



Play To Behave

# 10 Easy Ways To Exercise Your Dog

...when you don't have time!

Providing an outlet for your dog's excess energy can make it easier for your dog to listen and behave. But when you are busy, especially at holiday time or when the weather makes it difficult to keep your regular schedule, exercising your dog can be a problem and your dog can develop behavior problems and/or existing behavior problems can get worse.

Here are 10 quick and easy ways to provide your dog the mental and physical exercise they need during those busy times so you can relax and have fun during the holidays!



Use a puzzle designed for dogs to feed regular meals. If you have more than one dog, find a way to separate them using gates, crates or putting them in separate rooms so there isn't a conflict.



Give your dog the joy of a "hunt" by using several dishes or puzzles in different parts of the room, your house or outside in a fenced area:

- ❖ Start by teaching the word "Search". Hold your dog or make them stay as you put the dish with the food down on the floor. Then say "Search!" and release your dog to the food.
- ❖ After a few days, add a second bowl and when your dog is finished with one, say "Search" and help your dog find the second bowl.
- ❖ In a couple days, add a third bowl and do the same
- ❖ Now, keep your dog out of the room, in a crate or behind a gate and put all three (or more) bowls down.
- ❖ Say "Search!" and release your dog. They have to figure out where the bowls are located. If they finish one or two and don't realize there is a third, just say, "Search!" and see if they can figure it out.
- ❖ Don't make this too easy because the whole point is to exercise their mind. Make your dog think!
- ❖ Careful not to create problems! Think about where you put the food. For example, if you hide food in the couch, your dog might return looking for food and damage your couch. So just put these puzzles and/or dishes on the floor around the kitchen or whatever room you normally feed in.
- ❖ You can make this even more fun by hiding the bowl under a cardboard box or a specific blanket.
- ❖ The goal is to get your dog to think. A little frustration is fine. You'll need to use your best judgement so this exercise remains fun while providing mental exercise.



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Keep some obstacles in the area where you feed your dog. Then have your dog get on the equipment to earn their food. For example, have your dog get on a wobble board or an inflated disc which will exercise their core, work on balance and body awareness. You can use about 1/2 of their meal as a reward and then give them the rest of their food in their bowl.



When you move from place to place in the house, such as when you go up the stairs or when you walk out of a bedroom, ask your dog for a "sit" and also a "stay". Keep moving and then release your dog. This is a fun game using mental energy and can provide physical exercise as your dog follows you around and also races to catch you once released. Reward with praise and eye contact. Often, no food treats are needed!

❖ If your dog won't stay, wait with your dog by your side for a couple seconds, then release and continue on (much like "Say Please").

❖ Note that if your dog fails twice with the "stay", you need to release faster and work your way up to a longer stay.



Do the same as you did in #4 but get out of sight and hide before you release. Hide 'n Seek is great fun for your dog! When they find you, again you usually don't need food as a reward. The excitement and some praise is usually all the reward your dog needs.



Decorating the house? Getting ready for a party? Exhausted and just want to collapse on the couch after a long day? If your dog knows how, have your dog stay on a mat. If needed, use a remote control treat dispenser, such as the "Treat 'n Train" to keep your dog there. You can set it so it provides a treat at regular intervals, randomly or by a remote that you control! This can be a great way to feed your dog his meal if you use a dry kibble and allow you to get some work done or get some rest.



Put up a bird feeder IF your dog won't go crazy at the window! If your dog can be content just watching, a bird feeder can provide entertainment and mental exercise.



Plan playdates or walks with a friend that has a dog that is friendly with your dog and put those dates on the calendar. If you have a fenced yard, let your friend drop their dog off or if you want to get together anyway, both you and your dog can enjoy the interaction.



Put all your dog's toys away except for one or two each day. Rotate those toys so they are novel and more fun,



Take your dog out for one hour, once a week to a park, class or event. With the time it takes to get there and go home, along with the class or activity, your dog can work off excess energy.

Keep in mind that during the holidays, visitors, changes in your schedule, decorations and more are going to affect your dog and cause some stress. Make sure your dog gets all the rest they need and if your dog isn't thrilled with visitors, give him or her a space where they can retreat.

*Happy Holidays!*