

Thankyou
Or – give me back my sock

This exercise is designed to teach puppy to relinquish objects happily,
before he gets to the
'catch me if you can' stage,
or worse, before he says
'I've got it and don't you dare come near me'

All we need to get started is a pocketful of treats, and some objects like puppy toys that have low to medium value for puppy.

When he is quietly chewing on a toy, walk up to him with a nice treat, waggle it under his nose, when he drops his toy to sniff and eat the treat say 'good boy, thankyou,' let him eat the treat then pick up his toy again if he wishes.

Once he has done this fairly reliably and is ready to drop his toy when he sees you approaching wagging the food treat, then as you hold the treat out saying 'thankyou', take the toy in your hand as he drops it to get the treat, let him eat the treat then say 'good boy' and give him back his toy. Repeat this one quite a few times until you are sure it is reliable.

When he is nearly dropping his toy as you approach, then we will ask him to relinquish his toy when you say 'thankyou', but with your food treat out of sight. Give him three treats the first time he relinquishes with the food out of sight, and leave the lesson at that for the session.

When this is very reliable, we can start asking for 'thankyou' with toys or objects of higher value, with things that he really likes and may not wish to relinquish, but by this time we hope he should be thinking 'it's OK they just hold them for me while I eat my treat, then I get them back'. It may not go this smoothly though, so we start again at the beginning, increase the value of the treat to start too, as you are asking for a toy of higher value.

Try this also with bones to avoid food guarding, again from the beginning and with higher value food treats.

Next we come to objects of ours that he shouldn't have, eg the smelly socks! (that ideally shouldn't have been left for him to pick up though). Same story again, but this time after the 'thankyou' and the treat, we give him one of his own toys instead of our item back, but make it more fun for him than the sock, if you give him his favourite ball, roll it a few times and make it more fun than the sock! If you give him a tug toy, then have a little tug game after the treat.

With practice, eventually if he has something of ours when we say thankyou, he should either drop it immediately, or maybe even bring it up to you in order to get his treat more quickly. Sounds like more fun than chasing him around the house for your sock when you're late for work, doesn't it? (and don't dogs just love playing 'catch me if you can'?) Also sounds better than having him chewing things up just out of reach, and definitely much much better than growling at you saying 'go on, make my day!!'