

TUG

The following information has been adapted from Dr. Brenda Griffin's [Playing Games with Shelter Dogs](#)

Tug is a great game for dogs with impulse control and arousal issues—there's nothing better to help burn off some energy in a hurry, and it does not take a lot of space to play this game. Dogs learn to “turn it ON” and “turn it OFF” while having fun—this is very important for those strong, excited, impulsive types of dogs!

Materials:

- Dog toy- one that he really likes

What To Do:

1. Encourage the dog to grab a toy by waving it in front of him. Reward him for getting it, by allowing him to have it.
2. Get it back from him after a minute by “trading” him the toy for a tasty treat.
3. Wave the toy again. Gradually work up to tugging – some dogs are naturals, others will need more encouragement. (Hint: Playing Chase IT may get a reluctant dog into the game!)

Rules To Tug:

Once the dog is “into” the game, it is time to begin teaching him some rules to play by. As long as the dog plays by these rules, he can get as excited as he wants!

- Teach him to leave the toy on your cue or command
- Have a release command such as “out”, “leave it”, “mine” or “thank you”
- The dog releases, gets a food reward, then cue him to re-take it (“tug”, “get it”, “yours”)
- The dog gets used to having it, releasing it, receiving a reward, being presented with it again
- The dog may not take or re-take the object until invited to do so –the penalty for doing so is a time out (game ends)
- Zero tolerance for accidental nips –the consequence of a tooth nip is that the game immediately ends

Once the dog is committed to the game, TUG UP! Dogs engage in tugging by pulling the opposite way that you are pulling. When they are first learning, let them pull forward as they tug. If they pull too hard, let the toy go so your balance is not lost. Once you see that they are committed to the game and you have done the sequence a few times safely with them (i.e. they tug it, release it, receive a reward, you present it again, then repeat), then you can begin to **pull UP** as they tug. This encourages them to pull DOWN making it MUCH easier for me. I can turn in a circle or move a step one way or the other while tugging up, as they tug down. This takes less effort on my part and also prevents the dog from pulling me off balance. Thus, tugging UP is easier and safer for the handler.