! If your dog indiscriminately dumps all of the cups try using coffee mugs, upside down tins, or bowls that are harder to tip.

Physical Energy Burned: ½ out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3

7. **Hide ‘N Seek** - Hide and seek is a great way to exercise your dog's mind and body while working on recall skills. This classic game can be played in a few different ways. You can get the whole family involved! To play as a group, each person should have a pocket full of tasty treats. One person occupies your dog while everyone else hides in the house. Family members take turns calling the dog to them and reward her with a “jack pot” of treats when she arrives. Once she’s received all the treats from one person they say “All Done!” so that another person calls her to them. If it is just you and your dog spending a day together you can play hide-and-seek with her favorite toy to test her sight and smell. At first, put her toy in eyesight and reward her generously when she finds it and brings it to you. Gradually move the toy further away and eventually into other rooms or behind the furniture. If she loses interest make it easier for her to find the toy.

Physical Energy Burned: 1 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3

8. **Have a Doggie Play Date!** - If your dog has a favorite playmate or friend, consider scheduling a rainy day play date. Before your dog's pal arrives, be sure to puppy proof and pick up all breakables and valuables. As you know, dog play can get quite rowdy! If turning your house into a puppy romper room sounds like a recipe for disaster check out the many local doggie daycares and hiking companies.

Physical Energy Burned: 3 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 1 out of 3

9. **Go on a Socialization Outing** - If you are unable to take your dog for a walk, consider taking him for a ride and introducing him to a new place to explore! Many stores other than pet stores will allow you to bring in your dog. You could also do a "fun visit" at the vet's office where he just goes to hang out and get some treats and scratches just for being a great dog. This will provide the added benefit of teaching him that vet visits can be a lot of fun!

Physical Energy Burned: 2 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3

10. **Nosework** - Canine nosework is a great new sport that can be done in your house. All you need to start are some boxes and some great treats! For more information on canine nosework, visit www.funnosework.com or check out the handout from the Humane Society for step-by-step instructions.

Physical Energy Burned: 1 out of 3

Mental Stimulation: 2 out of 3

Thanks to the following for some of these great game ideas...

- www.petside.com/article/indoor-dog-games-beat-heat
- www.dogtrainer.quickanddirtytips.com/play-games-bad-weather.aspx
- www.dogster.com/dog-training/engage-dog-indoors

We Can Help! The Training and Behavior Department at the Humane Society of Western Montana has a variety of resources available to help you and your pets live in harmony! The Humane Society has several dog trainers and a behaviorist on staff to provide affordable group and private training lessons and free behavior consultations.

- Contact Jean, our Behaviorist for a free pet behavior consultation by emailing behavior@myhswm.org or calling the Behavior Helpline at (406) 549-9295.
- Contact Mariah, a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, to inquire about private lessons or a group training class. Email outreach@myhswm.org or call (406) 549-HSWM.
- Check out our website at www.myhswm.org for a complete listing of dog classes, rates and additional information.