

Nose work Games

GOAL: To engage the dog in a mentally stimulating activity that expends energy. Nose work games are a great form of enrichment for dogs that are not motivated to play retrieve, tug, or chase games. While interactive games (ie, retrieving) are usually a preferred form of enrichment, nose work games are an excellent form of physical and mental stimulation for all dogs.

Game 1: Find It

1. Tether the dog to a sturdy object, or ask to sit and stay.
2. Show the dog a food dispensing toy (Kong, Twist n Treat) or a small cardboard box containing a tasty and easily accessible treat. Allow the dog to sniff the toy or box.
3. Place the treat containing object on the ground approximately 5 feet from the dog.
4. Go back to the dog and say 'Find it!'
5. When the dog gets to the object, praise and allow the dog to eat the treat.
6. Repeat 5 times, gradually moving the object further from the dog, always keeping it within the dog's sight.
7. On the sixth time, do NOT put a treat in the object. Tell the dog to 'find it' and when the dog arrives at the object, praise and give a treat from your hand.
8. Repeat 4 times.
 - a. If the dog's motivation decreases once a treat is no longer present, place a treat in the object 50% of the time.
9. End the session.
10. Repeat items #1-9 for the second session
11. In the third session, repeat items 1-9, but start hiding the toy, in a fairly easy to find location.
12. In the fourth and subsequent sessions, the toy should never have a treat in it. The reward will always come from you.
13. During this and subsequent sessions, (ideally) there should be a small partition or barrier between you and the dog so that the dog is blocked from seeing where you hide it, and must use its sense of smell to find the toy.

14. As the dog gets better and better at the game, hide the toy in more difficult to find locations and play the game in different locations (ie, a larger room, a play yard, etc)

Game #2: Scent Identification

Goal: to teach the dog to identify which item contains the special scent (vanilla, peppermint, etc).

1. Get vanilla, peppermint or lavender scents from your local health food store, preferably not in an alcohol base.
2. Take two objects of the same type that you used to teach the find it task. Rub the scent on one of them
3. Put the two objects three feet from each other.
4. Tell the dog to find it. If the dog approaches or sniffs the scented object, praise and give a treat.
5. Repeat 10 times.
6. Now reverse the positions of the objects and repeat.
7. Praise and treat the dog for choosing the scented object.
8. You've just taught the dog to use their sense of smell to find objects!
What fun!
9. Next, try different odors to find out which works the best.