



The Default “Leave it”

Building a Default Leave-It

If there are both adults and young people in the house, this exercise is to start only for the adults. Not only do children have a hard time doing the exercise, the dog also has a harder time controlling themselves with young humans than they do adults. They often think of the children as “fellow puppies”.

This is an UNCUED exercise. The behaviour we are looking for (eye contact and not trying to grab the food) does not have a cue attached. Only after the behaviour has been taught and proofed should you add a cue. We want the dog to leave things as a default behaviour, unless they are told GET IT (tossed food and okay to get) or TAKE IT (food from hand).

What you need for this exercise:

1/Several different “levels” of food depending on the dog and how far into the exercise you are. Start with something easy like Kibble and gradually work up to higher value foods like treats, hotdogs, cheese or real meat when the dog is ready. Patience and the ability to keep from withdrawing your hand from the dog.

2/Time for one or two short sessions per day. This exercise is difficult for the dog (a natural scavenger) and especially younger dogs. Keep sessions as short as necessary to keep the dog from failing.

STEP ONE:

Holding food in your hand and somewhat away from your body where the dog can see it but not GET it wait silently for the dog to back away from your hand and/or make eye contact. Your timing must be very good to MARK the looking at you or backing off the food for the dog to understand what it is he is doing that gets him the treat. Marking is a quick and clear YESSS and say “take it” and give him the treat.

Repeat until you get definite and clear eye contact on each rep. Use the push drop stick rules (see infographic in package).



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STEP TWO:

Once he has succeeded 8 or 9 times out of ten you make the exercise harder by putting the food hand closer to the dog. For example: you drop your hand lower. You must be ready to close your hand at any time it is needed. Again, mark the behaviour (YESSS) and reward with TAKE IT or GET IT (thrown on floor)

STEP THREE:

Place a piece of food from your hand on the floor. Repeat the exercise as per previous sessions. You may cover it with your hand or your foot if needed.

STEP FOUR:

Drop a piece of food on the floor very lightly. As you progress gradually increase the height of the drop. Be prepared to cover the food if necessary. Then work on tossing the food a few inches in either direction and so on.

Children can be started if your dog is consistently succeeding at this level.

Work at the level that your dog succeeds at.

STEP FIVE:

When you are getting good results on the floor with you present you can start working on counter and table and once the dog is consistent at this level you can start moving further away, eventually to leaving the room and returning to mark and reward.

Then take it on the road. Outside, in different rooms, etc. Mark and reward every good choice that your dog makes and give him time to think about what he is doing. Every good choice gets a YESSS. TAKE IT.

If you have any questions about this procedure please let me know.