



NEW DOG OWNER TRAINING PROGRAM

HOW TO PLAY WITH YOUR DOG

The information in this handout is intended as a general guide only

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Control the games, control the dog . . .

The kinds of games you play and how you play them will directly influence your dog's behaviour (see our handout Good Games, Bad Games). A large number of behaviour problems seen in adult dogs can be traced back to the games they played as puppies. Do the games you play with your puppy encourage grabbing, biting or chasing?

"Having a dog is largely a matter of teaching the dog self-control. A good dog - and a safe dog around children - sits when he wants to jump, resists when he wants to take, and releases what he wants to hold onto. Anything you can do to foster that kind of control is for the best. Everything you do with your dog teaches him something! Make sure that the games you play foster the behaviours and attitudes you want ... Good games promote cooperation and control." - Sarah Wilson, Good Owners, Great Pets

Don't over-stimulate your dog – avoid competing for the prize

Avoid any action that might be mistaken as a challenge or teasing. Don't hover and pounce. Avoid games of 'keep-away', taunting the dog with the toy before it is thrown, wrenching it out of the dog's mouth after a momentary game of 'tug-of-war' and dangling the toy out of reach or behind your back to keep the dog from grabbing it away from you. These games increase dominant, pushy behaviour. These might be good ways to entice a shy dog to play, but should be avoided with a highly motivated, confident dog. A dog who enjoys playing these games with the adults in the family cannot possibly know that it isn't the same game when the five-year-old holds his peanut butter sandwich above his head. Tug-of-war games become merely annoying when clean laundry is ripped from the clothesline - it's a dangerous game when the adult dog plays it with a passer-by on a bicycle, or snares a running child.

Your dog should have two types of toys
Pacifier toys - chew toys (i.e. the ones he should choose instead of your shoes or furniture), 'Kongs' and treat balls are great pacifiers.

Interactive toys - balls, squeaky toys and tug toys (i.e. the ones that he enjoys with you).



You are not a toy!

Don't use your body or clothing as part of any game. The most certain way to tell your dog that you are a littermate or a lower pack member is to act like one. You are not a dog. Do not get down on your hands and knees and growl at your dog, or play pushing, wrestling games which encourage biting.



Use your voice effectively

High pitched squealing makes you sound like a squeaky toy (i.e. a wounded animal), which brings out the predator in your dog. Whining makes you sound like another puppy - a playmate, not a pack leader. Children and women are usually the most prone to high pitched tones. "No-o-o-o-o! D-o-o-n't! Mum!" If you are giving a command or a reprimand, use your voice effectively. Lower your voice, be calm and matter-of-fact. Tell, don't ask. Give direction (i.e. Stop that, do this).

Use your body posture as well as your voice

If your dog isn't taking you seriously, stand up so you are taller than your dog. Look down on him as you give a command. If the dog is trying to steal something from you, whether its his favourite toy or your T-bone steak, use your body language and voice to let him know that he doesn't stand a chance. Don't squeal, don't pull away or raise the item above your head; this will encourage a chase response. Move toward the dog, hug the item close to your body and make eye contact. Lower your tone of voice.

The winner keeps the trophy

Control all access to interactive toys. Squeaky toys, balls, Frisbees, tug toys are stored out of reach, not left on the floor. You select the toy. You decide when the game starts, what the rules are, and when the game ends. The dog should never be allowed to wander off with the toy when the game is over. It is your toy and you allow the dog to play with it when you say so.

You make the rules

Retrieving games can teach control. Start with short throws on-leash. Incorporate the SIT or DOWN and STAY commands in every game. "Sit - good sit!" "Stay" (toss the toy) "Get it!"- or-"Fetch!" "Bring it here!" "Sit"- "Out." The delivery and release of the toy are very important. The dog should remove himself from the toy. Don't allow the dog to initiate games of keep-away or tug-of-war. Stop the game when the dog is still eager to play, not when he decides to quit. Take the toy; "Out" (You might trade for a treat). Tell him, "OK, that's enough, good game!" - "Leave it." Place the toy in plain sight for several minutes. He may not touch it once you say the game is over. When he has resigned himself to the fact that he can't have it, quietly put the toy away until your next play session. Never allow your dog to shove toys at you or bark at you, demanding that you play *his* games.

REMEMBER...

Control games help teach commands and reinforce good manners - the rules are black and white.

No going for the toy until the "get it" command is given (Stay!)

No leaping for the toy when it is in the owner's hand (Leave it!)

No jumping up (Off!)

No Barking (Quiet!)

No leaping or lunging (Off/Sit!)

The reward for following the rules is getting to play!



For more information, read our booklets [Good Games; Bad Games and Intelligent Diversions and Creative Play](#) or go to www.diamondsintheruff.com