

Dog: Drop It Command



Benefit

Teaching your dog to drop something on command means you will be able to get dangerous or unauthorized items away from her without problems or aggression. This comes in handy with everything from chicken bones to shards of plastic or glass, bits of toys, or your remote control—all detrimental things that a dog might scarf down or chew on.

Note: If your dog ever aggressively guards items (growls, bares her teeth, barks, snaps, or lunges if you try to take things from her), talk to our behavior department before you work on this command.

What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese, or a favorite toy.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.
- 5 minutes 2–3 times daily.

How to Train It

Step 1. When your dog has something in her mouth she would be likely to let go of (e.g. a tennis ball that you will throw for her), offer her a treat. As she releases the ball to get the treat say “drop it!” (or “release” or “give,” if you prefer, just choose one command and stick with it). Then let your dog get the ball again.

Step 2. Repeat this sequence (offer treat; say command; dog drops; give treat) several times over several training sessions or days. Begin to practice with other toys your dog is allowed to play with.

Step 3. As your dog begins to understand that you will trade a treat for whatever she has in her mouth, start to give the command first, then offer the treat or use the ball as a reward and toss it as she releases the object. The sequence now becomes: Say “drop it!”, your dog releases the object, and then you give her a reward (treat or toy). Again, it helps to practice this with toys you can then throw for your dog or play with for a minute. Getting the treat *and* the toy back is doubly rewarding.

Step 4. Begin to phase out the reward after your dog is getting “drop it” right every time, i.e. she should release things without first being promised a food reward. If she drops a toy, the reward can now simply be that you will toss the toy or pick it up and play tug with her. If she drops something very special and valuable, like a chicken bone she found on the street, then you should have a food treat to give her. You should think of trading a lower value item with a higher value item.

Tips and Pitfalls

- If your dog snaps the treats out of your hand, toss the treat on the ground after she releases the object.
- Remember not to physically take away the toy. Always wait until she drops it, give her a treat, and then pick up the toy to toss/play with again.
- Only move on to non-toy objects when you are 100% certain your dog will drop any toy, anytime, anywhere.
- Changing environments, like on a walk, helps reinforce that “drop it!” means anytime, anywhere.