



14 - 24 DECEMBER 2024



CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

10 FUN & FESTIVE GAMES
FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG



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Welcome

Welcome to the caniAmis 2024 Christmas Countdown Games for You and Your Dog!



The holidays can be a busy and stressful time, but these games are designed to bring joy and connection to you and your dog.

Not only are they festive and fun, but each game teaches valuable skills to help your dog thrive in everyday life.

Whether you're working on loose-lead walking, building your dog's confidence, or teaching them to focus in distracting environments, these games make training feel less like work and more like play!

Best of all, they're easy to set up, use things you already have at home, and can fit into even the busiest holiday schedule.

By playing together, you'll deepen your bond, arm your dog with some really useful lifeskills, and help them become the star of the family this Christmas.

So grab some treats, get into the holiday spirit, and let the games begin!  

Hazel xx





Santa's Sleigh Circles

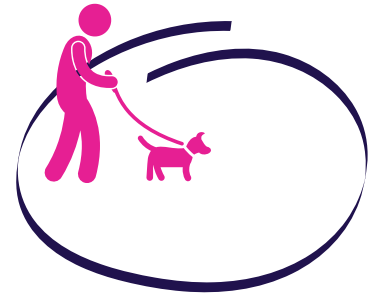
Goal: Teach your dog to keep the lead loose while walking, even during distractions.

You'll Need:

A quiet space to practice (indoors or outdoors).

Your dog's lead and collar/harness.

Kibble or some tasty Christmas treats.



How to Play:

- Start with your dog on lead.
- Begin walking at a moderate pace in a large circle.
- Throw a piece of food out into the middle of the circle but keep walking.
- Your dog will go into the centre of the circle and take the food.
- When your dog comes back to you, praise them, then throw another piece of food into the centre of the circle.
- Keep walking, no matter what your dog does.

Why It's Useful:

This game improves loose-lead walking by reinforcing your dog's focus on you.

Make It Festive:

Turn on some Christmas tunes or pretend you're guiding Santa's sleigh around snowy obstacles!





The Merry Mouse

Goal: Teach your dog to disengage from distractions and focus on you.

You'll Need:

Some kibble or tasty Christmas treats.
A flat surface (your dog's bed or a rug).



How to Play:

- Start with your dog on a bed or boundary.
- Have some of their treats to hand.
- Place some of the food slowly onto the boundary but cage it with your hand so your dog can't take it.
- Your dog will probably try to do everything in their power to get to that little tasty morsel, but don't let them yet!
- The very second your dog is calm and backs away from your hand, allow them to take the caged food.
- You can either roll it gently forwards for your dog to take, or you can invite your dog to come towards the food to take it.

Why It's Useful:

This game builds impulse control and teaches your dog to calmly back off when they want something. It's a must-have skill for any dog who struggles with self-control.

Make It Festive:

Hum "Jingle Bells" or wear a Santa hat while practicing!





Snowstorm Spin

Goal: Teach your dog to respond instantly to your direction changes when out walking.

You'll Need:

Your dog on a lead.

A safe location to practice, free of your dog's triggers.



How to Play:

- Begin walking with your dog on lead.
- Randomly say "Dynamite!" in an upbeat tone, then immediately turn 180° and walk briskly in the opposite direction.
- As you turn, lure your dog with a treat at their nose level to encourage them to follow you.
- Once they turn with you, reward generously with praise and treats as you walk together.
- Repeat in different directions to build responsiveness and focus.

Why It's Useful:

This is a life-saver when you need to steer your dog away from an approaching dog, person, or other unexpected challenge. It's also a great tool for teaching your dog to stay engaged with you, making walks smoother and more enjoyable.

Make It Festive:

Why not swap your "Dynamite" cue for a cheerful holiday phrase like "Snowstorm"? It'll keep the game fun and jolly!





Frosty FUNder

Goal: Build your dog's confidence and coordination through playful movement and show them that fun happens through you!

You'll Need:

A large open space.
Tasty treats.



How to Play:

- Start with your dog off-lead.
- Throw a piece of kibble or a treat ahead of you for your dog to go and find.
- Mark them with a "nice", "good" or "great" when they turn to come back to you.
- Throw the next piece of kibble between your legs. Your dog must run between your legs to retrieve the kibble.
- Turn around or continue facing in the same direction and toss the next piece of food between your legs for your dog to go and find.
- Repeat, but keep sessions short and fun – this is a high-energy game!

Why It's Useful:

This game is a real relationship booster for you and your dog and a great way to burn off energy together during the busy holiday season.

