Indoor Brain Games for Dogs

A printable checklist of 7 simple thinking games for rainy days and small homes



Walks tire the body, but many dogs also need work for the brain. Short thinking games can leave a dog calmer than an extra lap around the block, and all of these use things you already have at home.

Before you start

1. Keep sessions to 5–10 minutes.
2. Use small, dog-safe treats. Never anything with xylitol, grapes or chocolate.
3. Stop while your dog is still having fun.

THE CHECKLIST

The 7 games

Tick each one once your dog has tried it.

- [ ] 

01 Find it

Hide a treat while your dog watches, say “find it” and let them go.

LEVEL UP ↑ Hide it out of sight, then in another room.

- [ ] 

02 Muffin tin puzzle

Put treats in some cups of a muffin tin and cover every cup with a tennis ball.

LEVEL UP ↑ Fill only one or two cups.

- [ ] 

03 Which hand?

Close a treat in one fist and offer both. Reward a sniff or paw on the right one.

LEVEL UP ↑ Switch hands behind your back.

- [ ] 

04 Hide and seek

Ask your dog to stay (or have someone hold them), hide, and call once.

LEVEL UP ↑ Hide in a different room each round.

- [ ] 

05 Learn toy names

Repeat one toy’s name during play, then ask your dog to bring it from a pile of two toys.

LEVEL UP ↑ Add a third toy.

- [ ] 

06 Slow feeding

Scatter part of a meal in a snuffle mat, a rolled towel or a food puzzle toy instead of a bowl.

- [ ] 

07 The cardboard box

Put a few treats in an empty box with crumpled paper. Always supervise and remove anything your dog starts to swallow.

THIS WEEK

Weekly tracker

Game	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
01 Find it							
02 Muffin tin puzzle							
03 Which hand?							
04 Hide and seek							
05 Learn toy names							
06 Slow feeding							
07 The cardboard box							

Notes — what my dog enjoyed most, what was too easy, what to try next

When games are not enough

Games help bored, energetic dogs. They do not replace professional help for aggression, severe fear or separation anxiety. For those, look for a certified trainer or a veterinary behaviorist.

Want a structured program?

If you would rather follow a step-by-step plan, Brain Training for Dogs is a force-free online course by a CPDT-KA certified trainer, with 21 games across 7 levels and a 60-day refund.

See the course →

Read our full notes on the course

Affiliate disclosure: if you buy through the link above, New Skill Notes may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. We have not used this course; our notes are based on research of the public offer. This checklist is general information, not professional training or veterinary advice.