



The **PLAY** WAY with Amy Cook PhD

playwaydogs.com

Social Play is an excellent way for a dog to be in a happy state of mind and to be physically relaxed or loosened up. Playing also lets us know if a dog is truly relaxed or concerned about anything, so we can more effectively help them feel better.

Good play is an **INVITATION**. We invite our dog when they are looking at us, not when they are busy. We don't pressure them, as grabbiness, pushiness, and nagging are a turn-off. Pause and greet again before making a new suggestion. If your dog doesn't take up your suggestion but is still attentive, try something new.

FLIRT! Use **SUSPENSE**.

Not all play involves touching, but good play will have an element of suspense! Take pauses. Do not rush.

- ✓ Start with slower, softer energy.
- ✓ Give your dog plenty of room to move around freely.
- ✓ Invite, wait, listen to your dog's response (body language)
- ✓ Take "no" as an answer. PAUSE. Try something different.
- ✗ Don't make your dog feel trapped or overwhelmed.
- ✗ Don't make your dog wrong.

You want your dog to feel **SAFE** to open up and play with you. If you touch your dog, use the 3-SECOND RULE. Pull back after 3 seconds, staying engaged. Does your dog come back to you?



Be in your dog's **ENERGY RANGE!**

What is your dog's energy level?

If your dog is overexcited (eg, 8) slow down to a 6-7.

If your dog is unsure or shy (eg, 2) try 1-3.



With **SOCIAL PLAY**, the use of toys or food is not essential because you are not teaching your dog how to play. You are **playing** with your dog and learning what they like!

Play is a CONVERSATION. Here are some ideas to develop a "play vocabulary" with your dog:

YOU are the PREDATOR!	YOU are the PREY!
<p>"Claw" Hands</p> <p>* Stay on the floor</p> <p>I'M GONNA GETCHA!</p> <p>PLAY BOW</p>	<p>Hiding face</p> <p>GONNA GET ME?</p>
<p>Flat Hands</p> <p>SUSPENSE!</p> <p>SILLY PUPPY!</p>	<p>Pulling Away</p> <p>YOU GOT ME!</p>
<p>"Bitey" hands</p> <p>BITE YOU!</p>	<p>"Piano Hands"</p> <p>hello</p> <p>HIDE FACE</p> <p>FAKE BITE!</p>
<p>"HAR" mouth</p> <p>BONNI!</p> <p>HEAD BUTT!</p> <p>BITE YOUR BUTT!</p>	<p>Rolling, Flopping over</p> <p>BLANKET</p> <p>YOU SILLY! I GET YOU!</p>

How is your dog responding?

need to look

If your dog disconnects from you and looks towards something more interesting or concerning (that is not too close), let them process the other thing. Don't pressure them to come back to you.

When you let your dog **look and dismiss** the other thing on their own, the more of their attention that you really have when you get it!

NOPE you are being WEIRD

Look away

Shake Off

Stress Yawn

SNIFF SNIFF

Busy Sniffing

At first you may get a lot of "Not Now"s. If your dog shows confused signals or becomes busy doing other stuff, hold back. (Especially with the "shy" dogs) Your dog may not understand what you are doing.

When they approach you again, check your energy level, greet again, and try something different.

BITE YOU! ha ha ha, YES!

PANT PANT PANT

When you do something that your dog likes, they will keep coming back to you. Their bodies are loose and curved. They may roll around, jump on you, or fake-bite you. They may even laugh!

Now that you know what your dog likes, you can do it over and over again!