

Games to Play with Your Pup: Find It

This game ties directly with your dog's "natural wiring." Your dog's hard-wired behaviors are predatory and to forage for fun and food. "Find it" games tune into your dog's instinct to find prey or food, mainly using their nose. Some dogs prefer to use their eyes, such as sight hounds, and others are more alert to things that they can hear, such as dogs with erect ears like German Shepherds. Your dog has a natural desire to tear things apart to either get to food or to consume food.

Find It

This game will allow your dog to use many of his senses to find a food or toy item but will also serve to encourage your dog to pay more attention to your cues both visual and verbal. Not only is this a fun game to play with your dog at home but you can also play this game when you are out in public or even at a veterinarians office while you wait to be seen so as to ease your dog's tension or keep him busy so that he doesn't get into mischief.

1. Get your dog to look at you by calling them near you or making kissy noises to get their attention.
2. Say "Find It"
3. Toss food onto the ground near your dog. Be sure that your dog can see that you have tossed food. Do not toss food near your dog unless your dog is paying attention to you.
4. Repeat.

After several of these easy repetitions you can begin tossing the food out in front of your dog after you say "Find It" so that your dog has to take a few steps to get to the food. Keep practicing in new places and with different types of food and objects. Play with toys in the same way, say "find it" and then toss your dog's toy.

After your dog gets used to playing this Find It game you will see that your dog will immediately put his nose to the ground when you say "Find It" in anticipation that there will be something awesome hitting the ground pretty soon. When your dog is ready to step up to the next level you can say "Find it" and then toss the food into a hidden area such as tall grass or under a table so that your dog has to put more effort into finding the treat.

Seek and Find

When your dog has learned the cue "find it" means to go search for food, you can begin stashing bits of food/treats in and around objects such as boxes, bags, cans, on shelves, under furniture, etc. The places you can put stashes of food/treats is only as limited as your imagination. After your dog gets good at finding things inside the house you can practice outside the house where your options of hiding things become even more varied. You can stash things in tall grass, behind bushes, inside of bushes, on top of car tires, etc.

To take a step even further, enroll your dog in a Nose Work class at a dog training center. Nose Work classes usually do not require that your dog has any obedience skills but may require that your dog is comfortable being left in a kennel. For more information about Nose Work visit <https://nacswnet/>.