

Teaching your dog “Fetch”

Some dogs will do whatever you want them to, just to get some positive attention. Find the reward that best motivates your dog and stick with it. Maybe it's a squeaky toy (these work great especially for dogs who don't usually play with squeaky toys), or maybe a Treat Training Tube stuffed with treats that only you can get out.

Work with your dog daily in 5 to 15 minute sessions. Keep training fun, and end sessions on a high note with reward for a job well done. If you feel yourself getting frustrated or tired, quit and try again later.

With your dog on a long leash, give your dog the command "sit." Take the object and toss it a few feet from the dog. Give the command, "fetch," and let your dog run after the toy. Once he has it in his mouth, gently draw him back to you by means of the lead. Show him a tasty food treat and give him the command, "release" or "drop it". It is very important that your pet give the object to you willingly. This is not a tug-of-war. Retrieving breeds will learn this trick quickly, and may play for hours. Other dogs may not be so enthusiastic about surrendering their favorite toy, so make sure you reward success exuberantly, lavishing your dog with praise and treats.

Once your dog reliably brings the object back to you, remove the leash and have him fetch the object on his own. For a more advanced "fetch," teach your dog the names of different objects. Once he understands the concept of "fetch," work with one object at a time and call it by name until he can identify the object by name. For example, if you want your dog to get the morning newspaper, start by throwing a paper. Give the command "fetch paper." Your dog should bring you only the paper to receive his reward. As your dog learns the names of different objects, give him some mental exercise by laying out 3 or 4 different objects and asking for them by name. See how smart your dog is.

Continue to practice this over and over. Always use a happy singsong voice and lots of positive reinforcement. Eventually, your dog will understand and will begin fetching all kinds of things.

The keys to success when teaching your dog tricks are patience, practice, praise, and persistence (the 4 P's). Every step in the right direction should be rewarded as though your dog had just won the lottery. Tricks are fun – and learning how to do them should be fun, too.

Clicker Training “Fetch” for the dog with a natural fetch drive

If, due to his breeding, your dog has a natural fetch drive, and he naturally drops whatever he's got (in exchange for a treat at this stage), then you're able to skip a

couple of steps. However, his current age will affect his attention span, so keep expectations realistic.

Until your dog has totally learned “fetch,” I recommend the kids NOT do this activity with him because timing, etc. is so important.

This is a clicker training exercise.

- 1) Get a special “fetch” toy you use only for this game; make sure it’s something he can easily pick up and has a rope or handle. I used a ball on a rope.
- 2) Stock your treatbag with a couple different kinds of training treats, e.g. the soft treats and maybe small bits of hot dog or cheese.
- 3) Make sure your dog’s had some exercise before you do this activity.
- 4) “Charge the clicker” by having your dog “look” and “sit” and “down,” giving him the command + click + treat a few times so he’s paying attention to you.
- 5) Have your dog “sit” in front of you and present the toy a few inches in front of his mouth so he has to reach out and grab it. Just before his mouth touches the toy, say “fetch.”
- 6) As soon as his mouth touches the toy, CLICK (no treat yet)
- 7) Start backing up a few steps and coax him with an excited voice to keep him coming toward you.
- 8) While he’s still interested in the toy, toss it about 5 feet away.
- 9) As soon as his mouth touches the toy on the ground, CLICK (no treat yet)
- 10) When he has the toy in his mouth, crouch down and use an excited voice to say “come”
- 11) When he comes to you, say “drop it” (or he may just drop it without being asked), then CLICK + TREAT + LOTS OF PRAISE.