

Trick Training for Active Dogs

Two fun tricks that use your busy dog's intelligence and athleticism.

By Liz Palika

Archer is a "busy" dog. The 15-month-old Australian Shepherd is active, intelligent and extremely curious. To keep him out of trouble, I obedience train Archer every day and take him for a run alongside my bicycle. In addition, Archer and I do trick training. Here are a few tricks you can teach your busy dog to keep his mind occupied.

Figure-eight weave

One of our favorite tricks is when Archer weaves through my legs. I stand with my legs shoulder-width apart as my dog sits by my left side. With a treat in each hand, I show him the one in my right hand, holding the treat in front of his nose. Then I use the treat as a lure and lead him to the front of me, then back between my legs as I say, "Weave." Using each hand as needed, I create a figure-eight pattern, having him walk around one leg, then between my legs, then around the other leg. Archer gets the treat when he finishes the figure-eight weave and returns to his starting position.

Once my dog was able to weave through my legs easily without the hand lure, I started walking slowly, asking him to weave as each leg stepped forward. It's great fun and looks amazing.

Jump!

Another trick we both enjoy is when Archer jumps over my outstretched leg or through my arms. To begin, I sit on a low stool and stretch a leg out in front of me, with my heel resting on the floor. Using a treat as a lure, I ask my dog to step or hop over my leg as I say, "Jump!" Once he jumps over my leg, I give him the treat.

Once my dog learned to jump over my leg and understood the command, I stretched out one arm and asked him to do the same thing. Once he mastered that step, I began using both arms to make a hoop, and asked him to jump through my circled arms.

Trick training is great fun and keeps an active dog's mind challenged while using up some of that abundant energy.

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