

TOY

Control and Targeting

A photo story by Nancy Gyes, photos by Marcy Mantell

This story is an outline for tugging, retrieving, and using your toys in agility. For each segment you need to think about how to expand on the process; for example, I show you how to set up a short "dead-toy" retrieve, which you will want to expand on until you can send your dog a longer distance. In the two-toy jump game, expand the game until you have three jumps in a row so you are practicing finish-line skills. Build on the 180 jump drill until you can throw your toy to the finish line and run a whole course on your way to the toy. Once you have control of your toys around agility obstacles, there is no end to the fun training games you can create!

If you need to tell your dog, "NO! Leave it" when placing the toy, then you're moving too quickly through the incremental steps of toy-control training. Only move on once your dog happily lets you place the toy and won't cheat by going to the toy before directed to do so. Using threats or corrections defeats the purpose of the exercise. 🐾

Develop an intense desire in your dog to tug with you



Your dog should keep tugging until you give the release cue



Practice releases only when your dog is tugging strongly.



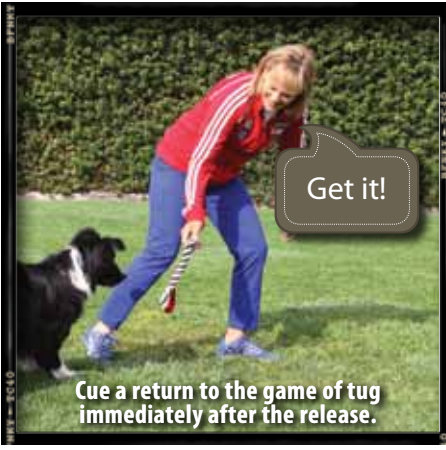
Leave!

Stop all of your motion and give your release word.



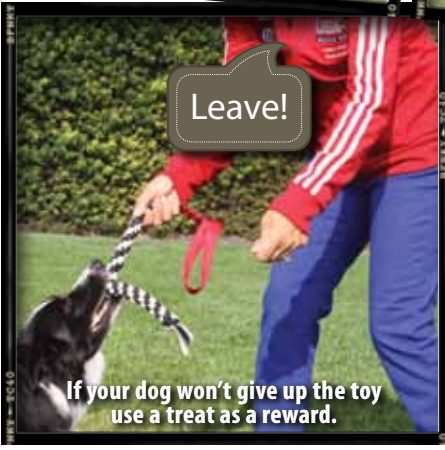
Good dog!

Praise your dog after the release.



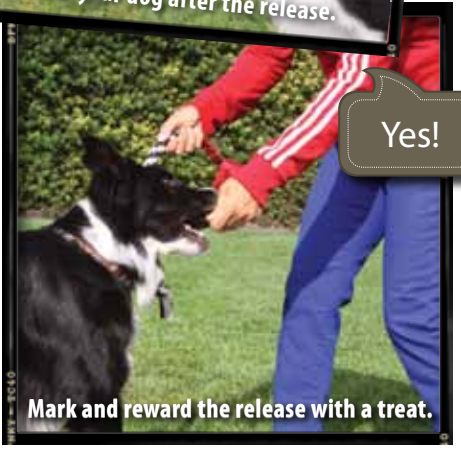
Get it!

Cue a return to the game of tug immediately after the release.



Leave!

If your dog won't give up the toy use a treat as a reward.



Yes!

Mark and reward the release with a treat.



Practice running with your dog while you carry the toy.

Heel!



Stop moving and give your dog permission to tug.

Yes! Get It!



Get a good game going.

Carrying a toy while training



Use your release word and start again.

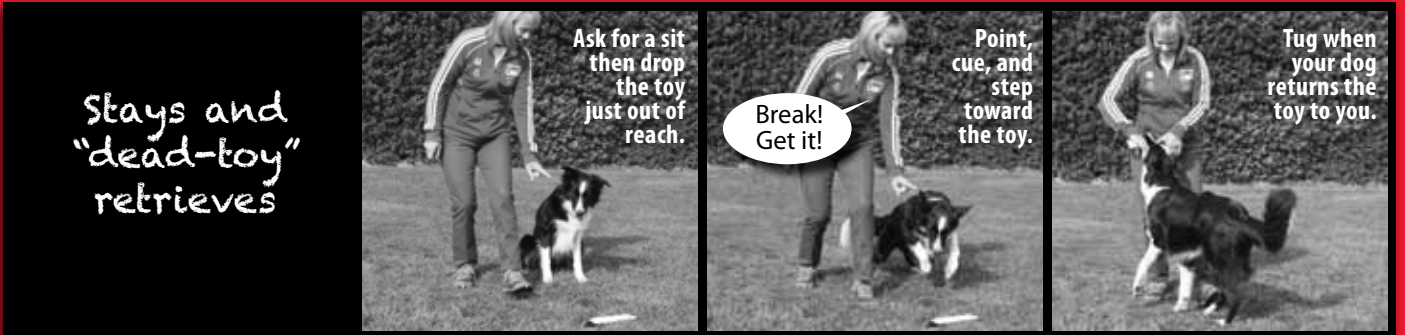


Stop running and use your end-of-tug cue if your dog grabs the toy.

Leave!



Lots of praise when he drops the toy.



