

Picking up an item

It seems that the more that we try to get our dogs to pick up an item they either refuse to do it, grab items that you don't want them to grab or they grab it and run away with it. Don't worry, this is a common ordeal even with the best trainers, regardless of what they tell you. Below are some simple steps to get started so you don't frustrate yourself and make it, so your dog doesn't ever want to to pick up an item for you ever again.

Make it fun and simple

Anytime that you work with a dog you need to make it fun for the both of you and ensure that you make it simple. By doing this you lower the chance of failure, frustration and ensure that they will want to continue to train.

- Find an item that they are always picking up and playing with. For example, use a ball that they always play with. By using a familiar item it will make it easier for them to understand what you are asking of them. Give the item or toy a name so that they know what you want them to get (in another lesson we went over item identification for your dog).
- When your dog understands what item that you are asking them to get then start the process of adding other and new items to the mix, i.e. Keys, Phone, pen, etc.
- Each item you will have them identify it and when they can pick it out have them pick it up. Ensure that you are using old items and non-breakable items so that you lower the risk of injury to your dog's mouth. Also with every new item the process of them identifying it starts over.
- Give them time to practice with each item, do not rush it. Every item creates a different challenge, for example, picking up a ball is not the same as picking up a pen or keys.

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- Place the item (for this we will use keys) that you want them to pick up into your hand and have them sniff it and then tell him to touch it with their nose. When they have identified that you want them to take the keys from your hand, reward them with love or treats so that they will want to continue the process.
 - Continue to repeat this process of having them take the keys from your hand until you are satisfied with the success rate.
- When they have been successful at taking the keys from your hand move them to a different location, i.e. the ground. Again coach and give commands the whole time, encourage them. If they only touch it several times, reward them by telling them "Good touch" but redirect them by telling them to pick it up.
 - Same as the previous step, continue to have them pick the keys off the ground until you are satisfied with the success before you move on to the next level.

When you are satisfied with your dog's success rate of picking up items from your hand and off the floor, have them get the items from other locations i.e. another room, the yard etc.

Just like before, make it fun for them as well as for you. The more that you practice this task/skill the more interesting that you will be able to make it. Good luck and as always, reward the good and redirect the bad.