

# Force Fetch

## Prerequisites

Before you start this work, your dog should have a reasonably solid stationary behavior (sit/hup, or stand/whoa). They should understand the concept that they can turn off pressure and access rewards by performing the correct behavior. Finally, if you are going to use e-collar at any point for retrieving, they should have completed a 3 action introduction (go, come, stop) before the e-collar is applied to the retrieve.

## Begin with the end in mind

Anybody who tells your force fetch guarantees your dog will never fail a retrieve again is lying to you. Force conditioning, in any training exercise or behavior, simply gives you a way to enforce your requirements when your dog is being willfully disobedient. It gives you a way to “push” your dog to do something they don’t want to do. Remember that you want your dog to like retrieving, and to like you. With that in mind, remember that your dog might start out disliking a step in the process, but you shouldn’t move forward until they are showing confidence in the current step.

## Overview

The force fetch is taught in three parts: the fetch (reaching for the object), the hold and carry (holding the object in the mouth, and moving around while holding), and combining the fetch and hold and carry together for a complete retrieve. There are many different ways to complete this training but the method I use is found in the book, “The Koehler Method of Open Obedience for Ring, Home, and Field.” This process teaches the fetch first, then the hold and carry, and then combines the two. Since the hold and the fetch are taught as separate exercises at first, an industrious trainer can teach both of those pieces, in separate training sessions, concurrently. And then combine them when both are well known by the dog.

For our application of pressure (the force in “force fetch) we use the ear pinch. I prefer the ear pinch because it gives me better control over the dog’s head and mouth. Once all the mechanics are taught, we transition to the electronic collar as a means of applying force. This is particularly helpful for the distance work performed after the force fetch is complete. It is likely that your dog will not enjoy the early sessions of any phase in training where it is most likely they will encounter force. Do not worry about their unconditioned response to that force. But do concern yourself with your dog’s clear understanding of how to turn off that pressure, and work until pressure is not needed at each phase before moving on to the next. Treating each objective as its own goal in this way will assure you do not push your dog faster than they are able to progress, and that you are being a good teacher.

Understand your equipment and your process before you start. Assume problems are due to lack of understanding rather than lack of motivation. This means your default response to trouble should be to be more clear, not be more forceful.

Remember... Hope is not a strategy. Stubborn dogs are built, not born. And you want your dog to like retrieving and like you, so having them hate the entire training process is not a great way to achieve those goals.

# Teaching FETCH

## Accept the object on command

1. Always start from stationary behavior
2. Step on leash or have dog tied off by collar to table/post.
3. Say Fetch, and Give, and give the dog a short release/walk after each rep
4. Pinch the lips against the teeth just behind the canines until the dog opens their mouth enough that you can slip the object into their mouth. Move the lips out of the way so they are not pinched.
5. Gently cage the dog's mouth with the right hand while petting with the left hand.
6. Only praise (or mark, if you are using markers) while the dumbbell is in the dog's mouth.
7. Take the object out of the dog's mouth the moment they relax and stop trying to chew or spit it out.
8. Do 2 sessions of 10 placements each, at least two hours between sessions
9. Suggested minimum of one week
10. **Cinch the dog's collar high up on the neck and tighten it, holding it with your left hand. Hold the object up against the dog's lips and command "fetch". Wait until the dog takes the object into their mouth without you having to open their mouth for them. This is required before moving forward.**

## One inch reach

1. Start in stationary behavior and set up ear pinch
2. Press object against dog's lips and give command to Fetch
3. Release ear pinch and praise while dog holds the object
4. Command "give" after two seconds of holding
5. When the dog starts moving to take the object without the ear needing to be pinched, begin work on 1 inch fetch. Remember, the dog's head moves to the object. The object does not move to your dog's head.
6. Do not go further than 1 inch, and end each session on a successful rep.
7. Suggested minimum of one week

## Six inch reach

1. Review 1 inch reach a few times.
2. Hold object 6 inches away, command Fetch, when dog is holding, cage the mouth with your hands
3. Praise for a few seconds.
4. Work this session until your dog responds 10x (total, not back to back) without correction.
5. Every session thereafter, review 1" retrieve, then get 10x six inch reaches without correction (total).
6. Work dog between two distractions that are 4 feet apart. Work until you get five consecutive fetches without correction.

