

Play Training with Tug & Fetch

Tug Steps & Rules

- You make the rules** You start and end the game. Have a special toy that's used only for playing tug. When you decide to end the game, always put the toy away.
- Your dog must take it on cue** She can't grab the toy before you say "Take it." (See box for details.) If she grabs it before you say "Take it," give her a 10-second time-out.
- Play & praise** When she takes it in her mouth, praise her, "Good, atta girl," and tug away! After 15-20 seconds, stop tugging and tell her "Drop it."
- Your dog must drop it on cue** Drop it is initially done with trades—offering a treat in exchange for the toy. (See box for details.) When your dog is reliable at releasing the toy on cue, you can stop using food and just reward the drop by restarting the game with "Take it!" If your dog fails to drop it, end the game or give her a time-out (about 30 seconds).
- Take obedience breaks in the action** When you say "Drop it" and she does, ask for a sit. When she sits, say "Good! Take it!" and then offer the toy and tug away.
- Your dog must show jaw control** Your dog's teeth must never nick you, or she faces a game misconduct. She must go out of her way to avoid your hands. Even if you think it was an "accident," immediately end the game. Say "OUCH!" like you're hurt, and put the toy away.
- Final tip** Play growling is fine. Serious growling (accompanied by snapping or persistent refusal to release the toy) should end the game.

Teaching Drop It & Take It

Drop it — When your dog has a toy in his mouth, position your left hand under his mouth to catch the toy. Say "Drop It" or "Give," then put a delicious treat right in front of his nose with your right hand. When he opens his mouth to take the treat, catch the toy from his mouth with your left hand and put it behind your back. Then praise and give him your treat!

If he doesn't give up the toy easily, don't argue with him but don't let him win either. If necessary, drop several treats on the ground until he is tempted enough to drop the toy and eat the treats.

Take it — Start with the toy held behind your back. Say "Take it," then bring the toy out from behind your back and wiggle it in front of your dog's nose, encouraging him with happy talk. As soon as he bites down on the toy, start playing tug.

After many repetitions of your consistently using these cues, you and your dog will be ready to enjoy tug.



Teaching Fetch



If your dog already picks up and carries toys in his mouth, play fetch to work on his skills of bringing the toy back to you. First play this in a small area in your house, like a hallway with all the doors closed.



- Show your dog the toy and then toss it a short distance. (If he doesn't follow the toy, encourage him by running to the toy yourself, picking it up excitedly and tossing it again. If all else fails, try a different toy.)
- Praise him as he follows the toy.
- When he picks it up and starts towards you, praise him. If he doesn't return to you, don't chase him. Just happily encourage him toward you by patting your legs, running away or squatting down. If that doesn't work, ignore him and play with another toy yourself.
- When your dog reaches you, say "Give" or "Drop it" and then put a delicious treat right in front of his nose with your right hand (the treat should almost touch his nostrils). Position your left hand under his mouth to catch the toy.
- When he drops the toy to take the treat, good boy! Catch the toy with your left hand, and give him the treat with your right hand.
- When he's good at fetching in the hallway, practice in other rooms in your house. Last, practice outdoors.
- After many repetitions over a week or more, your dog will learn the "drop it" cue. Then you can stop using the treat. When you say the cue and he drops the toy, reward him by throwing the toy again.

✓ **Quick Tip**

- There's a reason that you start this training in a hallway! First, there's nothing to distract your dog. Second, the walls make it easy for you to prevent your dog from bolting right past you if he tries to start a keep-away game. Without yelling, scolding or pushing your dog, just calmly use your body to block him from running past you. Body block him, then with him right there in front of you, practice drop it.