

# Drop-It

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*Drop-it* is a great cue and should be taught to every puppy. Trying to pull items out of a puppy's mouth can be **challenging, dangerous, and misunderstood** by the puppy as an act of aggression by you.

Teaching *drop-it* starts off as a game of exchange: I will give you this if you will give me that. When you begin to train the cue *drop-it*, make sure you have some wonderful treats to give the puppy **in exchange** for what he has in his mouth. When he is playing with a toy, walk over to him and give the cue "Drop-it," and offer him a piece of chicken or other **wonderful treat** in exchange for his toy. The second he drops his toy for the treat you have offered, mark the behaviour with "Yes" or a click from your clicker and give him the treat. This will teach your puppy two things at the same time:

1. The puppy will learn to drop objects in his mouth when you give the cue "Drop it"
2. It will help him not to guard his toys

Repeat this many times with many different safe puppy toys over the next couple of weeks. If he grabs other items in the house, use these items to train this behaviour as well. If he releases the item in his mouth when he hears the **cue** "Drop-it," **mark** the behaviour and **reward** him by giving him one of his toys in exchange for the item he should not have in his mouth.

Do not begin training with objects you are having trouble getting him to release. Start off with easy objects and work your way up to the more challenging ones. You always want to **set him up for success** and **then build on those successes**. That is what is called **shaping a behaviour**. You start off with small successes until he is doing exactly what you request.

As your puppy becomes faster at releasing what is already in his mouth, begin to offer the exchange less frequently. For example, the next time you say "Drop-it," he may get an ear scratch and be told he is a good boy. The next time, he might get a treat, and the next time just a verbal "Good boy." Yet another time he might get three treats instead of just one. By keeping him guessing on whether he gets a treat, an ear scratch, or kind words, you will keep his attention on you and make it enjoyable to listen to the cues you give him.

Once you feel he really understands what the cue "Drop-it" means, you can start adding distractions. This could be other people in the room while you are training him, or perhaps outside in a safe, enclosed area. After a while, the puppy will understand what "Drop-it" means. This will make playing fetch with him easier to train since he will already know the cue.

If, for safety's sake, you must physically take something out of your puppy's mouth, gently take your hand over the puppy's muzzle and, using your thumb and index or middle finger, gently squeeze at the back of the jaw between the upper and lower teeth. Reach inside his mouth and take the object out of it. Once the object is out, tell the puppy what a good boy he was and give him a treat. This procedure should never be done in a mean or hurtful way

and should be used only when the puppy's or another's safety is at risk. **Never put yourself at risk of being bitten!**

If your puppy is growling at you, an alternative way to get something out of his mouth is to toss a tasty treat a couple of feet away from him. When he drops the item to go get the treat, pick the object up quickly and put it away or throw it away.



*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us*