

# Advanced training: General Retrieve (fetch it)



This guide explains how to teach your dog a reliable retrieve using positive reinforcement.

## Step 1: Introduce the Item

Start with a boring but easy-to-carry item like a training dummy or soft dumbbell. Place the item on the floor near your dog. Reward any interaction, such as sniffing or mouthing it.

## Step 2: Reward Picking It Up

When your dog picks up the item, praise and reward generously. Always reward on your lap or close to your body.

## Step 3: Encourage Movement Towards You

Let the dog learn that bringing the item closer to you earns a reward. Use your voice to encourage them, and tap your lap if you can. Avoid reaching out or grabbing the item.

## Step 4: Reinforce Positioning

Sit still and reward the dog with treats in your lap or just in front of you. Resist the urge to lean forwards or reach your hand out too far. Your dog will learn to return to that spot.

## Step 5: Vary Positions and Heights

Practice retrieving from different positions, adapting to your dog's size and your seating height.

## Step 6: If Needed, Use “Paws Up”

**Teach “Paws Up” (front paws on your lap) using food rewards.** This can be especially helpful when combined with the retrieve for clients that need support bringing items closer. Use the verbal cue “Paws Up” and gently tap your knee if needed to prompt the behaviour. When your dog places their front paws on your lap (or chair footplates) and delivers the item, reward them with treats and praise. You may need to teach a “Paws Up” separately first, if your dog is struggling to combine both aspects.



## Step 7: Introduce New Objects Gradually

Progress to different items like phones, keys with key rings, and remote controls. Allow your dog time to adjust and ensure they are confident with each item before introducing something new.

## Step 8: Teach Retrieval of Large or Awkward Items

**Start with a smaller, manageable section of the item (e.g. part of a crutch).** If necessary, wrap it in a soft material to make it more comfortable for the dog to interact with. If the item can be taken apart, do so to make the introduction easier. As the dog's confidence and skill improve, gradually reassemble the item until they are comfortable handling it in full.

### Top tips

- Reward generously and frequently during training.
- Keep sessions short and fun.
- Use calm praise and always end on a positive note.
- Tap your lap to encourage the dog to bring the item closer.
- Attach a soft key ring to trickier items (e.g. keys, TV remote, or a phone) to make them easier for your dog to pick up and retrieve.
- Never force the item from your dog—build trust and make it rewarding for them to bring it to you.
- Use an open area like your living room or garden to avoid obstacles and allow your dog to experiment.
- It doesn't matter how your dog carries the item—as long as it gets to you safely. Encourage confidence and independence.