Make It Festive:

Pretend you're Santa and you're sending your dog back and forth to take gifts from Santa's workshop and put them in Santa's Sleigh.





Rudolph's Box of Noises

Goal: Build confidence, optimism, grit, and resilience by encouraging your dog to explore novel objects.

You'll Need:

A large empty cardboard box in which you can fit other containers.

Dog-friendly empty containers.

Lots of kibble.



How to Play:

- Start with just one empty box and lay it on the ground.
- Sprinkle kibble in and around the box.
- Allow your dog to investigate the box on their own.
- As they become confident in taking kibble from inside the box, add another empty container.
- Build this game up gradually, so that over time, your dog must rummage through a variety of smaller containers to find the hidden kibble.

Why It's Useful:

This game teaches your dog to be curious and brave, even when faced with unfamiliar objects, sounds, or movements.

Make It Festive:

Decorate the boxes with holiday wrapping paper and let your dog rummage through them for Christmas "presents" or toys!





Frosty's Figure 8

Goal: Teach your dog to regulate their own emotions.

You'll Need:

Your dog's lead and collar/harness.

A large enough space to walk in a large figure 8 shape.

How to Play:

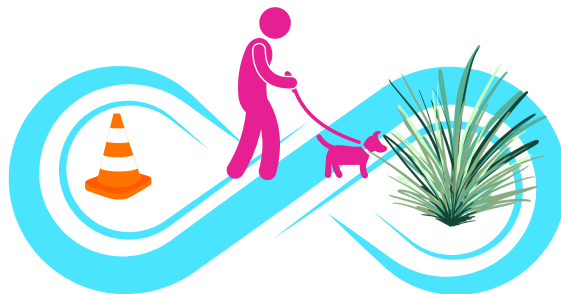
- Start by walking in a large circle at a fairly slow pace, making sure that your dog matches your pace.
- Then gently lead your dog into walking a figure of 8. This can be easier for some dogs if there are cones or objects to walk around, such as vehicles, trees, or benches.
- Make incremental changes to your pace moving gradually faster and slower, making sure your dog mirrors your pace.

Why It's Useful:

Figure 8s encourage your dog to focus on you, and are helpful in calming your dog down after an exciting or stressful event.

Make It Festive:

Imagine you're weaving through snowy obstacles on a walk with Frosty the Snowman!





Balance Path to the North Pole

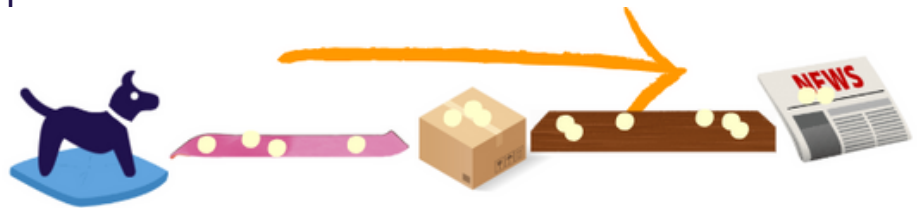
Goal: Build your dog's confidence and resilience by walking across novel surfaces.

You'll Need:

A quiet space to practice (indoors or outdoors).

A variety of household items of different heights and textures (e.g., pillows, wooden planks, bubble wrap, yoga blocks).

Treats for motivation



How to Play:

- Lay out dog-safe household items of different textures, things that make a noise and/or involve a change of height. Keep it simple to begin with.
- Without a lead, gently encourage your dog onto the easiest part of the path by sprinkling some of their daily food allowance on the object.
- Encourage them to move along the path by continuing scattering treats on to each of the obstacles.
- Allow your dog to investigate without pressure – if they want to miss items or leave the game, let them.

Why It's Useful:

This game encourages your dog to explore new textures and surfaces, building their confidence, optimism, resilience, and grit.

Make It Festive:

Pretend your dog is crossing an icy path to reach the North Pole!



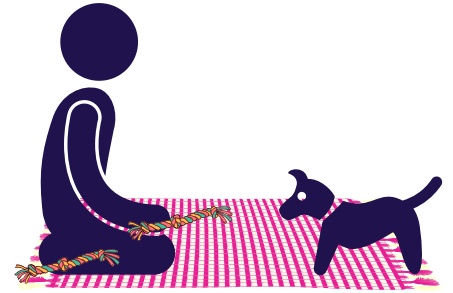


Cheeky Elf Toy Switch

Goal: Teach your dog to drop one item in exchange for another.

