



Teach Your Dog the “Leave It” Command

“Leave it” is a phrase that you can use when you want your dog to leave something alone. After your dog learns what “Leave it” means, you can tell him to avoid things that might hurt him, such as trash or debris on the ground, or things that could get him into trouble in other ways, like unfriendly dogs or people who don’t want to meet him.

The key to a reliable “Leave it” is to teach your dog that if he leaves something alone when you ask him to, he might score something even better!

Step One: Get the Behavior

1. Sit down with your dog and show him that you have a treat tucked in your hand.
2. Say “Leave it,” and then hold out your hand with the treat enclosed in your fist so that he can’t get it. Let your dog lick and sniff your closed hand. He may mouth, paw it or bark. Ignore all this, say and do nothing and just wait.
3. After several seconds, your dog will stop trying to get the treat. The instant he moves his head away from your fist, say “Yes!” Then immediately give him a treat from your other hand.
4. Repeat this sequence at least ten times until your dog visibly moves away from your closed fist as soon as you present it to him and say “Leave it.” Some dogs learn this in one session. Others will need more practice over a couple of days.

Step Two: Increase the Difficulty

The next step is to teach your dog to look at you to earn the treat.

1. Hold the treat in your hand, say “Leave it” and wait.



2. When your dog doesn't hear "Yes!" he'll probably look up at you. The instant he looks at you, say "Yes!" and offer the treat to him in your open palm.
3. Repeat until your dog makes direct eye contact with you when he hears "Leave it." He's now learned that the way to get you to give him a treat is to look at you.
4. To perfect this behavior, you can delay your "Yes!" by a second or so at first so that your dog must look up at you longer to earn the treat. Over many repetitions, gradually increase the delay until your dog will stare at you for as long as five to ten seconds before earning your "Yes!" and a treat.

Step Three: Practice on the Floor

The next step is to practice with the treat in plain view on the floor. At this stage, use so-so treats (ex. kibble) for the bait and higher-value treats (ex. Chicken) for rewards.

1. Say "Leave it," place the bait on the floor and then cover the bait with your hand. Just as you did before, wait until your dog stops trying to get at the bait.
2. The moment your dog looks at you, say "Yes!" remove the bait from the floor, and reward your dog with a treat from your other hand.
3. Now say "Leave it," place the bait on the floor and then hold your hand an inch or two above the bait.
4. When your dog is successful at responding when you say "Leave it" with your hand about six inches above the bait, you're ready to practice standing up.
5. Put your dog on a leash and stand next to the bait. Tell him "Leave it," and if he tries to snatch the bait, use your foot to cover it.
6. Wait for your dog to look at you and when he does, say "Yes!" and give him a tasty treat from your hand. With enough repetitions, you should be able to walk your dog up to and past baits on the floor and, when your dog hears "Leave it," he should look up at you in anticipation of a really yummy treat.



Step Four: Practice in the Real World

The final step is to practice your dog's training in the real world. Practice with food, toys, laundry, interesting objects around your house, tissues and other kinds of safe trash. Practice in your house, your yard, and on walks!

NOTE: For AAWL adopters who need more information or if you have additional questions, please call our support team at 602-273-6852 ext. 105.