

# Off Switch Game

## LEARNING TO REGULATE AROUSAL

It can be very difficult for a dog to go from excited, stressed, or overstimulated to calm. This is an important skill, and one that often gets overlooked. We can teach this skill of regulating arousal at home through play. Your dog gets to safely practice calming down in high-intensity moments. This is helpful if your dog struggles with reactivity, stress, or overexcitement.



1. You don't need treats for this exercise, just a toy or style of play your dog loves. You'll be practicing in the house or in a fenced backyard with your dog off-leash.
2. Get your dog playing! Fetch, tug, chasing a flirt pole, or social play between you and your dog with no toy are all good options.
3. After a little bit of play, stop and hold the toy calmly out of reach, close to your body. While being quiet and still, just wait.
4. As soon as you notice your dog calming down (breathing slowing, sitting, lying down, or standing still), reward by restarting play. You don't need to hold out for any specific behavior; we are just looking for your dog to slow down.
5. Repeat this cycle of play → calm → play → calm a few times.
6. Over time, gradually increase the duration of the calm periods.

### Tip

If your dog is struggling to calm down and starts vocalizing, jumping, or mouthing, make the initial play less exciting.

