



Puzzle Games

Puzzle games for dogs can be a great way to engage their brains, prevent boredom, and provide mental stimulation.

Tips for Success:

- **Start Simple:** Begin with easier puzzles and increase the difficulty as your dog gets the hang of it.
- **Supervision:** Always supervise your dog with new puzzles, especially if there are small parts they could swallow.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your dog with praise or extra treats when they solve the puzzle to encourage engagement.

Nina Ottosson has wonderful puzzle games to try out. Explore her website! Many dogs will start with Level 1 and Level 2 games; many working breeds like border collies and german shepherds get bored with these quickly and can start begin with a higher level. You might experiment with some DIY puzzles to see what level your dog is at and what it enjoys before purchasing something. Below are a few easy and fun ideas you can make at home.

1. Muffin Tin Puzzle

- **What you need:** A muffin tin, tennis balls (or any other ball that fits), and dog treats.
- **How to make it:**
 - Place a few treats in some of the muffin tin cups.
 - Cover each cup with a tennis ball.
 - Let your dog figure out how to move the tennis balls to get to the treats!
- **Difficulty:** You can start with just one or two cups and gradually increase the challenge by adding more balls or treats.

2. Towel Roll-up Puzzle

- **What you need:** A towel and some treats or kibble.
- **How to make it:**
 - Lay the towel flat and scatter some treats across it.
 - Roll the towel up with the treats hidden inside.
 - Let your dog unroll the towel and find the treats!
- **Difficulty:** Adjust by how tightly you roll the towel or how many treats you hide.

3. Plastic Bottle Puzzle

- **What you need:** A plastic bottle (with the label removed) and dog treats.
- **How to make it:**
 - Place some treats inside the bottle.
 - You can make a few small holes in the bottle for the treats to fall out when your dog rolls or shakes the bottle.
 - Let your dog figure out how to get the treats out.
- **Difficulty:** Start with a few treats that are easy to get out and increase the challenge by making smaller holes or using more treats.

4. Cardboard Box Fun

- **What you need:** A cardboard box, crumpled newspaper or tissue paper, and treats.
- **How to make it:**
 - Put some treats at the bottom of the box.
 - Crumple up some paper and fill the box with it.
 - Let your dog dig through the paper to find the treats.
- **Difficulty:** You can make it easier by leaving fewer crumpled papers or harder by adding more paper to hide the treats.

5. Cup and Treat Shuffle

- **What you need:** Three plastic cups and dog treats.
- **How to make it:**
 - Place a treat under one of the cups.
 - Shuffle the cups around and then let your dog try to figure out which one the treat is under.
- **Difficulty:** You can start slow to give your dog a chance to find the treat and then increase the speed or number of cups as they get better at it.

6. Tennis Ball Treat Puzzle

- **What you need:** A tennis ball and a knife or scissors.
- **How to make it:**
 - Cut a small slit in a tennis ball.
 - Place a few treats inside the ball.
 - Close it back up and let your dog figure out how to open the ball to get the treats.
- **Difficulty:** Adjust the size of the slit based on how easy or hard you want the puzzle to be.

7. Puzzle Feeder

- **What you need:** A plastic container with a lid, or a puzzle feeder toy (you can make one from a box or a plastic container).
- **How to make it:**
 - Place treats or food inside the container and secure the lid or cap.
 - Let your dog figure out how to open it or move it around to release the food.
- **Difficulty:** Choose a container that requires a bit more work to open for extra challenge.

8. The Sock Puzzle

- **What you need:** A sock and a treat.
- **How to make it:**
 - Place a treat inside a sock and tie a knot at the top.
 - Let your dog figure out how to untie or rip open the sock to get the treat.
- **Difficulty:** You can make the knot tighter or use a thicker sock to increase difficulty.