



Rainy Day Activities for Kids and Dogs

"It's raining, it's pouring, everything is boring!"

Rainy days with stir-crazy kids and dogs can try your sanity. When your kids wail that there's nothing fun to do, have them try some of these simple games with the family dog.

Hansel & Gretel Trails. This is a really basic activity, but kids love it! Give your children a small bowl of treats and tell them to create a trail for the dog to follow. Keep the dog near you while the kids put a treat every 2 to 4 feet. When they have laid out the entire path, have them come back and tell the dog to sit before releasing the dog to follow the trail. They'll follow along behind the dog cheering for each successful find.

Commando Crawl (for mid-sized dogs). Have the kids lay a trail of treats running under your coffee table from one end to the other. Teach the dog to belly-crawl across the floor to get the treats.

Dog Bowling. Arrange empty plastic 2-liter bottles in a bowling triangle in the hallway and have the kids take turns calling the dog for a treat. Whoever gets the dog to topple the most pins as he races down the hall wins.

Tiny Teeter-Totter. Lay a piece of plywood on the floor. Have the kids give the dog treats for stepping on the board. Once the dog is not at all concerned about walking on the board, lay the board across a broom to make a 2" high teeter-totter. Keep rewarding the dog for walking over the board. Remind the kids to keep their fingers away from the board while the dog is on it!

Rainy Day Come. Give each child a small cup of dog treats. Tell one child to go "hide" in the kitchen. At first the child won't really hide, she'll just stand in the center of the kitchen and call the dog. While dog is trotting toward the kitchen, send another child to the dining room.

After the first child has had the dog sit to get a treat, the child in the dining room can call the dog . . . and while the dog is coming to the second child, the first child will head to the living room. When it's her turn to call again, she'll call and the dog will head for the kitchen only to find that she's not there! While the dog looks for the first child, the second chooses a new spot.

As your dog gets better at this game, the kids can make it more challenging by standing behind doors or sitting in unusual places. The game is over when the kids are out of treats; then everyone can head to the kitchen for a cookie break.

Remember to use lots of treats to make these games as much fun for the dog as for the kids. The idea is to offer the children simple training opportunities in fun, easy-to-implement ways.

Don't allow anyone to push or pull the dog to get him to do something. If the dog seems confused or resistant, look for ways to make the challenges easier. Watch for any signs of frustration—on either the kids' or dog's part—and step in right away to help.

Soon your kids will be hoping it rains more often.