

The Fun Retrieve by Marcia Albert

A fun retrieve, the kind of game that we use when we simply want to toss an article, have the dog run and pick up in his mouth and then return it to us is done in three steps.

First, teach the dog to “COME” to you when called.

The recall is one of the most important commands a dog learns. If you have a dog that reliably comes to you then he can enjoy more freedom. Not only will you trust him more, but a great recall has been known to save many dogs' lives.

Here are a few guidelines to remember:

- Whenever your dog answers your call you must respond with so much praise that he thinks coming to you is the best thing he could possibly do!
- When your dog walks into a room and looks at you talk to him. Tell him he's handsome and brilliant, and then give him one of those treats that you **always** carry in your pocket.
- Never, ever call your dog to you to punish or to end his fun. If you must get your dog, go to him.
- Don't call him to do something he views as unpleasant, such as trimming his nails or giving him a bath.
- Call your dog only if you are certain he will come, Don't call him when there are distractions. If your competing with the neighborhood cat you may lose!!
- Whenever your dog comes to you make certain you touch his collar as you reward and praise. This will stop collar shyness.

Some good games to play are:

- Hide and Seek: Ask your dog to sit. Walk away and hide (make it an easy spot at first). Call him. When he finds you really praise and treat.
- Round Robin Recall: Three or more people take turns calling the dog. As soon as the dog goes to the caller he is praised. Mix up the order of the callers.
- Puppy in the Middle: Two people take turns calling the dog.

The following are good exercises to practice:

- Spring Loaded Recall: One person holds the dog's collar. The other person gets him excited. Runs away. Turns, opens his arms and calls the dog.
- Leash Recall: Walk with your dog. As soon as he gets distracted call him and as he comes to you take a few steps back. When he arrives, praise and treat.
- Long Line Recall: Put a 15-30 foot long line on your dog. When he gets distracted call him. If he hesitates give the line a little tug (don't reel him in). Once he gets to you, praise him and treat.

Remember to always touch his collar as he comes to you. Some dogs are collar shy and are very sensitive to a person reaching for the collar. You want to make certain your dog welcomes your touch.

Next, he must learn to “DROP”

- Go over to your dog when he has a favorite toy in his mouth.
- Offer him a **very tasty** treat and as you do command, “DROP”
- As the dog opens his mouth to take the treat praise him.
- Return the toy to him.
- In a few minutes repeat the exercise.
- Continue to do this in as many situations as possible until he understands the meaning of the command, “DROP”.

Finally, we teach the command “FETCH”

- With the dog at your side throw a treat about six feet away as you say, “FETCH” or “GET IT” or whatever you will use. Do this about 10 times a day for a week.
- Next, do the same with an object containing food, such as a toilet tissue roll with a fairly large treat in it, a Kong with a biscuit in it, etc. Try this a few times a day for 3 days.
- Then, tie a string around a squeaky toy. Toss it and have the dog go after it.
- Use “FETCH” or “GET IT” every time you toss an article that you expect the dog to go to.

Now, you are ready to put it all together: “FETCH”, “COME”, “DROP”.

Sometimes in the excitement of the game your dog may be reluctant to “COME” or to “DROP”. If so, use two toys or balls that are identical. Keep one with you, and toss the second. When he runs away with his prize after fetching begin to play with the one you have. Toss it up in the air, ignore him, laugh and run with it. In other words play the kid’s game, “Mine Is Better Than Yours”. It won’t take long before he comes to investigate. When he does, use your toy to get him to drop his. As he drops it, toss the one you are holding.