



OBJECTIVES OF THIS NON-COMPETITIVE GAME

The dog learns to run approximately 51ft (15.3m) up to a Touch Box (a specially made but inexpensive fold-away ramp - similar to a flyball box but without the expensive trigger mechanism that is used to launch a ball) and touch it with at least one of its paws as it turns around to run back to its handler. This Game can be taught in two ways – either by learning to touch a marker with its paw and then the marker is placed on the Touch Box, or by attaching a simple “ball holder bar” to the front of the Touch Box so that the dog can collect a ball as it turns on the box and bring it back to the handler. If using the marker method, this Game is a great way to teach your dog to run on ahead of you to touch a particular piece of equipment with its paw, and can easily be adapted for use on Agility contact equipment.

The handler learns –

- Either - How to teach a dog to press a marker (eg. a piece of paper or sticky tape) with its paw. Once the dog has learnt to touch this marker, the marker can be stuck on a variety of different articles for the dog to run to, touch with its paw, and return to the handler for its reward.
Or – To progress from what was learnt in the Dog-Game of “Hand” and retrieve a ball from the Touch Box rather than from the floor.
- Dogs have a “critical distance” (ie a distance at which the dog is reluctant to venture further away from its handler) when learning send-aways. As the training of Touch progresses and the distance between the Touch Box and the handler increases, the dog will suddenly become reluctant to run that far away and further positive and rewarding training will be needed to overcome these fears.
- To give simple vocal commands to achieve the exercise rather than have the dog become too dependant on the handler being nearby as it touches the box.

The dog learns –

- Not to become too dependant on its handler's body movements as it leaves them to run towards the Touch box, but to concentrate on what is in front of it.
- That the Touch Box is always placed in exactly the same position each time it is sent to touch it. As the distance in training is increased the handler moves further away from the box, yet the dog is still confident as the box has not been moved. This is how a dog learns to run further than its “critical distance”.

STAGES (See the website for full details on how to train each stage, also please refer to the paragraph in the box on either the Recall or Bounce leaflet)

*** Each test or training session should not be more than five attempts, and a rest period of at least an hour should be allowed if a dog is doing more than one test/training session in a day (see “Latent Learning” on the Understanding Your Dog section of the website)**

STARTERS (The dog learns how to do the Game)

Cert. 1 The dog learns to touch the Touch Box using either of the above methods so that eventually the touch box is 25ft (7.5m) from the handler. The dog must do **three out of five attempts correctly** before progressing on to Starters 2*.

Cert. 2 The handler gradually moves further back from the Touch Box until they are 51ft (15.3m) from it and standing by the start/finish poles. The dog must do **three out of five correct Touch runs** to pass this stage*. A pale blue, yellow and white rosette will be awarded by Dog-Games when the dog has achieved Touch Starters Certificates 1 and 2.

BRONZE (Learns to do the Game consistently while running in different directions in the training lane)

A Touch Bronze Certificate will be awarded for each successful session of **five out of five** correct Touch runs*. The handler and trainer/helper should stand at alternate ends of the training lane for each certificate (eg. cert 1 & 3 left to right, cert 2 right to left) so that the dog becomes used to doing Touch in different directions within the environment. A pale blue, yellow and bronze rosette will be awarded by Dog-Games when the dog has achieved **3 Bronze certificates**.

SILVER** (Learns to do the Game with the distraction of other dogs nearby in another lane)

A Touch Silver Certificate will be awarded for each successful session of **five out of five** correct Touch runs*, despite the distraction of the other dog(s) running in a netted lane nearby. A pale blue, yellow and silver rosette will be awarded by Dog-Games when the dog has achieved **all 3 Silver certificates**.

Cert. 1 Dog does Touch while another dog doing Dog-Games is **released at the same time** in another lane.

Cert. 2 Dog does Touch while another dog is **returning from its 51ft marker** in a nearby lane.

Cert. 3 Dog does Touch while one or more dogs run in **various directions** doing DOG-GAMES in the other lane.

GOLD (Learns to do the Game while another dog is playing the Game in the same lane)

A Touch Gold Certificate will be awarded for each successful session of **five out of five** correct Touch runs*, while another dog plays Touch in the same lane. If possible, a different distraction dog should be used for each certificate. A pale blue, yellow and gold rosette will be awarded when the dog has achieved all 3 Gold certificates.

PLATINUM (Learns to do the Game everywhere)

The dog repeats a Gold Certificate at **three different venues** so that the dog understands that it must do the Game not only at the training ground but at these other distracting locations as well. A Touch Platinum Certificate will be awarded for each successful session of **five out of five** correct Touch runs*, despite the distraction of the new venue and the other dogs. A four-tier pale blue and yellow rosette and a silver-plated salver trophy will be awarded by Dog-Games when the dog has achieved **all 3 Platinum certificates**.

****In Silver, plastic netting should be used between lanes in the interests of dog safety**