RETRIEVING GAMES

Game Day 1 - Treat Diving

The game of “Treat Diving” is not only simple but also incredible versatile. It serves as a valuable tool to increase your dog’s love for rewards while allowing you to observe what truly excites your dog.
As you engage in this game, you’ll see how your dog grows his value for playing by increasing his arousal state.
We will introduce the “search” cue, providing your dog with clear guidance on when it’s appropriate to look for food/treats on the ground. They will learn that it is OK when you give permission. Harnessing the “Power of Permission” is a fundamental element of dog training.
Together with the foundations of “ItsYerChoice” (IYC Game Day 2), “Treat Diving” gives your dog clarity on how they can easily earn something they want by making good choices.

Moreover, this game offers an invaluable opportunity for you to refine your dog training mechanics through strategic reward placement and can effectively transition your dog’s focus from the food to you and creating value for the dog bed or mat.

For this game we don’t need to play a warmup game as the game will build focus and connection.

What you’ll need:

Prepare your training area without your dog being present.

- A non-slippery floor
- A mat or dog bed
- A hungry dog
- Your mobile phone on a tripod to video your session
- A timer – make sure to keep sessions short, no longer than 30 – 45 seconds for tentative dogs, or 1 – 2 minutes for more confident dogs. Take breaks between sessions.
- Different types of treats ranging from low to high value

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Step-by-step-guide:

1. Growing confidence to chase the treat

In this this initial stage for the game, we are observing our dog's confidence and their value for different types of treats.

a. Grab 3 – 5 treats making sure you have a good mix in your hand
b. Stand still and toss a treat on the floor, encouraging your dog to chase it.
c. Take note of the treats that your dog is going for quicker – make a mental note of which ones they favoured.
d. Repeat step 2 until you see your dog being excited to chase the treat.
e. Give your dog a break and repeat this step as much as you need until your dog is confident playing.
f. Once your dog is excited and is “treat diving”, move on to Stage 2.

2. Introducing a cue

I use the word “search” to let my dog know that they have permission to look for food on the floor. You can choose any cue you feel comfortable with, making sure it is clear and you are not inclined to use the word in your everyday language.

a. Repeat the steps as outline in Stage 1, however say your “search” cue before you throw the treat.
b. Remember to remain still when you throw the treat.
c. The order is as follows:
    i. Grab some treats from your bowl
    ii. Remain still
    iii. Say your “search” cue
    iv. Toss the treat for your dog to chase
d. Use different values of treats to see which ones get your dog excited.
e. It is time to progress to Stage 3 when your dog is excited upon hearing the “search” cue and happily chases after the treats.
f. Go at your dog’s pace.
g. You would now have an idea of which treats your dog values most. Write the rank of order down.

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3. Introducing the dog mat/bed

Start by using only one mat or bed to introduce this stage of the game.

a. Place the mat/bed on the floor
b. Say your "search" cue and toss a higher value treat on the mat/bed
c. If your dog comes off the mat/bed by themselves then repeat the above steps several times.
d. If they remain on the bed, say your "search" cue and toss a lower value treat on the floor for them to come off
e. You will notice that your dog will gravitate towards the mat/bed after few repetitions, we have created value for being on the mat/bed.
f. Troubleshooting: My dog won't leave their mat/bed.
    i. You have created a lot of value for the mat/bed, so your dog will know that reinforcement is coming when they are on there. Reverse the value of treats for a few repetitions. Use the higher value treat to get them off the mat/bed and the medium value treat to get them on.
g. Once your dog has value for one mat/bed, play the game in different rooms in your house and with different mats/beds. But only make one change (i.e., room OR mat/bed) at a time until they are confident with one or the other.

The progression for this game is our **Hot Zone Game (Game Day 5)**.

Daily use: The Treat Diving Game is a great game to play daily. It will strengthen your dog's understanding that not everything lying on the floor is theirs, but they can have your permission for finding food on the floor when they hear your "search" cue. Furthermore, it is very valuable to introduce the permission to leave a station.

Is your dog sometimes uneasy in certain environments/situations? Play a game of Treat Diving to take off their mind and focus on the hunting fun.

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Checklist:

1. Have you videoed and reviewed your session?
2. Have you kept sessions short and fun?
3. Are you standing still when you say your “search” cue and before you toss the treat?
4. Is your dog confident and happy to chase the treat?
5. Look at your dog’s T.E.M.P (Tails, Ears/Eyes, Mouth, Posture)
6. Have you written down the value of treats?

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