

THINK YOURSELF, FIT, DOG!



11-MINUTE GAMES FOR CLEVER CANINES

115 Short Daily Training Sessions to Keep
Your Dog Mentally and Physically Stimulated
– Suitable for All Ages and Breeds

Table of Contents

Introduction	11
Why Brain Training Is So Important for Dogs	13
Mental Stimulation Without Overwhelm	16
The 11-Minute Principle: Small Sessions, Big Impact	18
Materials You'll Need.....	20
Safety and Motivation While Playing	22
How to Get the Most Out of This Book	23
CHAPTER 1: Brain Workouts for Beginners	26
First Steps to A Smarter Dog	26
Activity 1: Treat Trail Starter	26
Activity 2: Nose Touch to Hand.....	27
Activity 3: Follow the Pointer	28
Activity 4: Starter Target Spot.....	29
Systematic Treat Searches	30
Activity 5: Easy Scatter Search	30
Activity 6: Two-Corner Find.....	31
Activity 7: Under-Cloth Reveal.....	32
Cup And Hand Games	33
Activity 8: One-Cup Lift Game	33
Activity 9: Two-Hand Guess Game.....	34
Activity 10: Slow Cup Shuffle	35

Simple Scent Discrimination	36
Activity 11: Scented Cloth Match	36
Activity 12: Two-Scent Choices.....	37
Activity 13: Cotton Ball Mini Trail.....	38
Discovering Shapes, Colors, and Sounds	39
Activity 14: Red vs. Blue Toy Choice.....	39
Activity 15: Circle vs. Square Toy Match.....	40
Activity 16: Soft Sound Identifier	41
Activity 17: Name-Your-Toy Intro	42
CHAPTER 2: Brain Games with Everyday Items	43
Engaging Your Dog Without Expensive Equipment	43
Activity 18: Laundry Basket Peek Hunt.....	43
Activity 19: Cushion Step-Up Practice.....	44
Activity 20: Bowl Flip Find.....	45
Activity 21: Towel Tent Search	46
Cardboard Fun and Crinkly Newspapers	47
Activity 22: Newspaper Crunch Box.....	47
Activity 23: Cardboard Tunnel Peek.....	48
Activity 24: Tube Roll Reward.....	49
Bottle Rolling and Towel Tricks.....	50
Activity 25: Plastic Bottle Roller	50
Activity 26: Towel Burrito Unwind.....	51
Activity 27: Sock Knot Discovery.....	52

DIY Obstacle Courses	53
Activity 28: Chair Weave Lane	53
Activity 29: Pillow Island Jump	54
Activity 30: Doorway Tunnel.....	55
Build Your Own Food Maze	56
Activity 31: Cup-and-Mat Maze	56
Activity 32: Paper Sheet Path	57
Activity 33: Box Maze Steps	58
Activity 34: Muffin Tin Challenge	59
CHAPTER 3: Creative Search and Scent Games	60
A World of Smells – The Nose as A Superpower. 60	
Activity 35: Scent Box Line-Up.....	60
Activity 36: Multi-Surface Smell Trail	61
Activity 37: Scented Object Target.....	62
Activity 38: Hidden Cotton-Ball Cluster.....	63
Tracking Scents Indoors and In the Garden	64
Activity 39: Cotton-Ball Drag Track	64
Activity 40: Garden Pot Scent Search.....	65
Activity 41: Furniture Edge Trail	66
Finding Hidden Treasures	67
Activity 42: Shoebox Treasure Dig	67
Activity 43: Laundry Pile Hide	68
Activity 44: Curtain Corner Find	69
Activity 45: Basket Full of Soft Toys	70

Nose Work for Inside & Outside	71
Activity 46: Doorframe Nose Spot.....	71
Activity 47: Fence-Line Sniff Trail.....	72
Activity 48: Tree-Base Scent Marker.....	73
Easy Person Search Games	74
Activity 49: Basic Hide-and-Call	74
Activity 50: Silent Hide-and-Seek	75
Activity 51: Clothing Scent Match.....	76
CHAPTER 4: Combining Movement and Mind	77
Fun Coordination Exercises.....	77
Activity 52: Figure-8 Walk	77
Activity 53: Slow Leg Weave.....	78
Activity 54: Side-Step Shuffle.....	78
Activity 55: Rear Paws Step-Up.....	79
Mini Indoor Obstacle Courses	80
Activity 56: Cushion Jump Line	80
Activity 57: Mat Pathway.....	81
Activity 58: Tunnel Through Chairs	82
Improving Balance & Coordination	83
Activity 59: Two-Paw Balance Hold	83
Activity 60: Soft Blanket Stand	84
Activity 61: Backward Step Training.....	84
Activity 62: Cushion Walk Line.....	85
Trick Training with a Mental Twist.....	86

