

My Favorite Play List

Activities to keep your dog busy

Laura Tyler

Winter is beginning in our valley. It's one of the four most beautiful seasons here in Northwest Colorado. For some us who aren't conditioned for winter sports, it leaves us wishing for more activities to fill our time and keep from experiencing the winter doldrums'. After a life enriched with outside activities and basking in the sun all summer long, our dogs can start feeling all pent up and bored too.

I've decided to compile part of my favorite play list to offer suggestions for enrichment activities we can share with our canine buddies over the long winter months. To me any type of training is a game. The positive communication and relationship building techniques that I use keep us both happy to spend time together. Trick training is rewarding and fun. And you can begin teaching tricks by using some basic cues. (In a past life these were called "commands")

Let's start with sit. Tricks that start by requiring your dog to sit first might include; shake or high five, wave bye bye or sit pretty.

Tricks started from the down position offer fun things like teaching your dog to crawl or sneak, roll over or play possum.

Tricks while standing might include take a bow, back up, spin right, spin left or play peek-a-boo from behind a chair.

One of my favorites is teaching a round robin recall involving the whole family. Each person gets a chance to call the dog and then reward her with a yummy treats. Once your dog is really responding to each person in the family then you can all start to back up and give her more room to run. It will help your dog to learn that coming to each person in your family is very rewarding. This game can eventually turn into hide and seek! Or go fetch Daddy!

A great indoor game is to teach your dog to heel off leash. Once you have the basics your dog can walk nicely by your side from room to room inside your house. Did you know that this can actually really help leash walking? Most dog walkers use the leash like a steering wheel. We are constantly maneuvering our dogs this way and that way. By teaching off leash heel work, you actually communicate more with your voice and body language, thus giving your dog the opportunity to "read" you and move with you. Once you and your dog are moving well together, try putting some music on and move with your dog to the rhythm of the music. Add a spin here and there or a play bow and you have the makings of dancing with your dog. Now how cool is that?

So start by making up your own play list and have some great enriching inside fun with your canine buddy this winter! This kind of activity will keep you both smiling!

Laura Tyler is a certified professional dog trainer with 25+ years of experience and has earned associate certification through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. She owns Total Teamwork Training LLC here in Northwest Colorado.

www.totalteamworktraining.com