



The Benefits of Playing Tug-o-War with your Dog

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Dogs love to tug, whether it is a puppy tugging on your clothes or two dogs tugging on a prized toy.

But, did you know that there are many benefits for your dog playing tug?

1. **Increases the bond with your puppy** - Tug-o-war is one of the best games to increase the bond you have with your dog. You have one end, they have the other, the game has to be shared and creates positive emotions and fun is had by all.
2. **Builds confidence** - If you have a nervous or anxious dog, Tug-o-war can help them grow in confidence in other areas. It is also a great way to add positive association and greater movement to a situation that would normally make them anxious.
3. **Releases mouth tension** - Mouth tension is a term that relates to your dog's desire to use their mouth on things. With some dogs if they don't release mouth tension through playing Tug-o-war, they release it through chewing items, mouthing people or destroying things in your garden and home.
4. **Teaches young dogs to calm down from excitement** - Teach your dog to "drop it" 4-5 times throughout a Tug-o-war game. To teach "drop it", offer a treat near your dog's nose, say "drop it" as they let go, give the treat and continue playing.
5. **Helps reduce puppy play biting and mouthing** - A well timed game of tug (say first thing in the morning or after a separation) can give your puppy the interaction they are craving, and teach them to place their mouth on toys rather than you.

If your dog is too big and strong to play tug with, consider getting an Aussie Dog Home Alone Toy for play (a tug that is attached to a strong beam or tree branch). Many of the benefits above can be had (particularly if you are nearby with encouragement).

If you have a dog who has previously displayed resource guarding or aggression around toys, avoid tug games and I would recommend booking a behaviour consult with me to discuss this further so that I can help you and your dog develop some strategies for handling this situation. For all other dogs, enjoy and have fun!