



FEATURE

## *Keeping Your Dog Busy during Lockdown*



During this time of COVID-19 and working from home, don't forget about your canine friend. Although he may have you all to himself, due to spending more time at home, he will soon get bored if all you are doing is sitting around. Devote some one on one time just for him, so both of you can get some exercise and have some fun in the process. Here are some ideas which you may like to try, if you haven't already done so.

### **Search & Sniff**

Hide treats around your home to set your dog off on a tail wagging adventure. Your dog will put his nose to work to find the hidden treasures. You can determine how easy or difficult you want the game to be, depending on where you decide to hide them. You can also arrange to have treats hidden under certain objects and the fun is finding the object with the treat. You can use old cups, egg cartons, but please not anything breakable.

### **Schedule a puppy play date in the park**

Arrange to meet with a puppy pal in the park and have your dogs meet for a fun play date. You can still do social distancing with the other dog owner and just let your furry friends meet up.

### **Kong Ball**

Kong Balls are great for hiding treats and keeping dogs busy. The toy's opening is small enough to provide dogs with a challenge but also big enough for a treat to fall out before your dog becomes frustrated. There are a number of these available online and some are available in the pet section of your local supermarket or pet store.

### **Tug of War**

All you need for this old school game is some tough rope and/or tug toy and a dog who's ready to play along. This game will depend on how long your arms hold out and also how strong your dog is. Some tug toys are also balls so you can throw them and then play tug of war when he returns it.

### **Interactive Dog Feeder**

Even though your dog may figure it out in a few minutes, interactive dog feeders and puzzles are a great way to keep your canine occupied and are available from pet food stores and online.

### **Hall Ball**

A long straight hallway is ideal for this game. Similar to fetch, take a ball and roll it down a long hallway. Your dog will go racing after it so just ensure there is nothing breakable on a hall table or close to it.



## Teach an old dog some new tricks

On sunny days you're way more likely to visit the park than sitting at home teaching your dog new tricks. However, rainy days are great for catching up on all those things you set aside for another day, in particular practicing tricks your dog knows, and teaching them some new ones too!

## Set up a mini obstacle course in your backyard and practise basic agility

This is not only fun for your dog, but you can make it as easy or as challenging as you want, depending on what you have in your shed or garage at home. This also gets you moving as well and provides challenges and new skills for your dog. It can be as simple as holding up a hula hoop, or setting up a small jump with some boxes and some rope tied at either end. A large empty box can even provide a tunnel to crawl through. Make this as fun as possible and ensure there are treats for encouragement and rewards.

## Dental Chews

Dental chew treats are ideal for keeping dogs busy whilst also cleaning their teeth! Many of these are available at the local supermarket and pet food store.

## Stair Master

Utilise all areas of your home! If you have a staircase, even a small one, you can throw a ball up the stairs for your dog to retrieve and return to you at the bottom of the steps. Catch, toss, and have your dog return the ball several times to ensure a very worn out dog.

## Ball/Frisbee return

There is nothing like tossing a ball or even throwing a frisbee to wear out your dog. High energy dogs, in particular love this and you can do this in your own backyard (if it is big enough) or down at the off-leash dog park. Some dogs never tire of this, no matter how long you keep it up.

## Dancing with your dog

If all else fails, why not simply turn on some music and dance with your dog. It doesn't have to be as professional as those that actually practice Dances with Dogs (the sport), but your dog will enjoy the music and the fun the two of you will have together. Why not even try a few basic moves and see if your dog enjoys it. It may be the beginning of a new dancing partner. Just make sure you have lots of encouraging treats close by.



## Watching TV

Alright... then maybe this one isn't as much for your dog. Irregardless, you can still spend quality time with your dog and keep you and them entertained while catching up on a few shows, particularly if you have chosen to do at least one of the previously listed activities with your dog.

As long as you have a chew toy or toy nearby, your dog is bound to enjoy a little down time next to his best mate.