Dog's attention focused on his line and the toy



**Post turn
targeting games
with the toy**

Sit-stay at your side, drop the toy by your opposite side.



Break!

Release your dog and turn with him to the toy.



Get it!

Complete the post turn to the toy.



Drop the toy again at your side, then walk forward.



Break!

Your dog should come to your side.



Get it!

Then turn with him to the toy.



Good boy!

Start again, increasing your distance from the toy.



Break!

Release, turn...



Get it!

...send to toy.



Sit-stay in front of a jump; drop the toy behind your dog.

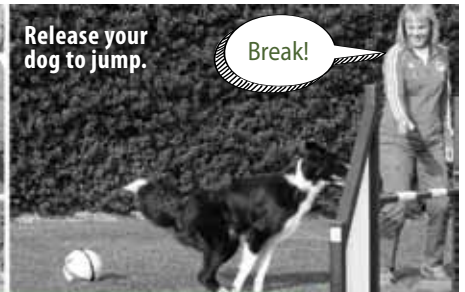


Stand close to the wing of the jump.



Release your dog to jump.

Break!



Front cross at a jump and return to toy target

Get it!

Front cross back to the toy.



Complete the front cross.



Your dog should run to the toy.



Finish-Line toy



Line up your dog so he's facing the first jump of a 180.



Toss your toy to a spot on your dog's line after the second jump.



Break!
Go over!

Release your dog to move toward the jump.



Good dog!
Stay!

Take a short lead-out toward the first jump.



Your dog should take both jumps with you moving parallel to them.



And finish by running to the target toy.

Two-toy targeting go-ons



Line up your dog in front of a jump and drop a toy behind him.



Throw a toy to the landing side of the jump.



Go on!
Get it!

Release your dog to jump and go to the toy.



Run with your dog and tug when you get to the toy.



Line up on the new side of jump, drop the toy behind your dog.



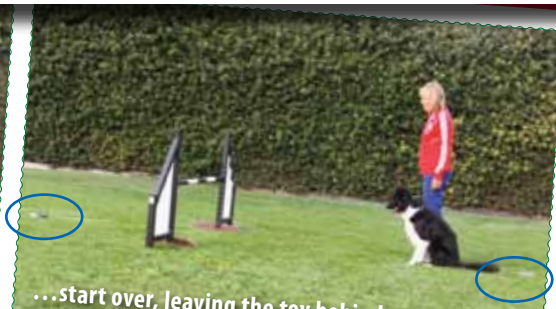
Go on!
Get it!

Run with your dog to the toy you left behind.



Gimme that!

After a game of tug...



...start over, leaving the toy behind you again.



You will be running to the toy you left on the other side.

Jump around the clock with send to toy as target



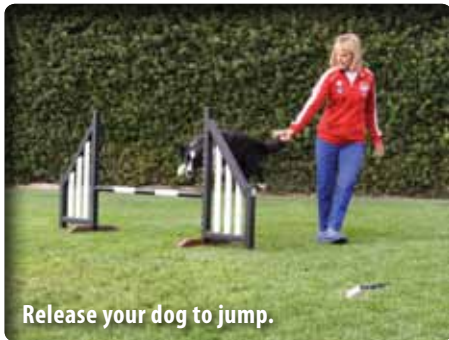
Line up your dog in front of an angled jump and toss the toy to the landing side.



Release and run with your dog.*



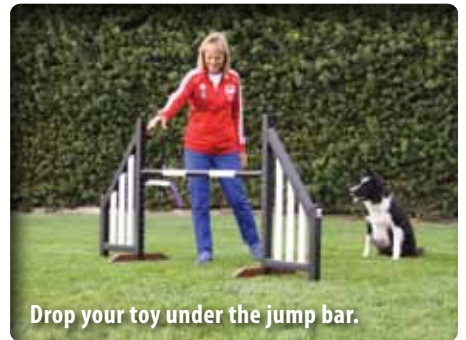
Line up facing the jump and toss the toy to the side.



Release your dog to jump.



And turn with him toward the toy.



Drop your toy under the jump bar.



Your dog should jump, not duck under to grab the toy.



Place a toy at the jump wing.



Ask your dog to jump before picking up the toy.

*Practice all of the angles by going around the clock.

Stash a toy

Stash a toy at the tunnel exit to reward tight turns out of the tunnel.

Teach tight turns from the tunnel using the toy.

Target your weaves.

Nancy Gyes and her husband Jim Basic run Power Paws Agility in San Jose, California. Nancy has been the AKC World Team Coach since 2006 and has been on the AKC World Team herself seven times: four times with Scud and three with Riot. Nancy and Riot earned both a 1st and 2nd place in Individual Agility at the FCI Agility World Championships. Nancy won the USDAA Grand Prix Finals four years in a row with three different dogs: Scud, Riot, and Wicked. Nancy and Wicked were also on the winning team at a Dog Agility Masters championship. Nancy and Riot were the 24" AKC National champions twice, and Ace was second in the Championships in 2012. Nancy and Ace represented the USA at the European Open five times and they were the first US duo to make it to the podium, earning a bronze medal in 2011. Nancy shares her life with four Border Collies aged 13 to 2 years. Contact Nancy at www.powerpawsagility.com where you can also view articles and videos.