

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue



Golden Rule Training

Teaching Your Dog to “Leave It”

What is “Leave it?”

The cue “Leave it” is one of the most important things you can teach your dog. When you need your dog to leave something alone, (something toxic or dangerous) this is the cue you want to teach him. It is used to quickly avert your dog’s attention; this can be used when at home or in public, on-leash or off. Whether he is being tantalized by a piece of raw chicken accidentally dropped on the kitchen floor, or a piece of trash in the street, getting your dog to stop before he picks it up is important. The “leave it” cue could save your dog from eating something that could hurt him. Think of a child near a hot stove. “Leave it!” means, “Don’t touch. “

Gather Your Tools

For this exercise, you will need a handful of treats and lots of patience. Cut-up hot dogs work well as treats, as well as freeze-dried liver, and cubed chicken or cheese. Use small, pea-sized pieces so you do not make your dog sick by giving him so many goodies!

Leave One, Take One

In order to teach “leave it”, you must also teach “take it”. If we only taught one part of the equation, the dog would think you are teasing him.

The steps:

Start with a handful of treats in your left hand and just one treat in your right hand. *You are going to use the treat in the right hand as the reward; having treats ready in your left hand makes it easier to continue to practice without him seeing you grab more treats.*

With your right hand closed (the one with just one treat), show your dog your closed fist. Put it right up to his nose to get his attention.

He will probably paw at your hand; lick you, and maybe even whine. This is where you need to be patient and keep your hand closed.

Wait for him to step back, look away from your hand in another direction or make eye contact with you. This could take a while. Be patient! When he backs off, in an upbeat voice say, “leave it”, then say “Good”.

Put your left hand behind your back again, and transfer another treat to your right hand and open your hand, and this time say, "Take it". He will start to understand the difference between the cues.

Repeat the exercise of "Leave it, Take it" six times in a session.

Next Steps

When the exercise is reliable and he is getting it right 8 out of 10 times, you can continue the exercise with advanced variations. Be careful not to tease your dog with this lesson. Always have that reward ready for the times he gets it right. Special treats are great, but he also needs to hear you are pleased with your love and praise!

Start by putting a treat on a table or chair. If your dog already knows not to jump on the furniture, you should find this next part very easy. If your dog tries to get the treat off the table or chair, tell him to "leave it!" and give him a different treat when he does leave it alone. This reinforces his behavior and tells him that this is what I wanted you to do, always say "good" when he gets it right.

You can also try this exercise with a treat on the floor and your hand cupped over it, or lightly covered with your foot. Ideally, whenever you say "Leave it," your dog should back off and look to you for further instructions.

If he does not follow the command, refresh his memory with the "Leave One, Take One" exercise, you can also say "eh-eh" as a no, that is not what you wanted. Never move on to a more difficult part of an exercise until they master the basics, we always want to make them successful every step of the way!

Data compiled by Carolyn McLeod

Resources:

www.aspcabehavior.org

www.loveyourdog.com

www.petmd.com