

Quick guide to...

Fetch!

Dogs can learn to fetch anything (balls, retrieve dummies, slippers, cans of beer from the fridge, lost children etc.), but the most common item is a ball, especially in the beginning.

Fetch comes naturally to some dogs, and others spend years learning how to do it. Break it down into individual elements if necessary. **The 4 main elements to fetch are:**

- 1) **The search or chase** – which may start with a wait (while the ball is thrown or hidden).
- 2) **Collecting the ball** and keeping hold of it.
- 3) **Recall** (without dropping the ball).
- 4) Giving up the item – either dropped on the ground (**'Drop'**) or placed in your hand (**'Give'**). This might also include a sit to present – either in front of you or by your side in heelwork position.

Here are 4 typical issues, plus some solutions:

- My dog won't pick up the toy!
 - o Play tug instead, encourage them to have fun.
 - o Use a special toy with a hidden treat – give them the treat when they start to follow it or look for it.
 - o Chase after the toy as well – add in a bit of competition!

- My dog won't come back!
 - o Forget fetch for a bit, and concentrate on recall. Reward them for coming back, even if they've dropped the toy or stopped looking for it.
 - o Use food to reward the recall.

- My dog comes back, but won't drop the ball!
 - o Use food as an exchange. Reward with food as soon as they've dropped it.
 - o Or use another ball as an exchange. Only throw the second ball when they've dropped the first one.

- My dog loves to play, but keeps jumping up and barking until I throw the ball again.
 - o Only throw the ball when they are sitting still, and are quiet.
 - o Make sure you have lots of breaks during play, so you can practise heelwork or stay-recall (using food rewards): this teaches them to change their focus, and to stop obsessing about their toy!