

## TRAINING WITH PLAY

My dog and I enjoy games like fetch, and tug. Therefore I can use them for training. I never play a game that doesn't have a command related to it. If I'm not communicating with my dog she can do whatever she wants. That's not how I play.

When we play fetch there are four commands I use: fetch, come, sit, and out (you are welcome to use your own). Your dog should have an idea what the commands mean even if she's not perfect at them. The game will help polish the obedience. Using the commands keeps a rhythm in the game and her attention on what I am doing. It looks like this:

I have the ball, I get her attention "Arrow!" I throw the ball "Fetch"

She runs out to get it. The minute she picks it up I say "Come!" because any time she's going to run toward me I'm using the command "Come."

When she gets close to me I say "Sit!" she sits, and "Out" for her to drop the ball.

And then we start all over again.

If your dog is not yet good at the 'out' command, play with two balls. When they sit and you ask them to 'out', show them the ball you have. You have a bigger brain and a thumb, she will figure out that you won't throw the second ball until she drops the first. And while she's fetching the second ball, you can pick up the first ball. I use this method when my dog plays with someone she doesn't know or small children. It keeps others from reaching toward my dog's mouth while she is holding the ball.

Tug of war has three commands: 'take it', 'get it get it get it', and 'out'. Please use a toy long enough to give you both plenty of room to grip, and only use one or two toys for tug, so everything in the house doesn't turn into a tug toy.

Tug looks like this:

I hold out the toy, playfully and say 'take it'. My dog grabs her end of the toy. I say 'get it get it get it' with enthusiasm and pull the toy without jerking. She pulls back. Game on.

We tug, she tugs hard, I let up a little, I tug hard, she gets surprised, I win and do a victory lap around the house. I return to her and say 'take it'. She does and she pulls hard now. I let her win, she does a victory lap around the house and brings it back to me because tug of war is impossible to play by yourself.

As long as she never tries to use her teeth to make me let go the game can go on. If she tries to bite my hand to make me let go the game ends. I just stop playing. She can have the toy but no one to tug with.

I will use the 'out' command during tug for practice and/or if I think she is getting over aroused. It's a safety measure during tug.

Your dog will learn to tug as hard as you want to and can learn to play at different levels for the different people in your household, if you hold them to it. Pulling gently can still be fun.

Tug does not make your dog aggressive. If you have an aggressive dog tug may not be an appropriate game. Dogs will also play tug together but that's another discussion.

Training while playing uses your dog's brain and body at the same time, which is good for young dogs who don't have enough to do or think about. Once your dog gets used to the commands of play the games go easily and you and your dog will be more satisfied. It's an easy fun way to polish training and build your relationship.

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Bring Rover Over

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