



## 101 Ways to Keep Your Dog Entertained

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# 101 Ways to Keep Your Dog Entertained!

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## Introduction

Most of us are unable to spend as much time as we would like with our dog, but it doesn't have to lead to a bored or stressed dog. With some creative thinking and motivation to make your dog's life a little better you can prevent or even solve many of your dog's boredom issues.

### Welfare and Safety Issues

Start with a good environment. Your dog's area should be safe, secure and clean, with the basic needs of adequate shelter, and free access to water. Some of the suggestions listed will not suit the size, age, breed, or temperament of your dog, so please choose wisely and pick appropriate toys for the breed that you have.

Ensure new toys (and related suggestions) are given under supervision to check for safety and suitability. Check toys on a daily basis and throw away any that are split or damaged, and avoid giving any items that belong to family members.

If you are including food in the selection of toys you may need to reduce your dog's meal size accordingly to prevent weight problems.

If attaching any of the toy ideas with rope to a strong structure, make sure the rope is tangle free or cover it with a length of PVC piping (secure the pipe in place by knotting the rope). Ensure any structures are strong enough to hold your dog's weight (and more), and don't use the washing line!

Some suggestions will not suit your dog; think of any implications first; for example giving old toys or clothes may encourage some dogs to help themselves. If you have children who leave toys or clothes around avoid these suggestions!

If in doubt about the suitability or safety of any suggestions for your dog, don't use it! There are plenty of other ideas to choose from.



*Start with a good environment. Your dog's area should be safe, secure and clean, with the basic needs of adequate shelter, and free access to water.*

*Photo – Adam Niclasen*

## Low Cost Ideas

Keeping your dog entertained doesn't need to be a financial burden. Following are lots of low cost, easy solutions that any dog owner can use.

### Empty Ice-cream Containers

You may wish to hide a treat underneath. You can also use them with a lid and treats inside. Place some treats inside and attach the lid. See how long it takes them to work it out!

### Empty Soft Drink Bottles

Use them clean and dry, with the plastic lid and ring removed. You may also place a few treats inside.

A clean and dry soft drink bottle with grains of rice or similar inside and the lid tightly closed.

A soft drink bottle part filled with water to weigh it down and either lid on tightly or off to allow them to play with the water. You



*Clean empty soft drink bottles make excellent low cost toys.*



*Large balls that are slightly flat are great toys for medium and large dogs.*

may also put other liquids inside for a liquid treat as they move the bottle around.

### Sock Toy

Fill an old sock with a tennis ball or similar and tie it in. Active dogs love to thrash it around.

### Old Footballs

A slightly flat football can be recycled as a dog toy. Either kick it for the dog to fetch (not to catch!) or allow them to play with it on their own.

### Old Soccer or Netball

An old netball or soccer ball which is quite flat is a great toy for medium to large dogs. These dogs can get a good grip on the slightly flattened ball and fetch it or just thrash it around!



## Training Tips to Keep Your Dog Entertained

Spend time training your dog. They need mental exercise, as well as physical exercise! Training stimulates the dogs mind and helps alleviate boredom. The following training tips will help you get off to a good start.

- Incorporate training into your daily routine and practice as often as possible. Try to keep all training sessions brief, regular and fun.
- All training should rely on positive reinforcement and gentle methods. Do not use harsh correction methods.
- Dogs will go on learning regardless of whether we teach them or not. Obviously if we put in some effort we can teach them what we want them to learn, rather than habits they pick up if left to their own devices.
- Food lure training can be useful. When teaching a new command the food can be used consistently, but when the command has been learnt, food should be given intermittently. Do not overuse food.
- It is very important that verbal praise is always given, even with the food, as this becomes a secondary reinforcer. Because it has been associated with an extra special food reward in the past, it takes on more meaning.
- Teach your dog to 'watch' you or 'look'. Hold a treat up near your face. When your dog's eyes look up to your eyes praise your dog and give them the treat. When they get the idea that they need to look to you to get the food, add the verbal command you wish to give and reward them when they look at you.
- Start training in an area with minimal distractions, then progress to more distracting areas such as the front yard or park. It is important to practice away from the home environment (eg park) as this is where you will need it!



*Food lure training is useful as an aid to teach your dog to focus on you while you are teaching a new command.*



## Health Tips



*Special dog toothpaste and brushes can be purchased from your vet.*



There are other things that you can do for your dog that are suitable both as an activity treat, as well as being healthy for your dog.

### Brushing Your Dog's Teeth

Okay, so it may not be the most entertaining but it's good for your dog! It's also good training to teach them to stand for a mouth examination. 'Finger' brushes are available, as are a variety of dog toothpastes (such as malt or poultry flavoured). Just apply the paste to the finger brush & gently lift your dog's lips & apply to the outside of the teeth. Ask your vet for a demonstration.

### Tooth Diet

If brushing doesn't suit you, a food is available from your vets called tooth diet. See pack for recommended quantities & discuss with your vet (Of course when feeding you can hide them in an easy to find spot, or put them in a trail).

### Special Diet Treats

For dogs on prescription diets homemade dog treats can be made by slowly baking some of the tinned food in the oven (slice & place baking paper, oven time will vary as will the texture of the finished product).

### Fruit and Vegetables

A whole apple (core removed) or whole carrot often goes down a treat. Research natural diet options for fruit and vegetables which can be given to your dog.

*Finger brushes may be easier to use. Just apply the paste to the finger brush & gently lift your dog's lips and apply to the outside of the teeth.*