

Teaching a Dog to Give or Drop an Item

Dogs, just like kids, need to be taught to "share" their stuff. We accidentally teach dogs to hoard and guard their food and toys by always taking things away from them and only playing tug with them, pulling things from their mouths. By doing this, dogs learn to compete with us for resources.

If you work to establish trust between you and your dog, your dog can learn humans approaching her food and toys is a good thing, that something great is about to happen.

Here is a quick video that explains how to establish trust: https://youtu.be/j_KZ7IXFvz8?t=63

And here's a few exercises you can do:

1) **Teach your dog to hold toys in his mouth:** Encourage your dog to hold toys in his mouth to get praise, attention, petting and snuggles. Wave and tease him playfully with a toy until he takes it in his mouth, and then pet and praise him. If he drops the item, withdraw your attention until he picks it up again, and then make a big deal out of it (if he doesn't get it, pick the item up and wave it enticingly to get him interested again). In time, your dog will pick up and drop items around you on his own because he's not worried you're going to wrestle them away from him.

2) **Exchange a toy or treat for the inappropriate object:** This is a great way to teach your dog what you DO want her to chew on, and save your stuff at the same time. Approach the dog with a treat and an appropriate toy. Wave the treat in front of her nose and when she drops the inappropriate object, give her the treat and then the toy. Start a game, and when she is distracted, take the inappropriate object.

3) **Teach her the Drop It cue:** When you are playing a game with your dog and she has a toy in her mouth, produce a treat and stick it right on her nose. As the dog is letting go of the item, say "give" or "drop." Praise and pet your dog enthusiastically. Treat her, *and immediately give the item back to your dog.* This is really important! Your dog is rewarded four times: praise, petting, treats and she gets the item back. How **awesome** is that?