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## Hot Topic

### 9 ways to keep your dog entertained in the winter months

Wednesday, February 9th, 2011



Written by: [Guest Blogger](#)

by: [D. Sakurai, Certified Dog Trainer \(CPDT-KA\)](#)

Now that we are in the throes of Winter, you may find that you are holed up in your house with your pet because of inclement weather. Your dog may not be able to take his/her daily walks and, whenever you look up, you find a pair of big, sad eyes staring at you expectantly, anticipating every move that you make.

Fear not, being indoors just changes the activities that your pet can engage in. Rainy days are when I break out some of my favorite interactive dog toys and play some indoor games that reinforce my dog's training. Here are some examples:

**1. Training** – why not use that time in the house to reinforce some of your dog's training? Put together a series of behaviors for your dog to perform and reward your dog for the last behavior in the chain. Go to your spot, lie down and stay is an example of a training combination. You can make up

your own combination and change it up. Or you can teach your dog a brand new trick. [YouTube](#) and other websites have great “how to” videos to teach your dog to do simple tricks. Short, fun training sessions engage your dog mentally.

**2. Hide and Seek** – playing hide and seek games where your dog has to find you in different parts of the house is a great way to reinforce your dog’s recall (coming to you). This game can be played by more than one person as well.

### **Toys Dogs Can Play With By Themselves**

Some toys can be used when the dog is left alone or for times when you need to keep your dog occupied (*e.g.* when you have guests over, you are busy at the computer, when you are having a meal). These toys must be fairly indestructible and have no small parts. Most people have Kong toys handy, but there are many others you can order online or obtain from most pet stores. Below are a few of the many toys that are available on the market. For a more detailed review of more interactive dog toys, [follow this link](#).

**3. Kongs** are great toys that can be stuffed with your dog’s kibble, treats, and other foods. Your dog will spend a lot of time trying to get the contents out of the Kong. Think of it like a doggie pacifier. For heavy chewers the Extreme Kong (black version) would be a better choice. The Kong website has instructions on how to use it with recipes and I also posted a blog about the many uses of Kongs which you can read about [here](#).

One of my favorite ways to use a Kong is to hide one or more Kongs around the house (I like to use places other than the kitchen or dining room) and ask your dog to find it. My dogs have been taught that the word “find it” means go hunt for an object. An empty Kong makes a great fetch toy as well.

**4. Tug a Jug** -- This toy, made by Premier Pet Products, requires the dog to manipulate the jug and rope to try to get the treats out. If you use smaller treats, it is easier for the dog to get the treats. If the rope is destroyed, you can place balls in the jug for continued play. The other nice thing about this toy is that the jug is see-through so the dogs can see the treats inside. This toy has a high difficulty rating in my book so it may be too difficult for inexperienced dogs like puppies. Premier products can be found in most pet stores and online.

Here is a video of my two year old Akita, Kiku, who takes a patient and systematic approach to problem solving:



**5. Twist ‘N Treat** – this toy is also made by Premier. The Twist ‘NTreat is probably better for smaller dogs and/or less powerful chewers. This toy has the advantage of being adjustable depending on the size treat you are using so I find it easier for most dogs.

**6. Buster Cube** -- The Buster Cube has been on the market a long time. This was one of the original toys I used with my 10 year old Shiba Inu when she was a puppy. The Buster Cube dispenses dry treats randomly when the dog moves the toy around. You can also adjust the level of difficulty depending on the skills of your dog.

**7. Kibble Nibble**: This is another Premier toy similar to the Buster Cube. The object of the game is to roll the ball around to make the kibble come out. The ball is see-through so the dog can see how much kibble is left. It takes some experimentation to determine what size kibble/treat works best so that it is not too easy or too hard.

Here is video of my Shiba Inu, Mitsu, playing with the ball. She is almost 11 years old now and she is going after the ball with gusto. This video is not sped up, this old gal is actually this frenetic. She ended up playing with this ball for about 15 minutes, did a couple of shiba yells at the ball, got a drink of water and came back for another 10 minutes before I took it away from her. During the video you can see a treat flying out of the ball:



