
Playing it Safe

5 techniques to prevent K9 injury during play

The Collared Scholar - April 4, 2017



What You Need to Know

Playing with your dog seems straightforward. You present a toy, and you and your dog play tug-o-war. I mean really, how hard could it be?

But in fact, there are mechanics at play that can make or break your game.

For dogs that aren't over the top for their toys, neglecting the mechanics of proper play can diminish the value of the game. In fact, it can be easy for dogs to check out, or find something better to do if we don't get the game right.

Alternatively, for dogs that go crazy for the toy, being haphazard in play can result in serious injury. Plainly stated, toy crazy dogs can be a bit reckless, so getting a handle on their game will help to keep them safe.

Here are the top things you should do to improve your tug game (that many people neglect). Five things that, when ignored, can not only cause conflict in the game, but can cause injury to your working, sport or active pet dog.

(1) Tug on Your Dog's

Level - Listen. It's not going to be comfortable on your back. But when engaging with your dog, you need to play on their level ... Not yours. When playing tug, your dog's back and neck should form a straight line. Not an "L". Refrain from pulling the toy up to your



level as it bends your dog's neck in such a way, that the game of tug can become really uncomfortable for them. Not only that, but playing in this fashion can greatly increase your dog's risk of injury. You don't have to bend all the way down, or sit on the ground with your dog. You simply need to drop the toy down to



about knee level to prevent the bend in your dog's neck as you play.

- (2) **Watch Your Entry** - If you are letting your dog launch for your toy, you need to pay close attention to your dog's entry. Plainly stated, you need to be careful of how your dog takes the toy. Your best bet? Hold it on the side of your body instead of center mass. If your dog comes flying in with any speed, and your toy is directly in front of you, your dog can easily crash into you, and that can hurt. But by holding the toy off to the side, it will be easier to absorb the entry. The toy has somewhere to go when the dog hits it, and the dog is less likely to crash into you and get hurt.

- (3) **For dog's with speed, let the toy go** - If your dog comes in for the toy with any level of intensity, don't be afraid to let the toy go when the dog



grabs it. This will minimize the chance of your dog getting hurt. If you're hesitant to let the toy go because your dog doesn't yet like to bring it back, just leave a long line attached to your dog's collar. You can let the dog drag the line as you play, and simply pick it up and reel him in should he decide to check out.

- (4) **Absorb the hit** - If you hold onto the toy when your dog grabs it, you need to absorb the entry. Don't be a brick wall. Take a few steps back and away from your dog at the moment he grabs the toy, so that your movement cushions the impact, reducing the risk of your dog getting jammed or tweaking their neck.
- (5) **Keep the toy parallel to the ground** - Hold your toy parallel to the ground so your dog doesn't have to turn his or her head when grabbing for it. This is far more comfortable for the dog and it has a lower risk for injury for dogs with any intensity in their game.

