

Item Retrieval, Hold and Drop

In previous lessons we taught you how to get your dog to identify an item, touch the item and pick up the item. Here we will go over the steps on how to get them to retrieve, hold it and then drop the item. These are three separate lessons we will be putting into one to save a bit of space.

First we will be going over the item retrieval, for this we are going to refer back to the item identification lesson. There we showed you how to get your dog to identify a specific item, here we are having them identify that same item but pick it up.

Retrieval

- Start off with the item and your dog in front of you to keep it simple and easy on both you and your dog.
 - Try using a toy that they play with regularly (again to make it easy). Keep the toy in your hand and have them just touch it to begin with. Once they have touched it, have them take it or pick (choose a word or command that is easy for them to relate to the action).
 - Do this several times so they understand the command and the action go together. Also on every successful attempt to ensure that you are rewarding the action.
- When they understand the short distance start putting the item or toy farther away from you both and have them get it, again rewarding them for successful attempts.

Hold

- Start with your dog next to you and the item in your hand, tell them to take or pick the item from your hand. Naturally they are going to hang onto it but what we are trying to teach them is to hang onto it for an extended period of time and only release it when we say to.
 - With the item or toy in their mouth, place your hand under their chin and tell them to HOLD. If they drop it, no worries just have them pick it backup and repeat the process again.
 - At first only have them hold the item for a couple of seconds, this will ensure a success rate and encourage them to want to continue to train.
- When they have made it for several seconds without dropping it then add more time, rewarding them for successful attempts.

Drop

- For dropping the item on command, start back at the beginning, have them hold the item in front of you and your hands underneath their chin. Tell them to HOLD, after a second or to tell them to DROP (note, the command does not have to be DROP, it can be given or anything that you want it to be.) the item into your hands.
 - You will repeat this over several times until it becomes second nature to them, the more practice that you do the faster the response is going to be.
 - There could be an issue with them not wanting to drop the item, this is extremely common for multiple dogs and owners. When they do this, I

can't stress this enough, do not try and pry it out of their mouth or start pulling at it. Doing this action causes them to think that you are playing a game and will continue to play until you get frustrated and give up. Try this instead, place your hand under the chin and in the other have a treat or another toy that they like. Barter with them, they will get in the habit of everytime that you say drop they get something. Personally I prefer to give them pets and ear scratches but on occasion I have been known to give a treat to a pup.

- There are several methods to get your dog to drop/release the item that you are wanting but the gentlest that I have seen and used is the barter. One other that isn't bad but I personally will only use it if the dog has something that he/she isn't supposed to have and that is putting your finger up under the chin and pushing up. This is very uncomfortable for the dog and they generally will release whatever they have just to get away.
- Regardless of the method that you use to get them to drop the item your goal is for them to do it on command and want to continue to do it.

Now putting all three together

- Now when you start putting all three together start at a short distance so that we have a higher chance of success rather than failure.
 - Put the item or toy in your hand and have them pick it up, hold it until told to drop it. All three should be done with a command so that they understand what you are wanting them to do.
 - When you are satisfied with the success rate then move the item to the ground, again repeat until you are satisfied.
 - Continue to move farther away from the item not making it harder but more interesting for them.
 - When they have become really good at retrieving and holding the item, start having them do different things with this task, such as having them pick up the specific toy and have them place it into the toy bucket. This is a brand new task for them, cleaning up after themselves.

Now that you and your dog are successful at Retrieving, Holding and Dropping the item on command go and have fun with it. There are so many different tasks that can be accomplished with this new skill. As always ensure that you are rewarding all successful tries and redirecting the failed attempts.