Activity 63: Carry-to-Target Spot	86
Activity 64: Double-Trick Combo.....	87
Activity 65: Head-Turn Cueing.....	88
Body Awareness & Muscle Building.....	89
Activity 66: Low Pole Step-Overs	89
Activity 67: Under-Towel Crawl	90
Activity 68: Pivot on Low Object	91
CHAPTER 5: Games for Advanced Dogs	92
Combining Thinking, Sniffing & Acting	92
Activity 69: Four-Step Puzzle Chain.....	92
Activity 70: Scent Race Challenge	93
Activity 71: Retrieve & Sort.....	94
Distinguishing Colors & Shapes.....	95
Activity 72: Three-Color Targeting	95
Activity 73: Shape Selection Game	96
Activity 74: Color-to-Cone Match.....	96
Activity 75: Mixed Shape-and-Color Pick.....	97
Teaching Your Own Cues.....	98
Activity 76: Whisper Command	98
Activity 77: Gesture-Only Response	99
Activity 78: Directional Nose Point	100
Memory Games & Brain Training	101
Activity 79: What's Missing?	101
Activity 80: Treat Memory Spot	102
Activity 81: Walking Pattern Recall.....	102

Activity 82: Three-Step Memory Chain	103
Strategic Problem-Solving Games.....	104
Activity 83: Lid Lift Puzzle	104
Activity 84: Pull-Rope Drawer	105
Activity 85: Slider Maze Box	106
CHAPTER 6: Brain Games for Senior Dogs	107
Gentle Mental Fitness in Old Age	107
Activity 86: Soft Snuffle Cloth	107
Activity 87: Low-Box Nose Search.....	108
Activity 88: Mini Sniff Circle.....	108
Boosting Memory & Mobility.....	109
Activity 89: Two-Cue Refresh.....	109
Activity 90: Gentle Step-Over Towel	110
Activity 91: Old Trick Recall	110
Activity 92: Short Recall Repetition	111
Smart Play for Limited Vision or Hearing.....	112
Activity 93: Scent Line Marker	112
Activity 94: Floor-Tap Cue	113
Activity 95: Low-Sound Finder.....	114
Staying Active & Connected	115
Activity 96: Hand Target Greeting	115
Activity 97: Calming Grooming Ritual.....	116
Activity 98: Slow Walk Together	117
CHAPTER 7: Everyday Training: 11 Minutes Is Enough.....	118

Brain Games on Daily Walks	118
Activity 99: Leaf-Pile Find.....	118
Activity 100: Lamp Post Hide.....	119
Activity 101: Sniff Three Spots.....	120
Activity 102: Trail Change Game	121
Waiting & Thinking on the Go	122
Activity 103: Curbside Calm Sit	122
Activity 104: Quiet Nose Touch	122
Activity 105: Check-In Habit	123
Activity 106: Pause & Look Around.....	124
Short Play Sessions in Daily Life.....	125
Activity 107: Doorway Wait.....	125
Activity 108: Quick 3-Cue Mix.....	126
Activity 109: Hallway Heel Burst.....	127
Activity 110: Couch-Side Trick.....	128
Creating Routines: Mental Fitness as a Habit	129
Activity 111: Morning Sniff Ritual.....	129
Activity 112: Bedtime Calm Cue.....	130
Activity 113: Toy Name of the Week	130
Activity 114: Daily Treasure Spot.....	131
Activity 115: Routine Object Recognition	132
CHAPTER 8: Homemade Brain Toys.....	133
DIY Ideas Using Recycled Materials	134
1. The Cardboard Crinkle Tube.....	134
2. Muffin Tin Mix-Up	135

3. Newspaper Twist Rope.....	135
4. Sock Surprise Pockets	136
5. The Recycled Box Discovery Center.....	136
Crafting Scent and Food Toys	138
1. The Scent Bottle Shaker	138
2. DIY Snuffle Cloth	139
3. Frozen Broth Cubes with Twist	139
4. Treat Tube Roll.....	140
5. Scent Cloth Pockets	140
Spinners, Sliders, and Puzzle Boxes	142
1. The Simple Spinner Plate.....	142
2. Sliding Lid Track	143
3. Pivoting Cup Puzzle.....	143
4. Drawer-Style Box Puzzle	144
5. The Rotating Treat Wheel.....	145
Toy Safety and Maintenance	146
CHAPTER 9: Strengthening Bond & Communication	148
Learning Together Builds Trust	148
Reading Body Language Correctly	149
Motivating Without Pressure.....	153
Sharing Success: Using Praise and Rewards Effectively	154
CONCLUSION	156

APPENDICES	159
4-Week 11-Minute Training Plan	159
Overview: Which Games Develop Which Skills?	162
Checklist: Play Ideas for Indoors & Outdoors	163
Recommended Materials & Books	165

Introduction

Many loving dog parents run into the same problem. They walk their dog, play with them, give them toys, give them love, yet something still feels off. The dog seems restless, bored, a little too energetic, or not quite settled. Maybe they pace in the evening. Maybe they bark for attention. Maybe they chew things when you turn your back for just a moment.

