



The **PLAY** WAY

with Amy Cook PhD

playwaydogs.com

illustrated by Lili Chin doggiedrawings.net

Social Play is an excellent way for a dog to be in a happy state of mind and to be physically relaxed or loosened up. Playing also lets us know if a dog is truly relaxed or concerned about anything, so we can more effectively help them feel better.

Good play is an **INVITATION**. We invite our dog when they are looking at us, not when they are busy. We don't pressure them, as grabbiness, pushiness, and nagging are a turn-off. Pause and greet again before making a new suggestion. If your dog doesn't take up your suggestion but is still attentive, try something new.

FLIRT! Use SUSPENSE.

Not all play involves touching, but good play will have an element of suspense! Take pauses. Do not rush.

- ✓ Start with slower, softer energy.
- ✓ Give your dog plenty of room to move around freely.
- ✓ Invite, wait, listen to your dog's response (body language)
- ✓ Take "no" as an answer. PAUSE. Try something different.
- ✗ Don't make your dog feel trapped or overwhelmed.
- ✗ Don't make your dog wrong.

You want your dog to feel **SAFE** to open up and play with you. If you touch your dog, use the 3-SECOND RULE. Pull back after 3 seconds, staying engaged. Does your dog come back to you?



Be in your dog's ENERGY RANGE!

What is your dog's energy level?

If your dog is overexcited (eg, 8) slow down to a 6-7.

If your dog is unsure or shy (eg, 2) try 1-3.



With **SOCIAL PLAY**, the use of toys or food is not essential because you are not teaching your dog how to play. You are **playing** with your dog and learning what they like!

8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

