

FLIRT POLE BASICS

Dogs learn best when learning is fun, and using a flirt pole is a great way to turn basic obedience practice into big excitement. Flirts are handy in shelter situations, especially with dogs who can't play with other dogs. A favorite tool for tiring dogs out while reinforcing new commands. Great for healthy dogs, but be aware that the fast turns and jumping could aggravate faulty joints, so use wisely.

Five or Six foot long PVC pipe. 3/4" diameter PVC is best for long poles.
Approximately 15 feet of rope.
A stuffed animal or similar toy to tie at the end.

Weave rope through pipe and let half dangle from one end. Your flirt should look like a big fishing pole now. Tie a knot at each end to prevent it from slipping. Tie a popular dog toy tightly at the end of the rope.

Dogs should be familiar with these commands before playing: 'Sit' ... 'Down' ... 'Stay' ... 'Leave it' ... 'Take' 'Drop' (or 'Out'). Ideally, dogs should be taught to respond to these commands through a low-key game of tug in preparation for the flirt pole excitement.

Game Objective: Dogs earn the reward of chasing the toy in exchange for a show of good obedience. This game teaches patience, good listening skills, self control during high excitement and fast response to basic commands. A great learning tool for dogs that are easily distracted or are prone to chasing cats or wildlife.

Rules: Dog must perform a CALM and successful 'Sit' and/or 'Down,' 'Stay,' 'Watch Me' command before getting permission to chase toy ('Take!') To keep this valuable as a learning tool, the game must stop and start from the beginning anytime a dog grabs the toy without permission. Once the dog is allowed to chase and finally grab the toy, the handler should allow some fun and exciting tug as long as the dog responds reasonably well to a 'Drop.' or 'Out' command.

Leave It! To increase the challenge and the learning: Drag toy in front of and around the dog while giving the command 'Leave it' before allowing the chase. Only reward full compliance.

This is fast action fun! To keep dogs healthy, practice warm-up and warm-down exercises and avoid letting dogs jump too high too often. Also, use care to change the direction of the chase so dogs' knees are not stressed through repetition.



