



## **WELCOME FETCHIN' VOLUNTEERS AND FOSTERS!**

**Fetchin' Retrievers Rescue Waggin' Wednesday Zoom Social**

**Dog Activities and Enrichment –  
Meeting Your Dog's Needs  
With Activity Ideas and Boredom Busters**

# WHAT DO DOGS FIND FULFILLING?

- Our modern dog parent world is constantly aimed at making our dogs happy. New bones, new food, new toys. Can we do more than buy new shiny toys?
- What most dogs actually crave is ENGAGEMENT. Doing something with you and their known friends and family
- Dogs are often guided by their genetic predispositions. Hound dogs like scent tracking, terriers like chasing small prey, retrievers like using their mouths, etc. Utilizing these predispositions in our activities, guiding them and giving them structure, can be a huge factor in giving your dog a happy, fulfilled life
- Most dogs share some commonalities. When looking for “enrichment,” it is both common and recommended to find information on **scent games**. Though a dog’s brain is much smaller than a human’s, their Olfactory Bulb is 40 times larger than a human’s. Studies have hypothesized that a dog’s sense of smell is over 100,000 times better (some studies quote millions) than that of a human. This means that dogs can smell scents that have been diluted one to two parts per **trillion**.

Dogs are also a species that have a Jacobson’s Organ, a structure in the roof of their mouth that processes scents and pheromones on an even deeper level than their fabulous nose. This structure is located in the roof of a dog’s mouth, which is why you may observe them licking things with interesting scents.

Even the most scent neutral dog will react more strongly to scents than the best human. Dogs with good scent capabilities have been used for amazing things, including detecting cancers, food contamination, and even more specialized fields. In archaeology, dogs are beginning to be used to detect human remains buried for hundreds or thousands of years below the ground surface and even in water. Your dog’s nose is just like any other muscle. Tune it up and see where it goes!

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## WE OFTEN GET STUCK IN A RUT WITH OUR DOG ACTIVITIES

While physical activity is essential to our dogs' health, there's more to physical activities we do with dogs (walking, running, biking, hiking) than just the movement.

For one thing, **the novelty wears off quickly if we do the same walk every day.** Walking the same neighborhood every day, staying in the same yard every day. The brain isn't challenged and the body experiences only minor exercise. Nothing new is seen or learned. The scents don't change. Learning doesn't occur and new experiences are not a normal, common occurrence to be experienced with calm self control.

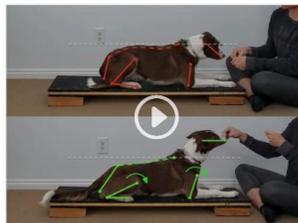
We also end up with dogs who are less eager to end their walks. Once the dogs are home, the humans check out physically and mentally, watching TV or otherwise spending more time not engaging with their dogs.

**The Result:** Dogs may start looking for new entertainment. Pulling toward new things, choosing to ignore owner's cues if they think they're going back to boring activities. They may start to become nervous or suspicious of experiences outside their normal routine.

# FIRST - PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – MOTION IS THE LOTION

- Health is rooted in movement, but we make assumptions about how much space and time we need to practice motion in our everyday life. You can do whole physical exercise programs in your living room with minimal equipment
  - Just like for humans, running and walking are not the only (and should not be the only) activities we do for fitness
- Stretching, massage, and body movement exercises are all great activities for your dog. A dog that is practiced in full body handling is more relaxed to handle it in other contexts, like the vet. Plus, it's a great way to regularly keep an eye out for lumps, bumps, and other issues.
- Pattern games, like the 2 Bowl game, and other movement puzzles can work on strength, flexion, body awareness, and also build confidence in our dogs by incorporating obstacles and challenging terrain.
- Even the most physically challenged dogs utilized physical therapy to target exercises to improve mobility and gain strength
  - Seek out medical expertise – Canine Physical Rehabilitation veterinarians are amazing and I can't recommend them highly enough
  - Recommended online resources
    - The Moving Canine
    - Canine Conditioning Coach

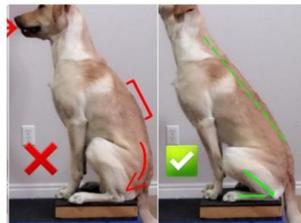
Photo Credit  
Canine  
Conditioning  
Coach



Posture Down: Beginner

Posture & Alignment • Back Muscles • Core Strength

Beginner



Posture Sit: Beginner

Sloppy Sitters • Puppy • Senior • Square Sit

Beginner



Head Nods: Beginner

AROM • Core Stability • Square Stand

Beginner

Photo Credit  
The Moving  
Canine



## BRAIN GAMES – MENTAL ENGAGEMENT IS THE GOAL TO KEEP “IN MIND”

- Most of the options for “enrichment” or “ways to entertain my dog” center around providing the dog outlets from boredom without having to pay attention to them
  - While there are options to keep your dog occupied without supervision, most of those activities will only get you so far
- If you’re constantly supplying entertainment for your dog, they will likely learn to continually look for something to occupy their time. It is important to teach calm and boredom along with appropriate exercise and entertainment
- It is also unrealistic to expect pack animals/social creatures like dogs, especially people-oriented breeds like retrievers, to routinely spend huge portions of their days happily alone or ignored.
- Your physical and time involvement in their fulfillment is going to be required at a basic level.
- **However**, there are a HUGE number of activities your dog can do that are not focused on physical activity.
  - **Food based:** Puzzle feeders, lick mats, snuffle mats, food scatters
  - **Training based:** trick training, husbandry (grooming and care) training, obedience training
  - **Scent (Nosework) based:** find the treat, odor identification games, Find it games
  - **Chase games:** Flirt poles, herding balls, lure coursing
  - **Recommended reading:** <https://www.allpetseducationandtraining.com.au/crate-rest-crazies.html>

# FINDING FULFILLMENT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

- Sniff walks – take walks in nature or on a long line with the dog having the ability to free range explore the environment – often called getting your Pee-mail and Facebark posts
- Play groups – rent a sniffspot, organize a trip to a dog pool, get an Airbnb on a ranch
- People/event watching – lots of dogs love to watch even if they're not part of the action! Especially great for shy or nervous dogs that need exposure without pressure
- Dog sports – there are SO many dog sports that are available to the greenest beginner. Your dog does NOT have to be a purebred or registered with a kennel club to participate in sports.
  - Barn hunt, FastCAT/Dashdogs, Fun Nosework, Canicross, Dock diving, Agility, Flyball, Treibball/Herding balls, Rally obedience, Parkour, Freestyle....
  - Facebook – SoCal Dog Events group