

Games to Play with Your Pup: Tug

This game ties directly with your dog's "natural wiring." Your dog's hard-wired behaviors are predatory and to forage for fun and food. "Find it" games tune into your dog's instinct to rush prey. Rushing is moving suddenly towards prey, hopefully making it turn and flee. Your dog gets a great adrenaline rush from chasing prey or toys that can trigger the prey drive response in your dog. Once your dog has caught the prey, they will instinctually bite onto it and hold on, as if the "prey" will wriggle and try to get loose. Your dog has a natural desire to tear things apart to either get to food or to consume food - that instinct will be directed at the rope or stuffed toy.

Tug

Begin by showing your dog a toy that they like to tug with, invite your dog to take the toy by shaking it or wriggling it around on the ground and say "Get it". Once your dog has the toy, tug on the toy for a few seconds while saying "tug". When you are ready to turn the game off, grab up both ends of the toy taking up as much slack in the toy as possible, say "Drop It", and freeze your hands and arms stiff until the dog lets go of the toy. As soon as the dog lets go of the toy either cue your dog to sit or simply wait for them to sit. As soon as your dog sits, repeat from the beginning.

Key things to remember during this game:

- No teeth on skin, EVER – not even by accident!
- The person decides when the game is turned off
- The dog must release the toy and sit to turn the game back on.

If at any time your dog lands teeth on skin, drop the toy and walk away. Your dog will learn that putting teeth on your skin makes the most thrilling part of the game go away. Sure, your dog will end up with the toy but he will have lost his play partner and, because dog's are social animals, he will likely do his best to do whatever it takes for your not to leave the game.

After a few seconds you can resume the game with your dog. Some dogs will even bring the toy to you almost as an apology for messing up and asking you to come back and play.

At the end of your game you can let your dog keep one or both of his toys so he can chew on them while settling down.

This is a great game to play with your dog while teaching him how to control his impulsiveness.