### **Toys and Games Requiring Owner's Participation**

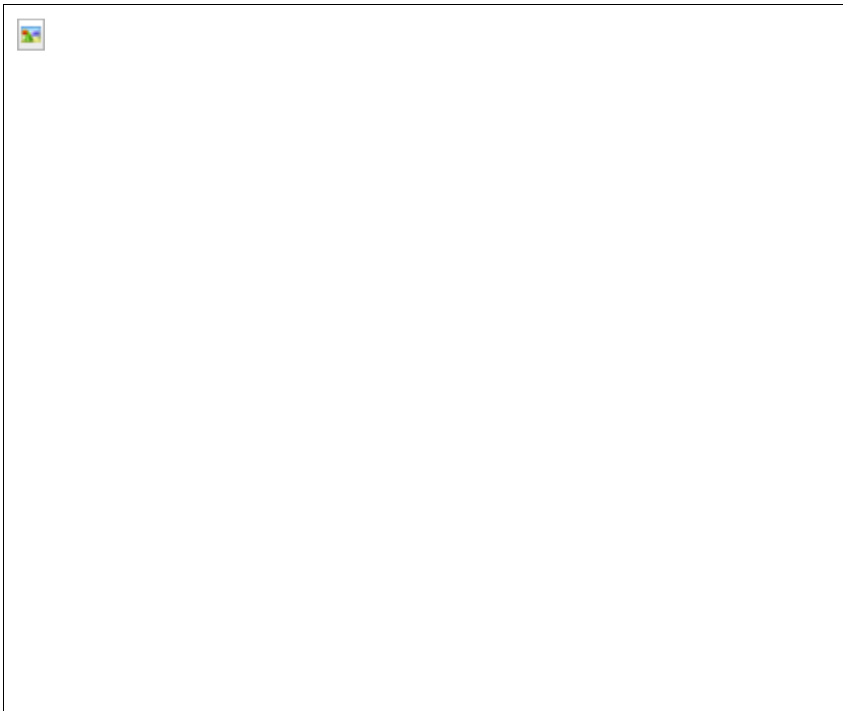
This category of toys involve the participation and supervision of the owner. Examples of traditional toys requiring owner participation are balls, fetch toys, tug of war toys and Frisbees. All of these activities are fun games for your dog as well. There are also toys that involve problem solving skills. [Nina Ottoson](#) has created a whole line of toys which help hone your dog's problem-solving skills and at the same time help develop the bond with your dog. These toys require human supervision and they must not be left alone with your dog.

**8. The Dog Brick** -- this toy requires the dog to remove the bricks and slide the covers to get to the treats. The link provided contains an instructional video on how to use this toy. Below is a video I made showing how my dog solved the brick.

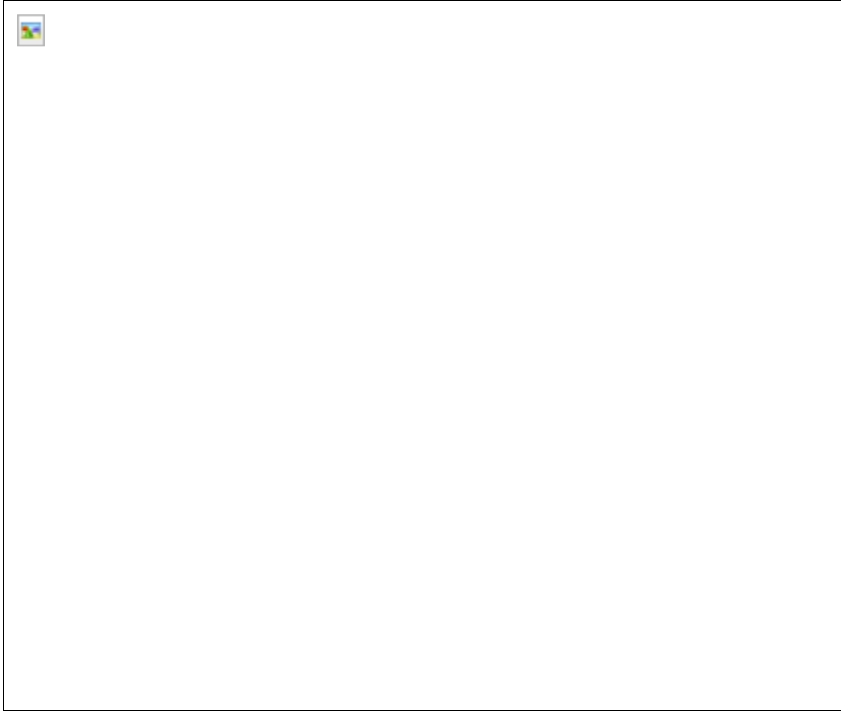


[9. Dog Tornado:](#) This toy has a higher difficulty rating than the Dog Brick and it is definitely more challenging. What is fun about this toy is that you can potentially put your dog's entire meal (especially for small dogs) in the Tornado thereby slowing down their eating and preventing gulping their food. Again, these toys require your supervision because there are small parts.

Here is a video of my female Akita, who is a little more sophisticated at solving puzzles, using the Tornado at a more advanced setting to make it more difficult to have access to the treats:



And some of these toys are not limited to use for dogs. Even cats can get in on the fun. Here is my cat using the Dog Tornado as a way to keep her occupied and to prevent her from gulping down food too fast.



So, if you are creative, there are many fun ways to engage your dogs and prevent “cabin fever.”

Learn more about the author and her pawsitive methods:



D. Sakurai

Certified Dog Trainer (CPDT-KA)

Pawsitive Feedback Training

<http://www.pawsitivefeedback.com/>

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This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 9th, 2011 at 2:19 pm and is filed under [Hot Topic](#). You can leave a response by [clicking here](#).

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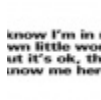
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[1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

[4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17

18 19 20 21 22 23 24

25 26 27 28 29 30

[« Mar](#)

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- [April 2011](#)
- [March 2011](#)
- [February 2011](#)
- [January 2011](#)
- [December 2010](#)
- [November 2010](#)
- [October 2010](#)
- [September 2010](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [July 2010](#)
- [June 2010](#)
- [May 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [March 2010](#)

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