

Upper Valley Dog Behavior Consulting and Training

GAMES DOGS PLAY

Take a look at your dog and consider how domestication has affected his instincts and drives. What was your breed of dog bred to do?

Do you have a hound bred to follow his nose?
Perhaps setting challenges for him to search for food or objects using his sense of smell would be appropriately engaging.

Do you have a terrier bred to hunt underground animals?
A digging pit containing buried squeaky toys to unearth and attack may enhance the terrier's life and at the same time satisfy his need to dig.

Do you have a working breed dog?



Examine the tendencies your dog displays.

You can tailor your choices to fit your dog's needs by watching what he is already doing and finding appropriate outlets for his behavior.

Hide-and-seek can be a fun game for both you and your dog. Hiding toys or treats around the house or yard would be an excellent way to address the instinct to search and scavenge for food. Not only will this satisfy some of your dog's drives, but it is a great way to strengthen your stay and recall commands.

Carmen D Noradunghian - 802.683.8827

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Frisbee and fetch are fun games that help fulfill a dog's urge to chase and catch.



This instinct is usually very strong and finding appropriate channels for it can help prevent problems. If you have a dog with a high prey drive, you can even use the opportunity to chase as a reward. If your dog goes wild when he sees a squirrel, ask for a behavior such as down stay. Release him and let him chase that squirrel up the tree. This is an excellent way to help your dog learn to control his impulses and look to you when he wishes to access his environment rather than just going straight for whatever he wants to investigate or chase.

Tug-of-war is usually a doggy favorite, and played with rules, can be a fun game for both of you and can help burn some of that predatory energy.

Kong toys are probably the most popular. They can be stuffed with dog treats, carrots, sweet potatoes, etc. "cemented" into the Kong using peanut butter or cream cheese. Your dog will really have to work to get all of the goodies out.

He may toss the Kong around, roll it or shake it in order to dislodge those last remnants. Freezing the Kong makes the challenge even greater and can also be wonderfully soothing to the gums of a teething puppy.

Toys hung from trees by a rope make great targets for jumping and tugging.

The more we observe our dogs and give them opportunities to naturally express themselves, the more we can learn about them. Be aware of your dog's body language and learn to observe patterns in it. Watch the way your dog plays and the objects and games he chooses. You will have a wonderful tool for enriching both your dog's life and yours. **Have lots of fun!**

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