

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC: PLAY TRAINING!

Play is the key to good manners and a strong bond: In addition to the obvious benefits of mental and physical exercise, play between you and your pup is the secret to developing a great relationship. This great relationship is *the key* to a well-mannered dog who wants to listen to her owner. Play is also an ideal way to teach your dog to understand communication and rules. In this lesson, we will learn how to teach easy games that are great for playing with your dog: stalk/chase the toy, tug, and fetch (retrieve).

Stalk/Chase Game: This is a great way to get your pup interested in grabbing and holding a toy. Try moving a toy around *on the floor* at varying speeds, towards him, then away. Making toys act like animal prey will incite your pup's natural instinct to want to chase and grab them. You can also show your pup a toy, let him smell or look at it for a second, then snatch it away as soon as he wants it, acting like it is the greatest possession you've ever found. It may sound like teasing, but it's just a game to teach your pup that toys are fun. When you appear to value something greatly, your pup will want it too! **Hint:** Squeakers don't hurt, either.

Tug: Once your dog starts grabbing at a toy, starting a game of tug is easy – just gently pull the toy and your pup is likely to pull back! Soft toys are best for this. Below we will teach you how to play tug with rules so that your dog learns how to control their biting and jumping, and “say please” in order to continue the game. The games we teach are super-fun and great for releasing energy, but they must *also* teach communication and rules. For example, never allow your pup to grab your hands or clothing. Whenever he does this, immediately fold your arms and turn away from the game as if you are completely turned off. For an instant, your pup will be surprised, stop mouthing you, and look up as if to say, “What did I do?” In that instant, you can praise and re-engage the game.

If your pup continues to play too aggressively, consider that he may need a time-out until he can cool down or he may need more exercise outlets in general. Praise your pup lavishly when he grabs toys instead of you, and make the toys the most fun thing to grab by instigating games of chase, tug, and fetch. For more help dealing with a “mouthy” puppy, ask your Trainer.

Retrieve (Fetch):

- 1) Retrieve often works best after you have established the first 2 games of stalk/chase and tug.
- 2) Choose a toy that your puppy likes, but it shouldn't be so exciting that she just wants to keep it to herself. She should think that the toy is more fun when you play with it, too!
- 3) Start your Retrieve from a place where your pup normally loves to bring her toys (e.g., her bed).
- 4) Get her really excited about the toy, then toss it a few feet away. When she grabs it, praise and entice her to come back to you by making fun sounds such as kisses or a drum roll on the floor. **Hint:** Gently pulling on a leash often helps to get a puppy coming in your direction.
- 5) If your pup comes to you without the toy, praise lavishly anyway. Then, grab the toy yourself and repeat step 4, more enthusiastically.
- 6) When your pup brings toys to you, don't grab for the toy right away; instead, praise and touch her in a way she loves. This will make her want to keep “sharing” toys with you and bring them to you as a “safe” place to enjoy them, rather than run away from you with them.
- 7) Once your pup is comfortable bringing toys back to you, reward her not only with praise, but by immediately engaging in more play!

Thank you for joining us!

Have more questions? Want training help?

We love what we do and would be happy to talk to you about your pup!

Call us about classes and private lessons today.

PHONE - WEBSITE