



# 6 Games To Master Impulse Control and Emotional Regulation





## The Clock Game

With your dog cued to 'Sit & Wait', take step back and then at least one step to the left (or right). Imagine you are moving in a circle around a clock face. If your dog begins to move with you, reset and start again.

Increase the steps slowly so that eventually you can walk 360 degrees around your dog (like the hands of a clock) with them remaining calm and in place.

## Leave It

With a treat in both of your hands, stand in front of your dog and put both hands behind your back. Bring one hand out to the side of your dog's head. They will naturally sniff and perhaps paw at your hand but keep it closed until the moment they look away from your hand and immediately say 'Good' and give them the treat in YOUR OTHER hand. This is important as we are teaching them that if they leave one thing, they get something else.

Repeat several times and then begin to add the cue 'Leave It' when you hold out your hand but say this only once each time. As they get better, you can switch to holding the treat in an open hand (closing it if they try to take it) or placing it on the floor for them to leave. To increase the difficulty even further you can add movement by dropping a treat or a toy and cueing your dog to Leave It.



## Space Invader Game

This can help with dogs that jump up or struggle with impulse control.

While they are in a sit, hold a treat or toy above their head and very slowly begin to bring it down towards them. If they try to jump to take it, move the treat back up and start again.

The aim is that you can slowly bring it down towards them while they remain calmly sitting. If they do, mark with a Good and let them take the treat or toy as their reward.

## Door Dashing

Cue your dog to Sit and Wait at a closed internal door. Then say Wait and use a clear hand signal (hand held up to your dog). If they don't move simply say 'Yes' and reward with a treat.

Increase the difficulty by repeating but after saying 'Wait' touch the door handle. Next repeat and slightly open the door.

Switch to the back door and finally the front door or gate. By building up to an open front or back door you are teaching your dog to remain calm and beside you as you open the door to visitors or when you are leaving the home with them.



## Drop

Begin by getting your dog interested in an item such as a toy. When they are holding it, hold out a treat in front of them and repeat the cue 'Drop'. As they drop the toy, reward them with the treat. This works on the trade principle.

You can change this slightly by varying the item you exchange e.g. could be a 2nd toy.

## Chin Rest

This is useful for dogs who may return to you when you call them to put their lead back on, but then jump away at the last minute. It is also very useful for cooperative care procedures, such as giving ear drops.

Hold a treat on the palm of your other hand while you are close to them. Slowly draw the treat back towards your wrist. As they move their nose towards the treat, reward with a treat while they are resting their chin on your hand.

Repeat this a few times building up the duration of the chin rest by delaying the reward. Occasionally hold the collar while they take the treat. You can then build up to a point where they will rest their chin on your outstretched palm so that you can easily reattach their lead.



## Discussion Points

### The True Meaning of Socialization

This really relates to good experiences your dog has that aren't overwhelming for them.

Of course, this includes (careful) exposure to other dogs but also sounds, objects, other animals, people, shops, car travel etc. Get them to experience all the elements of life around them.

It's not necessary to meet or greet every other dog or person on a walk but to teach your dog that while they may meet perhaps 1 in 3, it's just as important to remain calm and move past others.

### Enrichment

Keeping your pup engaged is easier than ever with fun, interactive enrichment tools! Next time you're heading to a café or want to curb your dog's boredom, try filling a toy with dog-safe peanut butter, low-fat cream cheese, or yogurt—fan favorites among dogs! Pop it in the freezer, and you've got an even longer-lasting treat that will keep their brain happily buzzing.

Snuffle mats and lick mats are also some of our favorites, offering similar benefits by encouraging natural sniffing, licking, and foraging instincts. These simple yet effective tools add a bit of fun and focus to your pup's day, wherever you are!