HEELING GAMES

The Helper Holding Game

Purpose: Build excitement and make the dog eager to catch up and heel with you.

1. Have a helper hold your dog while you move away.
2. As you leave, **make a big deal about it**. Be animated and exciting so your dog really wants to get to you.
3. Build anticipation before giving your heeling cue.
4. Have the helper release the dog.
5. Give your heeling cue and encourage the dog to race toward you and move into heel position.
6. Once your dog catches up into heel position, get about 6-10 paces of heeling nicely beside you before you mark and reward with a treat or toy.

Tip: Keep the actual heeling portion short. The goal isn't a long stretch of heeling—the important part is seeing the dog **"explode away from your helper"** and enthusiastically catch up to you.

Tip: Your dog reflects your energy. If you casually walk away and say "heel," don't expect the same enthusiasm you'll get when you make the game exciting.

HEELING GAMES

Start Line Stay / Catch-Up Heeling

Purpose: A version of the catch-up game you can practice without a helper. It also works on a strong stay while building anticipation for heeling.

1. Put your dog in a **sit and wait**.
2. Move slightly away from your dog. Janice uses the phrase “Ready, steady” while crouching and slowly creeping away to build excitement and encourage her dog to watch her.
3. If the dog breaks the stay, simply put them back and ask them to wait again.
4. Once the dog is holding the stay, build anticipation with your "ready/steady" routine.
5. Give your heeling cue.
6. Let the dog race to catch up and begin heeling with you.
7. Reward the catch-up. Janice demonstrated this version with a toy, dropping it to the dog after the dog catches up.

Tip: Don't worry if the dog breaks the stay while learning. Dogs are going to make mistakes—just reset them and try again.

HEELING GAMES

Target Plate Catch-Up Game

Purpose: Another catch-up game you can do by yourself, but the dog's food reward is placed away from you first. The dog then leaves the food to catch up and heel, allowing you to reinforce that portion with **play instead of more food**.

1. Have your dog watch you place a treat ("cookie") on a target plate.
2. Build anticipation while the dog waits.
3. Release the dog to the plate to **"get it."**
4. As soon as the dog gets the treat, move away and encourage the dog to catch up.
5. Give your catch-up/heeling cue and have the dog come after you and join you.
6. When the dog catches up, reinforce with **play rather than another food reward**.
7. Repeat the game, keeping it upbeat and energetic.

Tip: Janice's point here is that the dog already received food at the plate, so you don't have to give another treat for the catch-up. This helps begin weaning the dog away from expecting food every time.