



## **Does Playing Tug With Your Dog Cause Aggression?**

### **Is It A Dominance Game?**

Playing tug is a great, mentally stimulating and physically tiring activity, but unfortunately it has a bad reputation between dog owners. It used to be widely believed that it causes aggression and leads to domination. However, no evidence was found that it is associated with aggression and dominance theory appears only in outdated sources. What are the benefits of playing correctly with your dog?

- Playing tug with a dog is one of the easiest ways for a stimulating game with our dog companions, which is both physical and psychological. It's a great exercise for both the dog and the owner. Dogs that play with their owners are more likely to play in general and are active when interacting with their human.
- According to research, dogs who play tug with their owners are more confident and obedient, more often they come when called and have better impulse control, e.g. when it comes to biting. They work for any dog, even for hyperactive dogs by teaching them self-control.
- Studies have shown that the more often dogs play, the less likely they are to show behavioral problems. Dogs that engage in games such as tug show fewer problems with separation from the owner.
- If the dog likes to play tug, you can use it as a reward for correct behavior. In dog training, it is important to maintain motivation in various ways, which is why you need to diversify your rewards. For doing something complicated, the dog should get a extra great reward, which can be a short playtime with the owner. In addition, in dogs that do not want to work for food, tend to gain weight or cannot get a variety of flavors due to health reasons, playing tug can be a great reinforcement. In addition, the interleaving of training sessions with fun will make them more pleasant and interesting for the dog (and for yourself!).
- By playing with the dog, you strengthen your bond and it is also interesting for both parties. You don't need a large space or special conditions - you can have fun almost always and everywhere. If it is raining outside and your dog has a lot of energy - you can burn it this way!

## Here are some rules to keep in mind:

- Your dog should know the "let go" command. This will help stop the game in emergency situations. Additionally, teach your dog that he can grab the toy only if you ask him to.
- The toy should be long enough so that the dog does not accidentally bite your hand. It should also be flexible and durable.
- Put the toy away when you are not using it. You should initiate playtime when you think it appropriate.
- Do not lift the toy up when it is in the dog's mouth – you should only tug sideways. Otherwise you can damage your dog's spine.
- When the dog is very excited, it can start to growl; this is normal behavior. However, if you find that your dog is too excited or is starting to jerk too hard, take a break.
- If during play your dog accidentally bites you, even slightly, you should stop it immediately. Say "ow", "oh my" or any word (but don't shout or squeak!) And tell the dog to release the toy. When the dog sits calmly and waits to start again, you can tell him to "take" and start tugging again. If you feel his teeth on your skin again - stop the game completely. The dog will eventually learn to be very careful when playing.
- Let the dog win sometimes - this will make the game seem more interesting to the dog, make him happier and even more willing to play in the future.
- Children should not play tug with the dog, because they can squeak and cheer which will additionally stimulate the dog. They are also not as strong as adults and may not notice the dog's warning behavior. If the child wants to play and you consider it safe - remember to stay and supervise the course of play.

What are you waiting for? Grab your dog's favorite toy and have fun!