

## BARK U Educational Guide: Flirt Pole Games – A Fun Way to Get Your Dog's Energy Out

### What is a Flirt Pole?



A flirt pole is a long stick or pole with a durable rope or string attached to the end, often with a toy, tug, or lure at the other end. Think of it as a giant cat toy for dogs! Flirt poles are an excellent tool for physically and mentally engaging your dog in a fun, structured way.

Flirt pole games mimic the natural chase-and-catch instincts many dogs have, making it a highly rewarding activity for them. Plus, it's a great way to exercise your dog without requiring much space or time.

### Why Flirt Pole Games Are Beneficial

- **Burns Energy Fast:** Flirt pole games are a high-energy activity that can quickly tire out even the most active dogs. A 3–5 minute session can provide the same level of exercise as a long walk or run.
- **Improves Impulse Control:** Using commands like “sit,” “wait,” and “drop it” during flirt pole play helps your dog practice listening and self-control, even in high-arousal situations.
- **Builds Confidence:** For shy or nervous dogs, the fast-paced chase-and-catch nature of flirt pole games can help boost their confidence by engaging their natural prey drive in a safe, controlled way.
- **Strengthens Bond:** Playing flirt pole games together strengthens your connection with your dog. It reinforces you as the provider of fun and helps build trust and cooperation.
- **Mental Stimulation:** The problem-solving aspect of chasing and catching the lure provides mental exercise, which is just as important as physical activity.





## How to Play Flirt Pole Games

### Step 1: Building Intensity & Confidence

This level of flirt pole play focuses on building your puppy's confidence and teaching appropriate play. You'll practice this phase for at least 1-3 months until your puppy has mastered basic commands like "drop it or out" and understands how to engage appropriately with the toy.

- **Start Slowly & Build Confidence:** For puppies who are new to the flirt pole, keep the game fun and simple. Use a toy that moves in a controlled, circular fashion around you. Drag the toy just out of reach to encourage your puppy to chase.
- **Reward Catching the Toy:** Let your puppy catch the toy frequently during short sessions. This builds confidence and teaches them that success comes with chasing the toy.
- **Resetting the Game:** If your puppy grabs the toy and doesn't know how to release it yet, use the "make the toy go dead" method. Stop moving the toy and wait patiently until your puppy drops it or loosens their grip. Once they do, gently whip the toy away to continue the game.
- **Run the Toy in Both Directions:** Ensure your puppy engages with both sides of their body. Alternate running the toy in circles on the left and right. This keeps your puppy's coordination balanced and prevents overworking one side of their body.
- **Pulse the Toy:** While your puppy carries the toy, gently pulse it to mimic a fleeing squirrel. Avoid pushing the toy into their face, as this mimics a more exciting chase scenario. Let your puppy parade around with the toy, pulsing it consistently as they go.
- **End with a Win:** Always end the session by letting your puppy catch the toy and parade around before gently pulling it away. The goal is to keep the game fun, stimulating, and rewarding.





## Step 2: Advancing & Mastering Commands

Once your puppy has mastered confidence-building flirt pole games, you can gradually introduce more structure by reinforcing key commands like “sit,” “wait,” and “drop it.” Gradually increase the duration of play while maintaining control and supervision.

### Tips for Successful Flirt Pole Play

- **Choose the Right Pole:** Select a flirt pole that is sturdy, durable, and the right size for your dog.
- **Play in a Safe Space:** Use the flirt pole in a fenced area or open yard to prevent accidents or your dog from running off.
- **Supervise Play:** Always supervise flirt pole sessions to ensure your dog plays safely and doesn't become over-aroused.
- **Limit Session Time:** Keep sessions short, around 3 - 5 minutes, to prevent overexertion.

### Flirt Pole Safety Guidelines

- **Warm-Up and Cool Down:** Just like people, dogs benefit from warming up their muscles with a walk or gentle play before engaging in high-energy activities. Cool down afterward with a few minutes of calm walking or stretching.
- **Protect Joints:** Avoid high, sudden leaps or sharp turns that could strain your dog's joints or muscles.
- **Monitor Energy Levels:** If your dog starts to show signs of exhaustion, like heavy panting or slowing down, take a break.

### Make Flirt Pole Games Part of Your Routine

Flirt pole games are a fantastic way to channel your dog's energy, reinforce good behavior, and strengthen your bond—all while having fun. Incorporate it into your weekly routine as an outlet for physical and mental stimulation, and watch your dog thrive!



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