

# **7 Retrieving Games That Calm Excitable Retrievers**

Training With Instinct for Pet Retrievers

Calm Canine Companion

## Introduction

Many retrievers are energetic, enthusiastic and eager to be active. These qualities are part of what makes them such enjoyable companions, but they can also lead to behaviours such as over-excitement, constant chasing, or difficulty settling. These behaviours are not usually the result of disobedience. More often, they reflect natural instincts that have not yet been given a clear and constructive outlet. Retrievers were developed to search, retrieve and work in close partnership with people. When these instincts are understood and used in a structured way, they can help form the foundation of a calm, responsive companion dog. The exercises in this guide are intended as a simple starting point, helping you work with your dog's natural abilities in a calm and thoughtful way.

## Before You Begin

- 1 Keep sessions short and manageable
- 2 Begin in a quiet environment
- 3 Focus on calmness rather than speed
- 4 Allow your dog time to think
- 5 End each session while your dog is still engaged

## The Exercises

### 1. Calm Before the Retrieve

Purpose: Encourage calmness before action. Ask your dog to sit beside you. Hold a dummy or toy without throwing it immediately. Wait quietly for a moment of calm before proceeding. Gradually increase the time your dog waits. Key idea: Calmness before action creates control.

### 2. Short, Controlled Retrieves

Purpose: Introduce structured retrieving. Throw a dummy a short distance. Pause before sending your dog. Encourage a calm return. Increase distance gradually. Key idea: Retrieve with control, not speed.

### 3. Returning to Hand

Purpose: Develop cooperation. Encourage your dog to return close and remain with you. Reward calm behaviour. Shape toward a consistent delivery to hand. Key idea: The retrieve ends with calm return.

### 4. One Retrieve, Then Pause

Purpose: Reduce over-excitement. Do one retrieve, then pause. Allow your dog to settle before repeating. Increase pause duration over time. Key idea: Less repetition improves calmness.

### 5. Simple Memory Retrieves

Purpose: Build concentration. Place a dummy while your dog watches. Walk away, pause, then send. Increase delay or distance gradually. Key idea: Thinking calms the dog.

## **6. Gentle Hunting Exercise**

Purpose: Use natural search instinct. Place a dummy in light cover. Encourage calm searching. Progress to hidden placements. Key idea: Searching satisfies instinct.

## **7. Finishing Calmly**

Purpose: Reinforce calm endings. After training, return to calm activity. Avoid ending with excitement. Make calm finishes consistent. Key idea: Endings shape behaviour.

## **Bringing It Together**

- 1 Channel energy into purposeful activity
- 2 Develop calmness and self-control
- 3 Improve focus and responsiveness
- 4 Strengthen your relationship with your dog

## **Next Steps**

If you would like to continue: • Read the Calm Canine Companion blog • Follow the Calm Canine Companion book series • Join The Calm Retriever Club These will help you build on the foundation introduced here.

## **Final Thought**

When instinct is guided with care and understanding, training becomes clearer, behaviour becomes calmer, and the partnership between dog and owner becomes more rewarding.