You'll Need:

Two identical toys (or an old pair of socks).



How to Play:

- Hold one tug toy out of sight (e.g. behind your back).
- Animate the other toy in front of your dog.
- Let them chase it and then grab it.
- Allow your dog to dictate the tug.
- After a few seconds, bring the toy to a stop on the floor.
- Then animate the second toy in front of your dog, removing the first from sight.
- Repeat the game of tug, switching one toy for the other.
- Try adding a 'switch' or 'mine' cue each time you swap.
- Keep the game short.

Why It's Useful:

This game is great for teaching your dog to give up items willingly, even when they're excited or possessive.

Make It Festive:

Dress up as Santa's Cheeky Elf while playing!





Reindeer Chase Me

Goal: Encourage your dog to follow you enthusiastically, even in emergencies.



You'll Need:

A safe, enclosed area.

A large object to run around (e.g., a vehicle, garden furniture).

Treats or a toy to encourage play.

How to Play:

- Select an object – something your dog can chase you around.
- Throw a piece of kibble, a treat, or your dog's favourite tuggy toy in the opposite direction to where you intend to run.
- While your dog is taking the food or retrieving the toy, start to slowly run away from them around your chosen object.
- Your dog should start to chase you.
- When they catch you, praise your dog with gusto.
- Throw another piece of food or throw the toy, and run again.

Why It's Useful:

This game builds a reliable recall by turning following you into the most exciting part of your dog's day.

Make It Festive:

Pretend you're Santa, leading your reindeer dog on a chase through the snow!





Mistletoe Middle

Goal: Teach your dog a 'safe space' position between your legs.

You'll Need:

Tasty treats.

A quiet area to practice.



How to Play:

- Start with your dog off-lead in a safe area.
- Throw a treat a short distance ahead of you for your dog to find.
- Next, throw a treat between your legs so your dog has to run through them to retrieve it.
- Once your dog approaches from behind, hold the next treat still at nose height in front of your body instead of throwing it.
- Your dog will naturally pause between your legs to take the treat – this is the “middle” position.
- When your dog is in the middle position, reward generously by feeding multiple treats one after another.
- For large dogs, modify the game by throwing treats at the side of your body instead of through your legs, and guiding them to stand at your side and reward them there.

Why It's Useful:

“Middle” is perfect for keeping your dog calm and focused in crowded or overwhelming environments.

Make It Festive:

Imagine your dog is standing beneath the mistletoe when in Middle position but instead of them receiving kisses, they receive their favourite tasty treats.





BONUS GAME!: Jingle Jangle

🎄 **Congratulations!** You've made it to the end of these festive games, and now it's time for a special bonus game just for you and your dog! You can find it on the next page.

Thank you so much for joining the caniAmis 2024 Christmas Countdown!

I hope you and your dog had a blast with these festive games!

Remember, the holidays are a perfect time to bond, have fun, and keep your dog's training enjoyable. Keep playing, keep learning, and most importantly, keep sharing the joy of these special moments together.

If you're looking for more ways to support your dog's behaviour, be sure to visit **www.caniamis.com** for helpful tips, training resources, and upcoming programs.

Wishing you and your furry friend a paws-itively wonderful Christmas!

With festive cheer 🎄

Hazel xx



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BONUS GAME!: Jingle Jangle

Goal: To help your dog feel better about scary or distracting things and understand that it's okay to walk away or focus on something else.

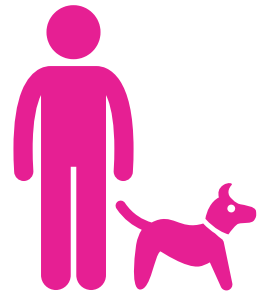
You'll Need:

A quiet space.

A safe "distraction" (e.g., a toy, noise, or movement – something that doesn't usually upset your dog).

Tasty treats.

Niiice!



How to Play:

- Calmly say your cue word (e.g., 'niiice'), pause for a split second, then give a treat to your dog – word + pause + treat.
- Repeat until your dog associates the appearance of a treat with the cue word.
- Add a small distraction – something that will not upset your dog too much, eg, a cough, and repeat the process above – cough + word + pause + treat
- Repeat with many low level distractions before moving on to more challenging distractions.

Why It's Useful:

This game helps dogs who are reactive or nervous build positive associations with challenging environments.

Make It Festive:

Introduce holiday-themed distractions, like jingling bells or a stuffed reindeer, to add some Christmas cheer to the training session.

