



"Collar Grab": Building Trust, Confidence and Impulse Control!

This is not really a training game, but a conditioning exercise. It is teaching your dog that you reaching for and holding his collar is a great thing, so that he feels great it!

Touching, holding and leading your dog by his collar is invaluable in your everyday life with him! You will undoubtedly have to call him to be leashed, or hold him at the vet office, or to lead him away from something dangerous.

A 'Collar Grab' is relationship building! It builds up trust in your movements towards your dog, and earns you the right to reach for your dog's collar, if occasionally, to take him away or give a time out, etc. A 'Collar Grab' means great things happening when you touch the collar, and if you have to reach for his collar quickly or urgently, or in the very occasional 'time out' when you take the collar, your dog is not bothered by a collar grab in either circumstance!

Most importantly, when you reach for your dog's collar, the dog will give you all the information you need about how he is feeling in that moment with you. By his T.E.E.M.P. (**t**ail, **e**yes, **e**ars, **m**outh, **p**osture) you will know if your dog is 'connected' and happily wants to work with you. Or do they seem to want to simply 'opt out'? Yep, they get a choice! Do they lean into your reach? Do they have happy, loose, excited, curvy body language? Waggy, happy tail? Are their eyes bright and interested? If not, they may be telling you they are simply not comfy, nor interested, nor happy or willing to engage right now! We have a responsibility to engage our dogs in a happy, kind way!

THE 'MECHANICS': Dog on leash, as with all initial training. One treat in your hand that is holding the leash (not in the hand you plan to hold his collar with) - you can easily 'pinch' that treat between thumb & forefinger! Have your treat ready before you reach for the collar. Be discreet in reloading your treat.

Three distinct actions: Reach & hold, marker cue, then deliver your treat.

Hold the collar until your puppy takes and eats his treat, before letting go.

Move around a little between each 'Collar Grab' to 'reset' your puppy and so the association is not only with a particular place.

WHERE TO START: First, get your dog moving around, and randomly reach to hold the leash about 12" from your dog's collar. Immediately give a treat. And then evaluate: what was the dog's T.E.E.M.P.? This will tell you where you need to start in this training process. If your dog's was apprehensive, you'll want to start at the very beginning; if your dog was happy about, you may be able to start a little further along in the training steps.

Days #1 & 2: (to help desensitize your puppy to the 'reach')

Reach out towards your dog's collar, but don't touch or 'hold' it yet - mark, 'yes, good boy', then give a treat! Move quickly around the room or to somewhere else in the house, and when your dog follows, reach out again towards your dog's collar. This means you are doing the collar reach in different places, in different situations.

(just a touch, 2-3 times in one session, do that 4-6 times a day, for 2 days!)

Mix in a game of tug or play to break it up, and to keep your dog engaged.

Can he still allow you to reach for his collar when he is super excited?



Days # 3 & 4: (adding the actual collar grab/hold)

Now, reach for your dog's collar and hold it for just a second. Mark with , yes, good boy' & give a treat! You are working up to having your dog accept you holding his collar.

(just a short hold of his collar, 2-3 times in one session, do that 4-6 times a day, for 2 days!)

Mix in a game of tug or play to break it up, and to keep your dog engaged. Can he still allow you to reach for and hold his collar when he is super excited?

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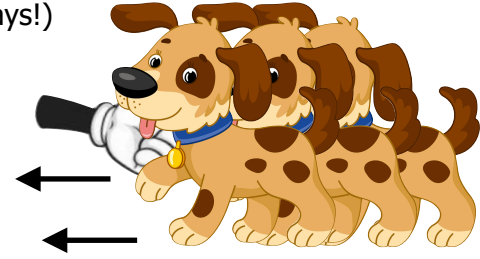
Days #5 & 6: (conditioning puppy to being moved by the collar being held)

Now, we add a step while holding the collar. Reach for your dog's collar and hold it for a few seconds. Then, mark with 'yes good boy' & give a treat! This time, reach for your dog's collar but hold the collar longer and take just 2 steps while holding the dog's collar. Quickly mark & give a treat!

(hold his collar, take a few steps, 2-3 times in one session, 4-6 times a day, for 2 days!)

Work up to taking 5-6 steps, and then, mark & give a treat!

Mix in a game of tug or play to break it up, and to keep your dog engaged.
Can he still allow you to reach for, hold and lead him by his collar when he is super excited?



EVERYDAY USE: anytime you call your dog to you, do a 'collar grab'. Occasionally, **be sure to reward him with a tasty treat or game of tug, to keep him interested in a 'collar grab'!** This will keep him coming in close to you, and will keep him willing to be held by his collar and leashed or walked to the car, or his crate, etc.

As you now add the leash, keep the 'conditioning' going, by treating along each step as you clip on a leash.

Keep it fresh: Do 'Collar Grab' 15-20 times with your puppy's meal as the 'rewards: do a 'Collar Grab' each time the leash goes on or off: do a 'Collar Grab' before you release your dog to play; do a 'Collar Grab' on every recall.

(credit: Susan Garrett Dogs That)