It is easy to wonder whether you are doing something wrong, or whether your dog just needs “*more exercise*,” even though you already try to give them plenty. Most dogs aren’t lacking effort from their humans. They are lacking **mental stimulation** in a way that fits real life — short, clear, doable moments that help them think, explore, and feel satisfied.

Dog parents want to help. Dogs want guidance. **But life is busy, days are full, and long training routines often feel unrealistic.** Many enrichment ideas online look complicated, messy, or time-consuming. Some require equipment you don’t have, or skills you’ve never practiced. It’s no wonder so many people feel unsure about where to start.

This book steps in to make things easier.

Think Yourself Fit, Dog! was created for everyday dog parents who want a simple, gentle way to give their dog more brain work without adding more stress to their own schedule. The activities inside are short enough to fit anywhere in your day, clear enough for beginners, and flexible enough for every age, breed, and personality. They give your dog exactly what their brain craves — a chance to think, sniff, try, and succeed — without overwhelming them or you.

A reminder that just **eleven minutes** can shift your dog's behavior, mood, and confidence in a meaningful way. These short sessions don't require big plans or perfect training. They just require you, your dog, and a few minutes of shared attention.

From here, we'll explore why mental exercise matters so much, how to keep things simple, how to stay safe, and how to make every session enjoyable. You'll see that brain training isn't a chore. It's a tiny daily habit that gives both you and your dog a better quality of life.

Why Brain Training Is So Important for Dogs

Most people know dogs need walks, movement, and outdoor time. But their brains need workouts just as much as their bodies. In fact, mental exercise often tires dogs out *more* effectively than long physical sessions.

Here are the benefits you'll see when brain training becomes part of daily life:

1. Better focus and calmer behavior

Dogs who use their minds regularly learn how to think before they react. They become better at handling everyday situations and less likely to engage in unwanted habits simply because they are bored.

2. Stronger communication between you and your dog

Problem-solving games help your dog understand cues, patterns, and positive routines. You'll notice your dog checking in with you more often, waiting for direction, and staying more tuned in.

3. Reduced stress and built-up energy

Mental challenges give your dog a productive outlet for the energy that sometimes turns into chewing, barking, pacing, or digging. Even high-energy and working breeds settle more easily after brain games.

4. Sharper memory and learning ability

Dogs of all ages benefit from cognitive workouts. Puppies pick up skills faster, adult dogs stay mentally sharp, and senior dogs maintain confidence as they age.

5. A healthier routine for all lifestyles

If you live in an apartment, have limited time, or deal with rainy days, brain games offer a way for your dog to thrive even when long exercise sessions aren't possible.



The wonderful thing is that none of this requires complicated tricks or expensive puzzles. Dogs naturally love sniffing, exploring textures, noticing sounds, solving simple problems, and moving through new patterns. With gentle guidance, those instincts become healthy daily habits.

Mental Stimulation Without Overwhelm

Dogs learn best when the challenge is interesting but not stressful. This book keeps things simple and low-pressure so your dog can stay excited without feeling confused or stuck.

Here is how we ensure your dog stays in that sweet spot:

1. Clear, tiny steps: Each game is broken down into small, doable actions. You introduce new elements gradually, giving your dog time to understand and succeed.

2. One short session at a time: You won't be loading your dog with an hour of work. The activities are short bursts of fun. Your dog plays, learns, and finishes on a high note.

3. Built-in choice and independence: Many games allow your dog to use their own instincts. They get to sniff, search, try ideas, and solve problems at their own pace. This builds confidence without pressure.

4. Watch your dog's signals: You will learn to notice when your dog is fully engaged versus when they

need a pause. When something feels too challenging, we simply adjust the game to make it easier.

5. Positive reinforcement only: Praise, treats, and enthusiasm fuel a dog’s willingness to learn. They should always feel that brain training is a safe, rewarding, joyful experience.

Signs Your Dog Is Happily Learning	Signs Your Dog May Need a Break
Loose, wiggly tail	Turning head away
Soft, relaxed eyes	Lip licking or yawning
Calm, curious sniffing	Paw lifting
Slow, steady movements	Walking away from the activity
Leaning forward, ready to try again	Small frustrated bark

Dogs thrive on success. This book is built to give them plenty of it.