

DOG PIÑATA!

BROWN PAPER SACK METHOD OF TEACHING OBJECT PLAY

ORIGINAL METHOD BY ???? ENHANCED AND DETAILED BY MOE STRENFEL

This method is for dogs that are inhibited in playing with their handlers or who just don't play with ANY toys on their own or with other dogs. Please check first with your veterinarian/chiropractor if you suspect your dog has jaw, neck or back problems. Please read the instructions through several times before you begin so you have an idea of what you are trying to accomplish. Each dog will progress at different rates. **Do NOT progress to the next level until you meet the stated criteria for moving forward.**

Questions? Email me at info@momentumdogsports.com

YOU WILL NEED:

- Your dog's regular daily ration of food
- Some extra goodies like steak, grilled chicken, fish, cheese, etc.
 - You can also just try sprinkling dry food with tuna or hot dog juice or some other "smell" that your dog REALLY LIKES (try smearing bacon grease or liverwurst on the kibble!)
- A quiet room away from other dogs, that you can close off, so the dog cannot leave with the bag
 - Try to choose a room that your dog already has good things associated with it
 - Your dog should not have ever been punished in this room
- Plain brown paper lunch sacks (available at most grocery stores)
- A kitchen countdown timer
- A comfortable chair for you to sit on

GUIDELINES:

- Don't worry if your dog skips a few meals (unless your dog has a medical problem and must eat twice per day)
- Don't make direct eye contact when your dog is learning this game
 - Eye contact can be intimidating
- **DON'T punish your dog for getting into things around your house**
 - Simply shut doors, or put things away
 - Punishment/fear may be the reason why your dog won't tug/rip in the first place
- If your dog is playing with toys with other dogs or by themselves (self play), REMOVE all toys and they only come out when you are interacting with your dog
- Keep happy and relaxed whenever you are doing a training session. Try reading a happy funny story, tell yourself a funny joke, or listen to a comedy act on your iPod
 - If you are worried and uptight, your dog will be MUCH less likely to succeed
- Supervise the dog during these sessions, do not leave them alone with the sack as they could ingest pieces
 - Clean up afterwards but notice your dog's reaction
 - If he slinks out of the room as you are gather up the pieces, put him in another area while you clean up
 - The slinking away indicates he has been punished for ripping/destruction
- At level two, you will start to add a verbal cue "Party time!!" or "Do you want your piñata?!"
 - Say the same phrase each time you approach the room from this level onward

BASIC METHOD – LEVEL ONE

- Take the dog's entire daily ration of food and divide into 6 to 12 small portions
 - These will be used throughout the day during the training sessions with your dog
- Take a single sack and put one portion of food in the sack
 - Add something tempting such as chicken or steak or sprinkle with tuna or hot dog juice
- Twist the top of the sack to make a handle
 - This is important for future training sessions so don't forget to do this each time
- Rip a small hole in a corner of the sack
- Take your dog to the quiet room
- Set a timer for 5 minutes
- Put the food sack furthest away from you as possible, on the floor
- You sit on a chair in an opposite corner away from your dog (especially important if you have a history of punishing the dog for getting into things)
- Don't directly stare at your dog but read a funny book, hum a fun song, etc. so your behavior is relaxed & happy
- If after 5 minutes, the dog has not ripped the sack open and eaten food, remove the sack and save it for a future session
 - DON'T SAY ANYTHING OR ACT UPSET
 - JUST IGNORE (no talking or petting) your dog and leave the room (dog can leave room also)
 - Try again several hours later (DO NOT FEED YOUR DOG BETWEEN THESE TRAINING SESSIONS!)
- If your dog starts to rip/pickup/paw at the sack, praise and laugh while he is doing so
 - If he stops interacting with the sack, go silent
 - Remember not to directly stare at your dog
- Repeat with another portion of food until dog's entire daily ration is fed this way
 - You can divided into many training sessions throughout the day

LEVEL TWO

Only move to this level when your dog is quickly starting to rip into the sack

- As you are going to your room together, start to add a verbal cue "Party time!!" or "Do you want your piñata?!" Say the same phrase each time you approach the room from this point onward
- Do not start with a corner rip in the sack but leave the sack intact (remember to twist the top into a handle!)
- Repeat sessions until dog's daily ration is gone

LEVEL THREE

Only move to this level when your dog is excited to go to his room and immediately goes to work as soon as the sack is placed on floor. You can hardly even get seated into your chair!

