Teaching your dog to drop something from their mouth is one of the most important things to train your dog to keep him safe, since you don’t want your dog swallowing something inappropriate that could be toxic or cause an obstruction or other damage to him.

Here is a training tip to teach your dog “Drop it”…..You will want to use some really yummy treats. Don’t use a boring regular everyday treat, but something like a small piece of cheese, hot dog or training treat. You’ll want to practice this cue with items that your dog likes to hold in their mouth, such as a stuffed toy or ball. When your dog is holding the toy in his mouth, put the treat right in front of his nose. More than likely your dog will drop the toy (if the treat is worth it). When he does, praise and give him the treat as a reward. Offer your dog the same toy that he dropped. This way he will learn that dropping something doesn’t always mean he will never get it back. Repeating this exercise several times and after your dog has dropped his toy a few times in a row, you can now add a cue to it. When your dog is holding the toy in his mouth, say “Drop it”. Then, present your hand with the treat. Praise when he drops the toy and give him the treat. Repeat this until your dog drops the toy with the verbal cue, “Drop it” only. Sometimes your dog may not drop it immediately. Give him a second or two after you have given him the cue to allow him the opportunity to process what he has learned.

So in the meanwhile, what should you do if your dog hasn’t mastered the “Drop It’ cue yet and you see your dog grab something and put it in his mouth? First of all, don’t chase him to try and get it back. Your dog will only think you are playing a game with him and the item increases value in your dog’s mind so he may swallow it more quickly.

Try these instead…..

1. Grab one of your dog’s toys and make a really big deal about it by squeaking it and tossing it around. Express excitement in your voice that you have the best thing ever. Hopefully this will entice your dog to come over and want to play with you and drop what is in his mouth.
2. Bend over or sit on the ground pretending you found something on the ground that is extremely valuable. Show that you are really excited about it. Pretend picking it up and eating it. Usually it will make the dog very curious and will come over and investigate dropping the item from his mouth
3. Walk calmly into the room where you store the treats and make lots of noise while opening up the bag. Dogs will usually pick up on that sound and follow you since they associate that sound with something yummy. Once he drops the item, toss the treat on the floor. Calmly pick up the item that the dog dropped.

Sometimes your instinct might be to simply pry open his mouth and take away the item. This technique can be dangerous as it puts you at risk of being bitten, and could make the dog swallow or choke on the item. It can also increase the chance that the dog will become more possessive over items in their mouth in the future — it's a recipe for resource guarding.

With consistent training, your dog should quickly learn this Cue and drop what is in his mouth. I know firsthand with my dogs it really works!