



Upper Rio Grande Animal Society

Teaching Your Dog to “Leave It”

Definition:

“Leave whatever you are doing and look at me.” **Practical uses:**

“Leave it” is useful when you want your dog to stop doing something, whether that is sniffing at someone or something, barking or licking. The dog should immediately stop whatever she is doing and look to you for a reward.

How to teach:

Put a treat in your closed hand, making sure she sees the treat; then put your closed fist near her. She will sniff and lick your hand. Keep your hand still, and do not pull your hand away from the dog (warning: your hand may get slimed!). As soon as *she pulls her nose back*, click and treat (C/T), giving her a treat from your other hand. The value of the treat you give the dog should be equal to or higher than the treat you are holding in your fist.

Adding a cue:

When the dog starts offering the behavior – i.e., when presented with your closed fist, she pulls her head back, or does not sniff at your hand -- you can begin to use a cue word like “leave it” so that the dog associates the behavior with the word. Do this about 20 times over two different training sessions.

In your next training session, start by saying the cue word as you offer your closed fist.

Now you have a cue!

Moving on:

- When your dog is reliable at leaving the treat in your hand, try the exercise with the treat on a chair. Cover the treat with your hand if she tries to take it. Remember to reward from the other hand.
- Next try the exercise with the treat on the floor. Cover the treat with your foot if she tries to take it.

Tips:

- ALWAYS C/T your dog when she leaves it. This is the one command that you will not move to a variable schedule of reinforcement on. She must learn that leaving what she is currently interested in always results in something better!