

GETTING STARTED

It's never too early!

So often I here this:

"My puppy is so young!

I thought I would wait until he gets older to start retrieving." The fact is that these little pups love picking things up and running off with just about anything they can carry, shoes, socks, you name it. The key is to have total control of the situation and to set things up for success. First time retrieving in a wide-open back yard is a sure recipe for failure and good luck catching your pup as he runs off. I prefer to start training as early as possible with my pups. 10 to 12 weeks is about right but be patient with him, as his eyes cannot follow an object flying through the air.

Begin retrieving in a hallway and close all the doors to other rooms to get rid of all distractions. You don't need an audience for this, as quietness is a prerequisite. A simple rolled up sock is all you need at this stage and you should have a whistle. Most handlers use an Acme 210 whistle or a Buffalo horn whistle, both of which high pitched and low in volume. Try to keep the volume low at all times as dogs are not deaf and there sometimes lack of response is not because they can't hear you but rather that they are preoccupied with something else...(a learned response)

Sit five to six feet from the end of the hallway (with your legs helping to block the exit).



Wiggle the rolled up sock in front of his nose and along the floor until he tries to catch it, and then gently lob it towards the end of the hallway. If you throw it to quickly pup will not be able to follow line of flight. Having seen the sock land pup will chase, grab and run away with it. There is only one way out and that's past you. As he attempts to rush past you catch him pet him and tell him how good he is. With your left hand, thumb and middle finger, gently push his cheeks

inwards towards his teeth. This will cause his mouth to open and you can remove the sock from his mouth and saying give at the same time. Again praise him, he doesn't know what he did but what ever it was it feels good. This is positive training and is the best kind. Repeat two more times and then move back three or four feet giving longer retrieves. Do not give pup more than six retrieves per session and try to discourage pup from shaking his head from side to side with the sock in his mouth. Repeat retrieving session once or twice a day until pup is retrieving to hand, and then try one retrieve out side along the side of the house or a fence. If pup runs away with sock you will need more work in the hallway. Remember consistency and control over the situation is the key to success.



Use various types of terrain to create a hallway scenario. Some examples would be a footpath through a wooded area, tire ruts made by vehicles through a field and if you live in the north, a path cut by a snow blower though your back yard works well. What you