



Hype Up/Settle Down

The Hype Up/Settle Down Game can be a useful tool for any rowdy puppy or adolescent dog to learn *impulse control*. This game can help teach your dog useful skills like taking breaks from play, settling in the house when guests come over, and how to settle and focus when out in public.

On their own, dogs and puppies do not know how to regulate their excitement and have to be taught how to settle or relax in distracting situations. Left to their own devices, most dogs will just wind themselves up until somebody's feelings get hurt. Teaching your dog to be calm or *neutral* in public has many useful applications, and starts first with teaching your dog how to settle from play.

More advanced versions of this game involve a skill called *Mat Relaxation*, which you can read more about in our "Mat Relaxation" Behavior Blueprint.

Follow the steps below to teach your dog the hype up/settle down game.



Step 1 Hype Up: Grab your dog's favorite toy and play chase or tug with them. Rile them up by bouncing around, squeaking the toy, or making some excited noises. Continue to do this for 10 to 15 seconds. If your dog isn't excited about toys, get down on their level and excitedly move around. Be exciting, and make yourself someone that's fun to play with!



Step 2 Settle Down: Remove the toy and ask your dog for a leave-it, sit, or a down. Keep holding the toy in a spot that they can't keep tugging with it (under arm or up high), and be very calm and boring until they sit. If they don't let go of the toy, drop it and don't engage with them anymore. If they jump on you for the toy, stand completely still and ignore them. The only way for you to re-engage and play with them is if they settle!



Step 3 Repeat: *Immediately* after your dog sits, say "free" or "take it" and start playing with them. "Free" is a release cue, and means you're allowed to get up and continue playing. "Take it" is the alternative to "leave it," and can be used to tell your dog that they are allowed to continue playing with the toy. You may use either cue here to continue playing the hype up/settle down game.

Step 4 Add Duration: Once your dog has a grasp of the game, start to increase the length of time that they hold the sit or down (the “settle down” portion.) Hype your dog up, remove the toy and ask for a sit or down, then count to 3. Slowly increase the amount of time that your dog holds the sit or down behavior.

Step 5 Generalize: Repeat this process in a new location. Your dog may be a pro at settling at home, but a maniac when you go to a friend’s house. Make sure that you practice this skill in multiple locations with varying levels of difficulty. These could be your front yard, backyard, a pet store, your apartment lobby, etc. Remember that some locations will be harder than others and to go at your dog’s pace! For more on generalization, check out our Generalization blueprint under the Advanced Skills section on our Behavior Blueprints page.