

TWO TOY GAME

By Jack Fields and Shirley Hammond

“Experiment with your natural movement and beautiful things will be born” Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi



This exercise, the Two Toy Game, was developed by Gottfried Dildei and Sheila Booth in their book *Schutzhund Obedience Training in Drive* by Podium Publications.

We have further developed the process for our needs using ideas from seminars by Ivan Balabanov from seminars and his book *Advanced Schutzhund* by Ivan Balabanov and Karen Duet Howell Book House. More important than the technique is the rhythm (flow of the exercise) and the play relationship that you can develop with your dog.

This exercise is designed to build prey drive and excitement in the dog, as well as increase the bonding with the handler. It is also very good for improving the dog's physical condition and endurance.

The handler starts with two toys of equal value. Just about any material of toys can be used, but we prefer jute, or leather tug type toys. We prefer flat toys because balls tend to bounce and move in erratic patterns increasing your dog's chances of injury. We like toys that when thrown will land in a flat predictable way. Also using tug type toys will give you more options later when you start to teach misses, grips, fighting games, and the out (drop) command to deliver the toy to your hand or drop at your feet.



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The game starts with you having both toys and teasing your dog with them. We like to hold the toys above our heads shaking them and enticing the dog with them. You want to make sure you're moving slightly away from the dog as you're doing this because it will encourage the dog to come closer to you. At this point you want to gauge your dog's excitement level. If your dog is not really excited then you need to evaluate why the dog is not getting really excited. Is it you, is it the toys, is it an environmental issue? It is important to evaluate your training at all times. It is important not to start playing until your dog is excited. It is a good idea to have your teammates watching because they are your best source for critique.



Once your dog is excited make sure your dog is watching the toy, throw the toy in a small arc 10-15 feet in a straight line and tell your dog to "bring", "get", "Fetch" or whatever word you choose to use. Even if it's a new word it doesn't matter at this point because your dog is being conditioned to a response. We have all the components of conditioning (Stimulus, Response, and Reward). It is important that your dog sees the toy being thrown because this is the stimulus component of the exercise that will ensure the desired response.



At this point your dog if he has been excited sufficiently will run out and grab the first toy. I stay real quiet until my dog grabs the toy. Once the dog has the toy in its mouth I let out a big praise and start to move backwards 3-5 feet capturing the dog's attention and I become the prey attraction drawing the dog towards me by my movement and praise. It is important at this point of the game that we do not move towards the dog because our game quickly will turn into a session of keep away. By moving away, you will attract most dogs to you. They can't help the fact that they are prey seeking animals!



holding the toy in its mouth.

So if all is going as planned your dog will end up running up to you with the toy in its mouth. When the dog gets really close to me I stop moving back and start to attract the dog to the second toy. You must not reach out and grab the toy that is now in the dog's possession. If you reach out and grab the toy, you are teaching your dog that bringing the toy back may not be in its best interests. You should be standing stationary with your dog at your feet

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Now we start to tease the dog with the second toy. I also start to introduce the drop command. I'll shake the second toy giving the command "Out", "Drop", "Give" or what ever you choose to call it. Patience is important here because your dog is so excited he has the source he wants in his mouth. I just watch the dog and keep teasing with the second toy and telling him to "drop". At this point if your dog moves away from you, simply move backward with praise and your dog more than likely will follow you again. It's ok and I go real slow at this point of the game because I'm working on an important component of the exercise. With patience, and consistency your dog soon will realize the toy it has is dead. It is not -as exciting as the second toy you are now teasing him with (the grass is greener on the other side). Watch your dog closely and as it starts to drop the first toy give praise (capturing the behavior that is bringing success) and make sure the dog is attracted to the second toy by continually moving the second toy as you slowly back away from the toy on the ground. You must make sure the dog tracks (focuses) on the second toy and not the first toy they just dropped. If they go back to the first toy, just be patient and start your "Drop" process again. It will not be long before they drop it again. Praise and work on getting them to track the second toy. Once your dog becomes focused on the second toy you will throw it in the opposite direction the same distance as you threw the first toy.

Your dog should chase the second toy with the same intensity as they chased the first toy. This is really the reason for having two toys of equal value. If your dog has a preference for one toy over the other you could get yourself in trouble. It could even be something as simple as one toy is older than the other. Be very aware of the value of the toys and how the dog relates to them. It will save you lots of frustration when connecting the parameters of the game to your dog. Once your dog focuses on the second toy you slowly and calmly pick up the first toy the dog dropped (it is important that you do not pick up the first toy too quickly and have your dog see you do this because they more than likely will turn around and come back for it. You must be sneaky when picking up the toy you convinced your dog to give up) you will repeat the same process as you did with the first toy (minus the initial loading) ending with your dog possessing the second toy at your feet. You will go through the "Drop" process and then throw the first toy back in the original direction.

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If you have managed to teach your dog to pursue the toy in both directions and convinced your dog that it is in his best interests to drop the toy then you are on your way to great things. It is important not to over do this. “Less is always more” when it comes to drive building. With a new dog I only do 3-5 repetitions. I must know when to quit, and the best rule is to quit when the dog and you are having the most fun. This take lots of self discipline, as does any dog training activity we engage in. You must think carefully about every aspect of what you and your dog are doing. When I feel it is time to quit. I go threw the “Drop” aspect of the game, then when the dog is looking at the toy in my hand I calmly pick up the toy the dog just dropped with my opposite hand (the hand with out a toy in it). Positioning of the toy is critical as you don’t want the dog jumping up and taking the toy in your hand. Also if you snatch the toy on the ground you could easily send your dog the wrong message. You must be calm, and slow so you do not attract the dogs’ attention to the toy you are going to pick up). Now you should possess both toys and an amped up frustrated dog. I then tease the dog as I did in the start of the game. It is important that the game always begins with frustrating the dogs’ drives and ends with frustrating the dogs’ drives. This way threw frustration you will build the dogs desire to play the game.

Once your dog becomes very familiar with this game you will find that you no longer need a “Drop” command because they will drop the toy at your feet because they learn by dropping the toy at your feet you will throw the second toy (I still use the “drop” command for word association).

The game should always be played in a lateral fashion and never in the beginning in only one direction because your dog will have a tendency to anticipate the direction of the next throw and start to drop the toy early.

By keeping the game lateral with you in the center, you will always be the center of the game and this is our goal.

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In closing this is an excellent game to teach your dog, but it is only the beginning. If done right you should develop a dog that is hooked on chasing and retrieving toys for you. Once you have this then we can start to teach more advanced concepts of our drive games such as barking, striking, gripping, fighting. We prefer to teach the basics of Two Toy and as the dog handler team progresses and the play relationship enhances we can go on and evolve to a one toy type game that is more along the ideas of Ivan Balabanove's concepts. In the end we have the option to go between Two Toys and One Toy, and we tend to use a combination of both methods. This ends up being an exciting game for both the handler and the dog. It can be used as a reward (drive goal) or just to have fun and exercise.



“Remember our dogs are what we make them”