

On your marks, get set, let's go – your first games & your first successes

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Games for beginners

The washing thief

Level of difficulty: ♥ to ♥♥♥

You will need: socks, clothes pegs, treats, washing line, 1 dog, 2 people

How to do it

From now on, don't throw away old socks; keep them for this game!

Hang three or four clean socks on a washing line with pegs, as shown in the pictures (height is obviously dependent on the size of your dog). Hide a treat in each sock as an incentive for your dog to firstly sniff at it and then tug hard enough to pull it off the line. Really cheer him on whilst he's doing this to boost his confidence. If your dog is frightened or alarmed by the clothes peg falling or ping-pong off, simply hang the socks over the washing line without pegs. In order to make the game a little more interesting, you can hold the line at an angle so that some of the socks are more difficult to reach.

Variations on this theme

A really easy version of this is to just attach treats – chewy strips, say – to the



Washing thief

1 Katy and Nick hold the washing line just high enough so that their chirpy Parson Russell Buddy can reach the socks ...

2 ... but has to exert himself to do so. A game for dogs of any age; children also enjoy participating and holding the washing line.

2



line, which will introduce your dog to the game in a very tasty way. The degree of difficulty can be increased by not allowing your dog to just drop the sock after he has pulled it off the line, but ask that he bring it to you or place it in a basket.

Jolly broolly

Level of difficulty: ♥ to ♥♥

You will need: 1 umbrella, 1 dog, 1 person

How to do it

Cue your dog to sit, then, at a distance of approximately twice your dog's body length away from him, hold out the furred umbrella horizontally. With your other hand, throw a ball (or treats) over the umbrella, at the same time giving your dog the cue for 'go!' or 'fetch the ball!' If your dog takes the direct route over the

umbrella-jump, give him lots of praise. He may not get the idea straight away, though, so here are a couple of tips:

- 1 At first, simply place the umbrella on the ground and allow your dog to walk or run over it, so that he understands the principle.
- 2 Limit his opportunities for avoidance by holding the umbrella against a fence or wall on one side.

Jolly broolly

1 Buddy joyously jumps over the umbrella. This is a game he knows and loves. If your dog still needs guidance for this jump into playtime happiness, take an umbrella with you on walks, even on sunny days, and practice when you are out and about. It will make a nice change of pace for your dog!

1



Human obstacle course

Level of difficulty: ♥♥to ♥♥♥

You will need: 1 dog, 3 people

How to do it

People today really put themselves out for their dogs! This game is ideal for nice warm days in the garden, the park, or on the beach. When it's really hot, always ensure you play in shady areas, and have plenty of water available for both people and animals.

Ask your dog to sit; he must wait until a human has positioned himself on all fours as a jump. If a higher jump is needed, hunch your back to make yourself higher. The second person also gets down on all fours but, in this instance, the dog has to run underneath. The third person accompanies the dog through the obstacle course to ensure that he does as he should. As soon as the dog has jumped over the first person and is running towards the second, the first person gets up and runs in front, positioning himself on all fours again, ready for the dog to jump over. This process can be repeated for as long as everyone's energy holds out!

Variations on this theme

The more people you have, the more things you can do. For example, you can have your dog run through your straddled legs, or jump over outstretched arms or legs. Perhaps you could also stand on your head and get your dog to jump through your legs. (If you manage to do the latter, please make sure you send me a photo; I'd really like to see that!) Whatever you organise, have fun and get the whole family involved.



Human obstacle course

1&2 An enterprising trio – mother, son and dog – who like trying out new things and demonstrating what they can do. When Katy gives the cue and the incentive, Buddy energetically jumps over Nick's back or runs under his stomach. Well done, guys!

The runway

1-3 The ball sits on the edge of the upturned crate. Jaden has to nudge it so that it starts moving and rolls down the run. Then Jaden is allowed to chase and catch the ball. A really self-rewarding game for your dog!



The runway

Level of difficulty: ♡♡♡to ♡♡♡♡

You will need: 1 ball, a child's slide or a board balanced at an angle on a crate or similar, 1 dog, 1 person

How to do it

The challenge here is for the dog to get his ball to move by himself. Show your dog the ball and reward him when he touches it with his nose and moves it. Position the ball at the top of the board or the slide, but ensure that it won't move by itself. Encourage your dog to nudge the ball with his nose. The steepness of the slide will cause the ball to really gather speed so that your dog has to run after it to retrieve it.

Variations on this theme

You'll know you've really got this game cracked when your dog learns to replace the ball at the top of the slide after having retrieved it! A clicker would be beneficial for training such as this (see the section on clicker training in Chapter 7).

However, your dog may well be clever enough to work out for himself how to replace the ball. If that is the case, praise him, praise him, and then praise him some more!

