

In-House Behavior Modification Protocol Controlled Tug Game

This protocol to be used for dogs who become hyper and aroused in play and cannot settle.

Teach “drop it”

Before you start the tug game you must teach the dog a “drop it” cue. To do this, give the dog a tug rope to take into her mouth. When she has it in her mouth, show her a high value treat and AS she spits out the rope toy to get the treat say “drop it” in a cheerful voice and then praise and give her the treat (this is pairing the cue with the action). Then pick up the rope and give it back to her. Repeat this several times in a row. When you think you have associated the words “drop it” with the behavior of spitting the rope out of her mouth (about a dozen times) test your cue by saying “drop it” without showing the treat and if she does reward her heavily. From then on, you should not to show the treat up front to get the drop it behavior. Practice this exercise until she drops the rope any time you cue “drop it”.

Using cue during tug game

Once the dog knows “drop it” when she has the rope toy in her mouth, you can start incorporating the cue into your tug game. Offer her the tug toy. Encourage her to start to tug but before she gets too aroused – say “drop it”. If she does – say good girl, give her a treat and then give the tug toy back to her and start tugging again. Do this over and over until she learns to drop it during the game any time that you ask her to do so. Through the sessions allow her to tug with more and more force before asking her to drop it. If at any time she doesn’t drop the tug toy, you should release your hold of the toy and say “too bad” and walk away from her.

Add the cue “sit” after “drop it”

Once all is going well with the “drop it” cue during your game, start to add the behavior of “sit”. Tug with her for a while and then cue “drop it” – when she does say “good girl” and then cue “sit”. When she sits, say “good girl” and resume the game. The reward for dropping and sitting is to get the opportunity to tug again. As the training progresses, have her sit for varied amounts of time before the game resumes.