

Teaching Your Dog to “Leave It”

The “Leave It” command is a very useful command to teach your dogs. You can use it in a variety of ways that are practical, convenient, and sometimes life-saving.

You can start teaching your puppy or dog the first step as early as 4 months old.

Your puppy may not understand what you're doing for a few months, but it will lay a strong foundation for the command. The first step is to put a new type of food treat on the floor. (Don't use one he's used to, as it may confuse him to think that “all of a sudden” he's not supposed to have a treat that he's always been able to have at leisure). Small pieces of cut-up hot dog work well, as do any other doggie treat that's new to him.

Begin by placing the small treat on the floor and make sure he sees you put it there.

Walk him by the treat (with him on-lead). When he tries to sniff the treat say “Leave It!” When he looks away from the treat, praise him with pats on the sides and “GOOD Leave It!” (Depending on your dog, you may need to physically turn him away from the treat.) Then pick up the treat from the floor, inspect it, then tell him to sit. When he sits, give him the food treat and say “GOOD Sit!” Release him and play with him so that he likes this new “Leave It” command.

As you progress in your teaching, start periodically putting the food treat in your pocket after inspection, and offering an “old” food treat for the reward when he sits. This teaches your dog the true meaning of “Leave It” because the reward does not match what he wanted in the first place. In most instances of actually using the command this will be the case. After a few weeks of practicing, start using the command whenever you deem appropriate. Some instances may occur when he finds garbage on the ground, or when he wants to say hello to an aggressive dog (or unknown dog). In any case, ALWAYS follow the “Leave It” command with praise! **“Leave It” is a difficult thing for a dog to do, and he will be more willing to respond to your command if he knows what a GOOD thing “Leaving It” is!**