

Impulse Control Games

Playtime with a Purpose!

WHATCHA GOT?!

Teach the dog how to give up items with a “drop it” or “whatcha got” cue.

WHY: dogs need to learn that it is fun to allow you to take items from them, preventing resource guarding and destructive behavior.

- Start with a tethered dog, a chew toy, and a handful of treats
- Give the dog the toy and let them chew for a moment
- Approach the dog and toss a treat (aim for right next to the toy) the moment the dog notices you, then walk away so the dog can resume chewing after eating the treat
- Repeat multiple times - the dog should begin looking up at you expectantly when you approach
- Start adding a “drop it” or “whatcha got” type cue the moment before the dog spits out the chew toy to accept the tossed treat
- If the dog is enjoying the game and is not a resource guarder, begin moving closer and closer with each repetition
- Modify the game by saying the verbal cue and presenting your open hand, then reward the dog with a treat from your opposite hand when they spit out the item
- Play this game a couple times/day with various items (even if your dog picks up something they are not supposed to have) and then let them resume chewing on the original toy or acceptable replacement
- You can advance this game by teaching the dog to put the item in a specific location (in your hand, on your lap, between your feet, etc)

SAY PLEASE...

Teach the dog to ask politely to get what they want.

WHY: dogs need to practice calm behaviors before gaining access to things that produce excitement, creating a more relaxed, polite, and focused dog.

- First, use the dog’s food bowl by preparing their meal, then standing with the bowl in your hand and out of their reach
- Do a couple calming signals to signify to the dog that the goal is to relax (ex. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly, yawn, shift your weight to one side or lean against something, slowly blink and look away from the dog)
- Stand calmly, ignore any behavior the dog offers (barking, whining, jumping, etc) and wait patiently for a sit
- Do not tell the dog what to do, simply hold the bowl, relax, and wait
- When the dog eventually offers a sit (or a down is extra credit!), say “yes” and place the bowl on the ground for them to eat
- If practiced at every meal, the dog will begin to SAY PLEASE automatically without being asked
- Start using a SAY PLEASE with anything the dog wants (food, couch time, going outside, putting on the leash, getting out of the car, access to a toy or game, etc)

TUG! or GET IT!

Teach the dog how to grab, hold, and drop a toy, as well as focus on the handler.

WHY: dogs need an outlet for rough and roudy play that can be structured through a controlled exercise, teaching dogs how to settle when highly excited.

- Choose ONE toy (or type of toy) to use for the tug game (pick something long so your hands are safely away from the dog’s teeth) and grab a handful of treats
- When you present the tug toy say “get it” or something similar to indicate that the dog can take the toy in their mouth
- Play tug for a moment

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- Act playful and move the toy all around to stimulate the dog, allow the dog to get riled up and have fun,
- Stay safe - make sure you are not lifting the dog off the ground during play, make sure your hands are at the opposite end of the toy from the dog's teeth
- Periodically, stop play by ceasing motion and standing still and quiet
- Use the cue from WHATCHA GOT game and present a treat to trade for the toy
- Ignore the dog and be still until they make the correct choice by spitting out toy and taking the treat
- Then, hold the toy up and out of reach and wait for the dog to SAY PLEASE
- Once the dog sits, say "get it" and restart the game almost immediately but make sure play does not resume until "get it" cue is given
- Each repetition will gradually make the dog faster and more responsive
- Use the "all done" cue when the game is over, toss a treat on the ground, and put the toy away

FIND IT!

Teach the dog to use their nose to locate food and toys.

WHY: dogs need to satisfy their instincts by searching for their food, creating a mental energy outlet and leaving them more satisfied during the day.

- First, put the dog outside or in another room (somewhere where they cannot watch you)
- Using their meal, grab small handfuls of kibble and place them in little piles around the room
 - Piles should be out of the way and slightly hidden so they are not easily seen when the dog enters the room, but will be easy to access when the dog finds them
 - Start with very simple hiding places (like next to a table leg) and as your dog masters the game, slowly increase the difficulty (like under a rug)
 - Do not hide food in areas where you don't want the dog snooping (kitchen cabinets, for example)
- Release the dog into the room and say "find it"
- Walk around the room with the dog and pass the hiding spots closely so the dog is able to catch a whiff, then praise when the dog gets the goodies
 - Do not point to or show the dog the kibble, just pass it with closer and closer proximity until the dog notices it - then say "find it" to pair the verbal cue with finding the hiding spot
 - Continue to walk around to the next pile so your dog begins to realize there are multiple hiding spots
- After two or three repetitions of the game, stop helping!
 - Use the "find it" cue then stand back so the dog can start to figure out the game on their own
- Use the "all done" cue and toss a treat out of the room after your dog finds all the goodies, so they know when to stop searching
- You can also hide favorite toys, or eventually items like your car keys, for your dog to find
- This game is also good for dogs to play while you are away - hide their breakfast then let them hunt while you are out of the house

FETCH!

Teach the dog how to retrieve an item and bring it back to you.

WHY: dogs need an outlet for their predatory drive, while teaching focus on the handler and responsiveness to cues.

