

# TEACH YOUR DOG TO “DROP IT”

Teaching your dog to drop things, or to leave it, is the most effective way of getting them to let go of anything they're not supposed to have. It can also be a useful way to teach your dog to play constructively.

Teaching your dog to “drop it” is much more effective than chasing them or trying to take things off them by hand. Chasing a dog who has something in their mouth will turn this into a fun game and they will learn to run away from you instead.

You can teach your dog to “drop it” using a portion of their food or some of their toys, depending on what motivates your dog the most.

## TEACH YOUR DOG TO “DROP IT” USING FOOD

Start by teaching your dog the word “drop”. You can do this by building a positive association with the word.

You can also watch our step by step guide on teaching your dog to “drop it” on the Battersea YouTube channel.

### STEP 1 – SHOW YOUR DOG THAT THE WORD “DROP” EARNS THEM A FOOD REWARD

First, say the word “drop” once and put a small amount of your dog's food on the floor. Once your dog has finished eating and looks back at you for more, do this again. Practice this 10 more times, over a few short sessions. Once your dog begins to look for the food on the floor as soon as they hear the word “drop”, you're ready to move on.

### STEP 2 – ENCOURAGE YOUR DOG TO SWAP A TOY FOR FOOD

Now it's time to introduce one of your dog's toys. It will be easier to use a toy that's not their favourite as they'll be more likely to release it. Encourage your dog to play with the toy for a few seconds, then use your cue word “drop” and place a handful of food on the floor. It can be tempting to try and take the toy from them, but don't. Your dog needs to



be motivated to swap it on their own. Again, practice this over a few short sessions, with at least 10 repetitions per session.

### **STEP 3 – WAIT FOR YOUR DOG TO DROP THE TOY BEFORE REWARDING THEM WITH FOOD**

Now, repeat this process, but this time wait for your dog to drop the toy before you place the food on the floor. Once your dog is consistently dropping the toy before you offer the food, try doing it with a toy they like a little more. Continue practicing, until you have built up to using their favourite toy and they will successfully drop it when asked.

If your dog doesn't drop the toy, don't try and take it from them. Instead, stay calm and try to distract your dog with food instead. If this is necessary, your dog might need a break, or you may have moved on too quickly. Go back through the steps as far as you need to and try again at a later stage.

## **TEACH YOUR DOG TO “DROP IT” USING TOYS**

Some dogs may prefer toys to food and therefore are unlikely to drop them in exchange for a food reward. If this is the case with your dog, you will need to trade one toy for another. This is a great exercise for dogs who like to run away with toys. Your dog will eventually learn that without you, the toy's much less fun, so will be more likely to bring them back.

### **STEP 1 – TEACH YOUR DOG TO SWAP BETWEEN TWO TOYS**

Start with two toys that are either the same, or which your dog values the same. Throw one of the toys for them to fetch. When they come back to you, show them the second toy and play with it enthusiastically. It's important to show them how exciting and fun the second toy is, so that they want to drop the one they have. You may have to be patient but try not to lose your enthusiasm!

### **STEP 2 – MAKE SURE YOUR DOG FINDS THE SECOND TOY JUST AS REWARDING AS THE FIRST**

You may have to wait for your dog to drop the first toy but when they do, mark them, or respond to the action, with a 'Yes'. As soon as you've done this, play with them using the second toy, and make sure they're having just as much fun as with the first one.

### **STEP 3 – SWAP THE SECOND TOY FOR THE FIRST ONE (AND SO ON)**

While your dog is playing with the second toy, pick up the first one and repeat the process. With practice, your dog will begin to automatically drop the first toy when you offer them the second one. If your dog prefers a game of tug, you can do this instead, with two suitable toys, following the same steps.

### **STEP 4 – TEACH YOUR DOG TO ASSOCIATE THE WORD “DROP” WITH DROPPING A TOY**

Once your dog is consistently dropping the first toy when you show them the second one, you can introduce your cue word, “drop”. To start, practice as before, and say “drop” as your dog lets go of the toy. Keep doing this, and when your dog is immediately letting go of the toy when they hear the word “drop” you can move on to asking them to simply “drop” the first toy without using a second one.

Make sure that when your dog does respond to your cue word and drops the toy they are always rewarded.