

TEACHING THE TOY RELEASE

An important part of becoming a good leader and thereby having a calm, confident dog is to play the toy release game. This teaches the dog that you own the toys and you decide when play begins and ends.

This is a major step in establishing yourself as leader, and dogs with a calm, kind leader are happy self-confident dogs.

Have the puppy on a lead and hold a favorite tug toy in the other hand. Hold the lead with your non-dominant hand **about 18 inches** from the pup's collar.

Hold the toy in your dominant hand and wiggle the toy and invite the pup to tug by saying "get it, get it, get it". PULL the toy, keep the LEASH LOOSE.

After a few seconds of play, stop tugging or moving the toy, but keep a firm grip on it (keeping it low and directly in front of the pup). Tell the puppy "give" as you apply gentle pressure on the lead, very gentle, as you encourage him to release the toy. Be certain that you are not putting any pressure on the toy. As he relaxes his grip, tell him "yes!", good boy! And gently remove the toy from his mouth.

DO NOT raise the toy in the air. Stand up with it dangling by your side. You OWN it. **Calmly** praise the pup as he stares at it but leaves it alone. "Good leave it." Try to have a loose leash; the puppy is controlling himself. You have the lead in your hand if you need to correct him if he makes a grab, but then release the pressure a.s.a.p. and praise his self-control.

After a few seconds, initiate play again with "get it, get it, get it." Have fun, praise, enjoy.....and then after a bit, repeat the release.

Do this over and over (not too long, keep it fun). The puppy is having a terrific time, but he is also learning the very important lesson that you are the leader and that play is both started and ended by you.

Try to play this game regularly.