

Winter Games

Keeping the BT Mind and Body Exercised During the [Northern] Winter Months

From Mel in New Brunswick, Canada (BT –Molly, Whippet – Winnie, Dalmation – Saro)

One of the games I play with my 3 rascals is sort of like the "Mother, may I?" game that human children play. For this game, I have the 3 of them in a line, with me standing several feet (a couple of metres) in front of them. I ask the group, or individuals, to do certain things: sit, down, wait, catch, look cute, leave it (that's about it for Winnie ;o), back up, shake a paw, high five, etc. If they do the behavior correctly, they get a reward (randomly treat, pat, or Praise); if they goof, no reward.

Example:

I say: Girls, sit.
All three do, all 3 get rewards.

I say: Winnie, sit.
Winnie & Molly sit.
So, Winnie and Saro get rewards; Molly gets a questioning look and/or shoulder shrug from me.

I say: Molly, sit.
Molly sits, Winnie stands there looking pretty, Saro goes through her entire repertoire of tricks at warp speed in hopes of getting a morsel of food....

You get the picture :O) It's amusing.

Some more game ideas are here:

http://users.tkk.fi/~mtt/belg_tricks.html

It has:

1. Useful Tricks,
2. Silly Pet Tricks or Tricks Just for Fun,
3. Problem Solving,
4. Nose Work,
5. Balance Work

From Jacqueline in Essex, England (BTs - Tristan, Iseabail and Geordie)

I play "hide and go seek" I use this to practice stays and then when I shout "come find me" I can hear the 3 of them charging around.

Because of the game I can actually leave them in stays longer than they tolerate when I'm in front of them. My guys love this game and I've become very creative about hiding. I now play it in the dark so not only do they have to stay in the dark they actually have to "seek" me rather than just run around and "come across" me.

The great thing I find about this game is I don't have to play it for very long and they don't realize they're practicing obedience with no treats!!

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From Donna S. in Maryland, USA (BTs - Gally, Harry, Free and Colin)

1) Stays. I haven't done this since getting Colin, but I used to regularly put all of my dogs on stays when I did something like brush my teeth before bed. I would line them up on the edge of the bed and tell them to stay. Then, at first, I'd rush into the bathroom and get my brush, wet it, get the toothpaste and then rush back. Then watch them as I brushed. Then rush back, rinse and spit, and rush back to release them and give them their bedtime biscuits. Pretty soon I could just leave them there while I did the whole tooth brushing.

I'd occasionally do stays other time for fun, but most of the time it was just a bedtime ritual. Not surprisingly they all have better, longer, and surer stays when left as a group than any of them has alone, but it also did help their obedience stays.

2) I regularly play fetch with my dogs down my hall. I do it with one at a time, or Colin and Free together, or Gally and Harry together. Only, if I have a very large area (much larger than my house or yard) do I play fetch with all four, but they enjoy that too.

3) Always fun to teach them tricks.

3a) Get a trick book and try to teach each of them the same trick one at a time, letting the others watch through the baby gate.

3b) Get out a clicker and with just one dog in a non-distracting environment shape a trick using only the clicker. Both the dogs (other than Gally) and I find this the most fun, but it can be mentally exhausting for the dog and for me too sometimes.

4) Something I'd like to teach my dogs but haven't done yet is to circle an object and then return to me. I think that it would be useful for agility, but haven't had time to get to it.

5) One thing I tried to teach my dogs, but only Free learned, is a game where the dog farthest from me gets a treat thrown to him/her. Free picked it up fast and whenever Gally or Harry would get a glimmer and start to move back, she'd quickly back up so that she remained the farthest from me.

6) Not really a game, but I do like to hide tiny bits of food in the dog room before I leave for the day. I also do things (only with Harry and Free) like put a biscuit on top of their crate that with work can be pushed so that it falls inside. I did build some mazes for Harry back when he was young that required him to go up and over, squeeze under, and even go back and around things to get to a dog biscuit. It was a lot easier when there was fewer dogs around. :)

From Ken in Ontario, Canada (BT - Maxx)

We have found 2 activities that Maxx likes indoors. The first is relatively simple in that he likes knocking a regular ballon back and forth to us by jumping up and butting it to us using his nose.

The second is a situation where we get him to find objects that we hide around the house by using his nose. This can be almost anything although I have tended to use a standard canvass dummy that I have put a small amount of grouse scent on. I do this because I would like to use him in the field to find birds. No matter what we use he gets really excited when he realizes that he is supposed to be finding an item and runs all around the house until he finds it. When he brings it back he gets lots of praise and sometimes a treat.

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From Lisa in Maine, USA (BT - Higgs)

Something we used to try with Higgs that we have been working on again is teaching him names of toys: kong, ball, etc. and retrieving them by name. We also thought it would be neat to teach him the names of different rooms in the house but we haven't tried that yet.

I don't know how well dogs know names of other dogs, but it would be fun if you could set up a couple of dogs in different rooms and then tell the third one to find one of them.

Higgs is pretty good with "find David" or "find Lisa". Wonder if it would translate at all to other dogs.

From Sarah in Ontario, Canada (BT - Henry)

As you may know, Henry is an only dog and sometimes the "bored now" comes at most inopportune moments. I find it great fun (and I get a couple of minutes to finish something) to either send her to "kitchen" or "downstairs" and if I'm really able to concentrate on her as opposed to trying to finish a thought to a client, then I send her to find one of her many (and I do mean many) toys, all of which she knows by name. Of course, in the warmer months, it's an easy matter to open the door to the backyard and say "squirrel" ...

We also have a tiled hallway between the kitchen and my office which we use as a hockey rink/soccer pitch in the winter. She is goalie and I am trying to score. Much fun and amusement for her, and watching her "skate" backwards trying to control the puck (aka the tennis ball) is highly entertaining for us both. I too would like to know about indoor earthdog games.