

# Gotcha! Game



This is a game to teach your dog that having his collar grabbed is enjoyable rather than something to shy away from. This is especially important for teaching the recall since grabbing your dog's collar may be the last part of the recall, and we don't want that to be unpleasant for the dog, because it could then poison the recall. Grabbing the collar could also occur in an emergency situation, and the more your dog has positive associations with the collar-grab, the less likely you may be to getting bitten.

Your dog may have associated having his collar grabbed with something that he perceives as aversive in the past, like for example being taken away from fun, or simply the natural discomfort associated with a human leaning over and/or reaching for him. Therefore, please make sure to work through each individual level of this protocol very gradually. In this exercise, a very large number of repetitions (several hundred) will be necessary. We want the dog to love having his collar grabbed!

Start at whichever step your dog is already 100% comfortable with.

1. Slowly and deliberately reach your hand towards your dog's chest from below (not from above!). With your other hand, give the food treat and then withdraw both hands at the same time. If your dog turns his head away, approach sideways rather than face-to-face. Repeat several hundred times until your dog is completely blasé about this exercise.
2. Progress to reaching for and touching your dog's collar. Give the treat while touching the collar, then withdraw both hands at the same time.
3. Once your dog is completely blasé about #2 exercise, start placing a finger or two under the collar and treat as before.
4. Gradually increase the length of time you hold the collar before giving the treat. Treat as before.
5. Apply slight tension to the collar. Treat during the tension.
6. Gradually increase the amount of manipulation to the collar. Give the treat during the manipulation.
7. Periodically throughout the day walk up to your dog, gently grab his collar and stick a treat in his mouth at the same time.

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