## Arm's length reach

1. Every day, review the 6 inch reach first.
2. Ten arms length reaches per session. They do not have to be correction free.
3. Five arms length reaches, correction free, back to back, NO DISTRACTIONS.
4. Five arms length reaches, correction free, back to back, WITH DISTRACTIONS.

# Teaching HOLD AND CARRY

1. Back to mouth placement. Command “hold” while the object is in the dog’s mouth.
2. Cage mouth briefly until the dog settles. And take the object before the dog drops it. Only praise while the object is in the mouth. Command “give” when you remove the object.
3. Continue placements, commanding “hold”, but instead of caging the mouth, set up thumb correction under chin.
4. Work at this level, gradually increasing hold time, until the dog will hold for one minute.
5. **Begin asking the dog to hold while you lean into the leash to get them to move. Cage mouth to ensure success the first few reps. We only need one or two steps at first.**
6. Continue hold and carry without caging the mouth. Move over small obstacles and around distractions, increasing difficulty little by little.
7. You will not use the under chin cuff correction again after this phase.

## Combining FETCH with HOLD AND CARRY

### Objective 6: Leave my side and return to me

1. Give “Fetch” command, set up ear pinch every time.
2. When dog takes the object at arms length, turn dog to face you
3. Say “Give” and take the object from the dog.
4. The dog need not sit; just turn to face you. Lots of praise

### Objective 7: Pick up off the ground

1. Each time you ask the dog to “Fetch,” lower the object closer to the ground each rep.
2. Angle the object with one side on the ground and the other side elevated in your hand.
3. Place object on the ground but keep your finger on it. Use enough pressure to make the dog have to pull the object off the ground and out from under your finger.
4. **Place object on ground without your hand on it.**
5. Take buck as soon as the dog lifts it from the ground.
6. Command Fetch. Use ear pinch to correct if needed.

*You can start e-collar overlay at any point from here on out.*

## Leash length retrieve

1. Place dog in stationary behavior
2. Set up ear pinch and command Fetch
3. When dog moves, release ear pinch
4. If dog stops on the way out, tighten the leash to stop any more forward progress, pinch ear and correct.
5. Work to get the retrieve from a placement of a leash length away and no further.
6. 5 reps per session for as many sessions as you can get in per day

# Formalizing the pattern

- Days 1 - 4
  - Work dog in at least 3 different areas minimum.
  - Leash length retrieve amid distractions, no more ear pinch setup.
  - If dog drops dumbbell, hold the dog back and ear pinch all the way to the dumbbell.
  - 2 sessions of 8x per day.
- Days 5 - 6
  - Follow the same procedure as above but be ready to make 3 changes in your handling:
    - Correct for any anticipation.
    - Send dog to “Fetch” without setting up collar.
    - Handle dog like you would in the test/hunting. Watch sits, heeling and miscellaneous.

## Continuing Work

- Slowly add distance until dog is working on “fetches” at full check cord distance.
- Now is the time to work out all of your problems, not when you are off leash
- At each level, work until the dog can’t get it wrong..
- 5x per session, 2 sessions per day
- **Begin odd objects, unusual setups, heavy distractions.** Find things the dog doesn’t like to do, and get them to do those things willingly.

## E-Collar Overlay

- Start all the way back at the beginning of ear pinch. Pinch ear between your finger and e-collar button. You should already know your dog’s “point of perception” and “point of motivation” levels.
- Redo each step in the process with the e-collar, moving on as soon as the dog is successful.

## Advanced Work Sequence

Don’t reset for mistakes. Simplify the exercise if needed but otherwise handle the dog through the rep. This teaches them they are not done when they give up/fail, they are done when they complete the job. We don’t need dogs that start the job, we need dogs that finish it.

1. Force to pile
2. 3 Handed Casting (left back, right back, left over, right over)
3. Mini T
4. Single T
5. Walkout blinds
6. Memory blinds
7. Cold blinds
8. Simplify, step back, and review as you transition to new terrain. Low/no cover, open water, cover, water cover, etc.