

## Training Your Dog Should Be Fun for Both of You

**Games are a fun way to challenge your dog to learn new tricks.**

*Liz Palika*

When your dog responds to the ball, lay it on the floor next to the bowl and ask your dog, "Where's the ball?" Praise and reward if she gets the ball.

Now set something else out with the bowl and ball. Again ask, "Where's the ball?" When the dog brings it back, praise and reward her. When your dog does that well, place one of her other toys there and send the dog for the ball. If she goes for the other toy, take it away with no comment, and send the dog after the ball again. This is a critical step in the learning process, and you may need to repeat it several times. If your dog continues to go to her other toy, take it away and practice again with the original items. After a few successes, stop the training and let your dog relax. Later try again with the original items, and when your dog does it right, place her toy there again.

When your dog will pick up her ball from among several items, including other toys, start hiding the ball. Make it simple to start, maybe partially hidden under a magazine. As your dog's skill improves, start making the game more challenging. Hide the ball behind a chair or in another room, again only partially hidden.

Later, when your dog has mastered the search, have someone else hide the ball so she can't follow your scent trail to it.

When your dog succeeds, use the same process to teach her the names of other items. The next three items will be easier to teach. Your dog needs to understand the concept you are trying to teach: Different items have different names. Once she understands that each has a different sound or name, she will learn much faster.

Keep training sessions short and upbeat. With some dogs, three minutes may be too much. Other dogs may be able to concentrate for six or seven minutes. You need to know your dog and always stop before she loses interest.

Also, always stop with a success. If your dog is having trouble, have her do a trick you know she can do, then praise her lavishly before you stop the training session.