- Start with a leashed dog and an item the dog is likely to chase or show interest in (ball, squeaky toy, kong, etc)
- First, practice the WHATCHA GOT game with the item, so the dog learns that you taking it away is quite fun
- Add a little distance by offering your reward treat a few steps away from the dog
 - You may need to encourage the dog to come toward you with kissing sounds or patting your legs
 - The dog should remain leashed so they do not leave with the toy, but do not use the leash to pull the dog - leash should remain slack at all times
- Toss the item about 12" away and as soon as the dog grabs it, encourage the dog toward you and play the WHATCHA GOT game
- Begin tossing the toy further and further with each successful repetition (allow dog to drag leash at first, remove leash only if the dog is not thinking about leaving)
- Add a "fetch" cue as you toss the item

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- End the game after a few tosses by saying “all done”, tossing a treat on the ground, and putting the toy away
 - It is important to end while the dog still wants to play instead of waiting until the dog gets bored and runs away with the toy or loses interest
- If the dog does not deliver the toy, **ignore** the dog
 - You can just sit and look the other direction or even get up and walk away from the dog
 - The idea is to get the dog to realize that delivering the item continues the game, holding onto the item ends playtime

CHASE! or GONNA GET YOU!

Teach the dog when it is fun and appropriate to run and be chased by people.

WHY: dogs need to learn that being chased only happens when initiated by humans in play, not in order to receive attention and not when trying to avoid being caught.

- Typically, dogs like to play chase when they have an object in their mouth, so find a toy that will represent the CHASE ME game (this will help avoid CHASE ME with inappropriate items)
- By slapping the ground or your legs with your hands, mimic a dog play bow motion and use the verbal cue “gonna get you” or something similar to start play
- Run a few steps towards the dog with playful body language and a big smile then retreat a couple steps to see if the dog mimics the play behavior
- Do not try to catch the dog or grab the toy, think about it more like a game of flag football - target near or around the dog
 - Run up to the dog, do a playful, gentle pat on their back, then retreat
 - Stomp your feet, clap your hands, and mimic play bow behavior to encourage the dog to sprint around
 - Often, use the “gonna get you” cue to continue play time
- Periodically, stop play by saying “all done”, standing still, and avoiding eye contact
 - When the dog comes up to investigate your statue-like body language, give the dog a treat then walk away to end the game
- Repeat the game to teach the dog to differentiate playful body language with end-of-game body language
 - Add SAY PLEASE game to teach the dog how to initiate play politely
 - Do not play CHASE ME with the dog unless you use the verbal “gonna get you” cue (even if the dog picks up an inappropriate item)
- Pay attention to the dog’s body language - if this game is not fun for the dog, do not chase them!

TO YOUR SPOT!

Teach the dog to enjoy going into the crate, relaxing in the crate, and waiting patiently in the crate. If you are not using a crate with your dog, play with going into another room, pen, bed, or tether spot.

WHY: dogs need to have a pleasant, secured place to feel safe and relaxed, creating this association with a crate helps keep the dog out of trouble and limits stress when the humans are away.

- First, place a breadcrumb trail of treats leading up to and into the crate and allow your dog to eat them
- If the dog is too nervous to go all the way in, place even more treats just barely out of reach so the dog gets a treat jackpot for every step forward
- Repeat until the dog is easily running in and out of the crate and eating up all the treats with confidence
- Then, say “to the crate” or similar cue just before tossing a small handful of goodies to the back of the crate
 - Repeat multiple times until the dog’s response is instant
 - Make sure to only cue one time then wait patiently for the dog to figure out how to get the goodies
- Next, say “to the crate” and wait for the dog to go into the crate (however long it takes), then toss in the handful of goodies to reward the behavior
 - Repeat multiple times until the dog responds immediately and excitedly when you give the verbal cue
- Next, instead of immediately tossing the treats when the dog enters the crate, wait for the dog to pause for a moment in the crate before tossing the treat
 - If the dog runs out, no treat
 - Only look for 1 second of patience to start then start building duration as your dog masters shorter time periods

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- Next, wait for the dog to sit or lay down before tossing treats
 - Do not cue a sit or down, simply wait for the dog to offer it
 - Holding the treat in a closed fist close to the entrance to the crate may help the dog troubleshoot to figure out the correct response
- Add distance to improve performance by standing a step or two further away from the crate with each successful repetition
 - Eventually, you can be at the other end of the room and your dog will enthusiastically race all the way to their spot!
- Continue expanding on duration and distance, you can also add distractions, like closing the gate, leaving the room, eating dinner, having company over, etc
- Adding a good chew bone during crate sessions will help encourage the dog to stay put for longer periods of time and is a great way for the dog to practice self-soothing
- Practice throughout the day, not only when you leave, to encourage a positive association

SHRED HAPPENS!

Teach the dog when it is fun and appropriate to shred and rip apart items.

WHY: dogs need an appropriate outlet for stress relief and destruction is their favorite!

- Find an item that will hold kibble - plastic bottle with cap removed, open cardboard box, old rag rolled up, etc - and stuff it with your dog's meal (or part of their meal)
 - Start with really easy items so your dog has a high success rate
 - Bait with higher value goodies like pieces of hot dog or liver treats to add motivation
- Gradually make items more challenging by adding a shredding component
 - Examples:
 - Kibble, wrapped in a paper towel, stuffed in a plastic bottle
 - Kibble, crumpled up in paper bags, stuffed in a closed cardboard box
 - Kibble, wrapped in a rag, wrapped in a towel tied in a knot
 - Kibble, wrapped in multiple strips of cloth, stuffed into a holey roller toy
 - The ideas are endless!
 - Only increase the difficulty if the dog masters an easier version of the puzzle
- Always give a verbal cue like "shred it!" and encourage the dog with playful body language to establish when it is appropriate to destroy items
- Say "all done" when all of the kibble is found and toss a treat in another room so you can clean up the carnage.
- Do not play with dogs that will ingest the objects, only promote food eating!
- Play often so the dog has to work to access their meals!

Please contact Kelsey with any questions, comments, or concerns!! Congratulations on helping your pup become
Pawsitively Trained!

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