

PLAYING RETRIEVE – CHEAT SHEET

GOAL: To play a game with the dog which incorporates fun, training, and exercise. Please use this sheet for a quick reminder of how we recommend playing retrieve with a dog who already knows how to retrieve. If you would like to view the detailed version, please use the following pages for reference.

GENERAL RULES:

- These instructions are for dogs that pick up the ball, bring it back, and then drop it upon return.
- Use a toy that the dog will enthusiastically retrieve; good choices are balls and plush squeaky toys
- Never move toward, chase after or follow the dog when it has the toy; the dog should come to you. Movement toward the dog will encourage many dogs to play 'keep away'.
- Do not put your hand on the toy until the dog has dropped it.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Show the dog that you have the toy, get the dog excited, and then throw it. When the dog picks up the toy, praise and make noise, encouraging the dog to return with the toy.
2. When the dog returns, pick up the toy when he drops it in front of you. If the dog does not automatically drop the toy, ask the dog to 'drop it', then give him a treat and pick up the toy.
3. Hold the toy in your hands at chest height (do NOT allow the dog to grab it), and wait for the dog to sit. Cue the dog to 'sit' if he does not offer it.
4. Throw the ball immediately after he sits, as a reward for his behavior.
5. Repeat.

HELPFUL HINTS

- With a dog who is not highly motivated to retrieve, either don't require the dog to sit, or give a treat after he sits, and then throw the toy.
- For toy-motivated dogs, if the dog does not automatically drop the toy, show the dog a second toy, and ask the dog to 'drop it'; throw the second toy immediately after the dog drops the first toy.

RETRIEVE TRAINING (DETAILED)

GOAL: To teach the dog a fun game which incorporates training and exercise, and to drop items when asked.

GENERAL RULES:

- Assess your dog with different toys, to determine which your dog is most motivated to retrieve
- Never chase after or follow the dog when it has the toy
- Do not put your hand on the toy until the dog has dropped it

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introducing the game: Start with two similar toys, i.e., both should be tennis balls or plush squeaky toys.
2. 'Tease' the dog with the first toy, show and entice the dog with the toy – if using a tennis ball, bounce it on ground; if using a plush squeaky or tug toy, squeak the squeaker and move it back and forth close to the ground, in front of the dog.
3. Throw the toy a short distance (approximately 6 - 10 feet).
4. If the dog does NOT pick up the toy, try a higher value toy. If the dog is still not interested, you may need to teach retrieve by means of a different game, such as tug.
5. If the dog picks up the toy, but does not immediately return to you, get excited! Clap your hands, say the dog's name (do NOT say 'come') to attempt to encourage the dog to return to you.
6. If the dog returns, trade the toy for a treat. Do NOT touch the toy with your hands. DO follow the instructions for 'drop it' (next page). If the dog is reluctant to release the toy for a treat, use a higher value treat and on the next throw, use a lower value toy.
7. If the dog returns without the toy, praise, treat, and then pick up the toy and start over. On next throw, praise less enthusiastically as the dog gets the toy and returns to you. The timing of your praise and encouragement can influence when many dogs drop the toy.
8. If the dog does not return, show dog second toy and repeat steps two and three, throwing second toy AWAY from dog and first toy.
9. When the dog releases the first toy, pick up the toy.
10. If the dog still does not release the first toy, throw several treats on the ground to encourage the dog to drop the toy and eat the treats. Start over with a lower value toy (and a higher value second toy as 'trade')
11. After the dog picks up second toy, return to step 5, enticing the dog to return with second toy.
12. After 5-10 repetitions, and if the dog is interested in picking up the toy every time, but not reliably returning with it, you are ready for level two (below).
13. If the dog is NOT interested in picking up the toy every time, keep practicing. Continue to experiment with changing the timing of your praise and the value of treats and toys.

IF THE DOG PICKS UP THE TOY, BUT DOES NOT REGULARLY BRING IT BACK:

1. Begin with steps 2 – 5 above.
2. If the dog returns toy, trade toy for treat.
3. If the dog does not return toy, sit in a chair and ignore the dog and WAIT.
4. MOST dogs will lose interest in the toy after a few seconds to several minutes (if you have done a good job enticing the dog in step one, and have chosen an appropriate toy- a stuffed squeaky toy is a poor choice for a dog who enjoys destroying toys) and come over to you to interact. Be patient! If they don't lose interest after a minute, start playing (by yourself!) with the second toy to entice the dog.
5. If they return to you without the toy, PRAISE, QUICKLY toss the second toy, and then pick up the first toy while they are chasing after the second toy, and return to your chair. Start over at step 4.
6. If they return to you with the toy, PRAISE, feed a treat, and then QUICKLY toss the second toy. Repeat.
7. Once the dog is routinely bringing the toy back 95% of the time, start requiring that the dog 'sit' before the toy is thrown.
8. If desired, start randomly decreasing the frequency with which you give a food reward. Throwing the ball is the reward for bringing it back.
9. Some dogs are less motivated to retrieve toys and will always require a treat for bringing the toy back.

DROP IT:

1. When the dog returns with the ball, hold a treat directly in front of the dog's nose.
2. When the dog releases the ball, pick up the ball at the same time you deliver the treat into the dog's mouth. If you feed the treat before picking up the ball, the dog might pick the ball up again before you can get to it!
3. Throw the ball again.
4. Once the dog starts quickly releasing the ball every time the dog returns, start saying 'drop it' before presenting the treat.
5. Once the dog starts releasing the ball as soon as you say 'drop it', start producing the treat as a reward (i.e., comes from your treat bag) instead of as a lure (put right in front of dog's nose).
6. Some dogs may be more motivated to 'drop it' with a second ball (or toy) as a lure, instead of treats.
7. With many dogs, once they understand the game, you can start intermittently feeding treats as a reward and eventually eliminate them. The game (continued play) is the reward.



Shelter Dogs

A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON