

Teaching Your Dog to Fetch

Everyone talks about playing fetch with dogs and how fun it is for both humans and dogs. However, after an afternoon of trying to get your dog to bring anything back, you may think that your dog is the only dog on the planet that does not enjoy a game of fetch.

Some dogs fetch and drop easily. Retrievers and spaniels, bred to hunt, are naturals. Other dogs, like terriers, were bred to find their prey and kill it, so they are more likely to hold onto things. That is why it's ideal to start teaching the rules of the game when a dog is a puppy, although adults can learn, too.

Pick a toy that your dog likes to mouth. Fleece toys, soft disks, squeak toys and soft balls are all good choices. Don't give him anything he can eat, like rawhide; he may not want to give it up.

Then throw the toy. When your dog chases it, praise him.

When he picks up the toy, call him to you immediately. As he approaches you, praise him again and tell him to drop it. When he does, pile on the praise again. If he drops it a distance from you, don't worry. Simply go get the toy and throw it again. Keep praising him the closer he gets and finally praise him only for dropping the toy at your feet.

Your dog may refuse to return the toy and beckon for you to chase him. Don't. Instead, throw another toy. Most often the dog will drop the first toy and chase the second. Praise the dog for chasing the second toy.

Gradually, he will learn that the toy-chasing game is fun even if you're not chasing him. And soon enough, he will bring the second toy back. If he doesn't, try reinforcing the game plan with an edible reward.

