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## Tug O' War

**Specific Tuggers:** Have one or two toys that will be used specifically for, and only for tug. Get tug toys that have a good distance from end to end so that when the dog is tugging his teeth are not close to human hands! If your dog tries to initiate tug with any other toy, do not engage him. If he has a toy that he will not relinquish, just let go and walk away. To get the toy or object out of his mouth, get a tasty morsel of food, place it near your dog's nose, say "Give" as the dog drops the toy to get the food and then quickly remove the toy while he's eating the food.

**You Start the Game:** The human should always initiate the tug o' war game. Tug toys are always put away except when in use, and this makes them even more special to the dog. Have a little bag of food treats that your dog likes ready nearby. To start, hold the tug toy out of reach of the dog, and say, "Wait". Then offer the toy to him and say, "Take it!" Then play tug! Be careful to pull the toy smoothly as quick snaps could give your dog whiplash! After you've played for a minute, offer to exchange the toy for a treat as described below. Repeat several times during game. If the dog will not exchange then you need to use a higher value food as your treat like small pieces of real meat or cheese.

**Give:** Periodically throughout your game of tug you should exchange the toy for a food treat and use your cue word, "Give". Ease up on the tension on the toy by pushing it toward your dog. Then, put a food treat in front of your dog's nose. As your dog lets go of the toy, quietly say the word, "Give" and put the toy behind your back. Then hold the toy up and have your dog "Wait" and then offer the toy, and say, "Take it." If your dog manages to grab the toy and begins to tug before you have offered it, simply drop the toy and walk away. Also, if canine teeth ever meet even slightly with human flesh, that too will stop the game. ("Ouch!" And walk away.) The dog needs to learn to take the toy politely (No grabbing!) and to keep teeth off the human!

**Put the toy away:** End the game by getting your "Give", exchanging the toy for a treat and put the toy away. Saving the toy for tug only will retain its power and appeal. Over time and with lots of practice you should eventually have a dog who will drop the toy without the use of a food treat when you say "Give".

**Tug Smoothly** Tug smoothly back and forth . . . do not jerk your dog quickly, as this could cause injury to his neck.

**\*Note\*** Tug may be played safely with the vast majority of dogs and is recommended as a great energy-burner by Patricia McConnell, PhD. & aggression specialist in her booklet, "Play Together, Stay Together." If tugging over-stimulates your dog and leads to undesired behaviors, please discontinue.