

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

Posted: Sun Jan 30 00:00:00 PST 2000

Training your dog tends to take a serious tone; after all, much of it involves teaching your dog her place in the family and self-control. Your dog needs to learn that she's not allowed to jump on the sofa and that she has to keep her nose out of the kitchen trashcan. That can be serious stuff.

However, training also can be fun. Games and tricks can challenge your skills and your dog's ability to learn. Once you have taught your dog, you can show off her tricks and amuse your friends and family. I use trick training with my therapy dogs. A silly trick can help the person we're visiting laugh.

The name game is one of my favorites and a great way to make your dog think. Don't doubt for a minute that your dog can learn the names of many different items and people. This is a rewarding game for your dog and can come in handy around the house. Tell your dog to find your keys or your shoes. Send your dog after the remote control or to find your husband, wife or child.

I have taught my dogs to identify and find many different items. If my husband calls to me from a different room and asks for something, I can hand it to my dog Dax and tell her, "Go find Paul!" It saves me from interrupting what I'm doing and gives Dax a job. She always gets praised for doing it and loves being useful.

I have also taught my dog Ursa to find turtles. I rescue turtles and tortoises and rehabilitate abandoned, injured or ill ones. Occasionally when I go to feed and care for the turtles, one is missing, so I tell Ursa to find it and she does. A couple of times she has even found buried turtle eggs when I didn't know any had been laid.

Start teaching your dog the name game by selecting two very different items, perhaps a tennis ball and a bowl. Sit on the floor with your dog and the items and have some treats it likes. Ask, "Where's the ball?" and bounce the ball so your dog pays attention to it or perhaps tries to grab it. When your dog touches it, say, "Good boy to find the ball!" and give her a treat.