- Now put the food portion into a double sack layer – piñata time!
- As you are moving towards the room, remember to say your verbal cue "Party time!!" or "Do you want your piñata?!"
- Once your dog is quickly ripping into a double layer sack, add a third layer
 - If the dog is small, stay at 3 layers of sack and don't bother going to more layers
- Over several days, add a four layer (for large to medium sized dogs)
- Over the next several days, add a fifth layer (for large dogs)

LEVEL FOUR

Only move to this level when your dog shows excitement at seeing the sacks and is eagerly ripping into a five layered sack (or three for small dogs)

- As you are moving towards the room, remember to say your verbal cue “Party time!!” or “Do you want your piñata?!”
- Bring your chair 1 foot closer to the corner your dog is working in
- Gradually over several training sessions, bring your chair in closer until you are right beside your dog and he acts normal, not even glancing at you, but only attacking the sack
- If your dog acts different the closer you move your chair in, move your chair a smaller amount each day
 - Or stay at the same distance for several days before moving in closer

LEVEL FIVE

Only move to this level when you can sit in your chair right next to your dog as he is working his five layer piñata (or three for small dogs)

- As you are moving towards the room, remember to say your verbal cue “Party time!!” or “Do you want your piñata?!”
- Go back to a single sack and a tear in corner
- Sit in your chair
- You hold the twisted end, don’t let go
- Don’t make eye contact (look away)
- When you feel the dog pull at the sack, giggle/laugh
 - Hold on until the dog’s piñata is broken and he has eaten his portion
- Repeat immediately until your dog’s daily portion of food is finished
- If your dog won’t touch the sack, tie a string/shoelace to the sack so you can be slightly further away from the dog and provide some resistance when the dog tugs at the sack
 - Gradually over several days, shorten the string until you have your hand on the sack as your dog tugs on it

LEVEL SIX

Only move to this level when your dog starts grabbing the sack before you even have time to sit down

- As you are moving towards the room, remember to say your verbal cue “Party time!!” or “Do you want your piñata?!”
- Stop tearing the corner of the sack
- Remember to hold onto it by the twisted handle
- Look away if your dog seems to do better
 - Experiment with starting to look at his chest as he is tugging (don’t make eye contact yet)
- Laugh/giggle when he is pulling the sack

LEVEL SEVEN

Only move to this level when your dog is immediately and forcefully grabbing the single layer sack from your hand before you even have time to sit down

- As you are moving towards the room, remember to say your verbal cue “Party time!!” or “Do you want your piñata?!”
- Add a double layer of sack with NO tear in the corner
- Work up to multiple layers and your dog is attacking the sack BEFORE you even sit down
 - Make sure you work up to enough layers so that your dog has to tug the sack with some force before it tears open
- Remember to laugh/praise when the dog is tugging on the sack
- Start to make very brief eye contact (1 second) with your dog as he is tugging on the sack

- Add a verbal cue “GET IT” while your dog is pulling the sack in your hand
 - ONLY add this cue when his mouth is ACTIVELY pulling on the sack
 - Go silent if he lets go
 - Gradually change the timing of giving the cue so you give it just before he grabs the sack
- Start to half stand while the dog is tugging (best done over several days)
 - Try not to loom over the dog
- Gradually over several days (or weeks for some dogs) work yourself until you are standing and the dog will still tug on the sack with the same enthusiasm as what you had when you were sitting

LEVEL EIGHT

Only move to this level when you can stand normal (or slightly bend over) and your dog is immediately and forcefully grabbing the multiple layer sack AND your phrase “Piñata Time” gets the dog excited!

Progression:

- Take your multiple layer sack to different locations within your house
- Take it to your back yard
- Take it to your front yard
- Take it to a quiet known location (the park early or late)
- Take it to a busier known location
- Take it to a quiet unknown location
 - Then go to many unknown locations
 - Then go to many busy unknown locations
- Reduce the amount of food inside the sack until it is just one or two pieces (the pieces may have to be high level (such as steak)
 - Keep twisting your handle down further and further on the sack so there is more twist than “pouch” part so the dog has to work even harder to get the food out

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Use a higher value food inside your sack
- Don’t feed the dog between training sessions; your dog needs to be hungry
- Don’t leave other toys out for the dog to play with if he won’t play with you
- Go down a level if you are not getting the intensity of sack ripping/grabbing that you want

VARIATIONS TO TRY

- Tie a string on the sack and drag it on the ground for your dog to pounce on
 - Your dog should tug and rip sack open to get out food
 - Start this game in known locations (such as inside your house) and with no distractions
 - Progress to other areas as detailed in Level Eight
- Try transferring from paper to cloth
 - Take a tug and treat toy and put a portion of food in it
 - Hold the toy in your hand and let dog grab and tug
 - When you feel a strong, prolonged tug, mark it with a click or verbal marker
 - Open toy and let your dog shove his head in the toy to get a treat
 - Do NOT give your dog a treat from your hand
 - Gradually shape longer and harder tugs (pit bull like)

Now teach your dog to fetch (bring you) the sack or tug n’ treat so you can tug!

Consult Wendy Pape’s DVD, Games to Enhance Training, for ways to teach fetch. Available at Clean Run.