
LEAVE IT

OVERVIEW

The purpose of “Leave It” is to direct the dog away from an object, or to let the dog know that they are to ignore something and return their attention back to you. The verbal cue itself should only be given after the dog has shown that they understand the initial exercise and are able to attach meaning to the cue. Overuse of this cue will cause it to lose meaning and effectiveness. It’s important that when your dog “leaves it,” it gets a reward for doing so. Telling the puppy to “leave it” and then pulling them away without giving them any feedback for listening to the cue does not encourage further obedience of the cue. If you find yourself having to say “leave it” five times before the dog allows itself to reluctantly be pulled away, the dog does not truly understand “leave it” and needs more practice.

EXERCISE

GOAL: The dog learns to ignore objects on command and does not linger over them.

- **Poison Hand** = hand holding treats that the dog is meant to leave alone
 - **Reward Hand** = held behind back or loose, used to reward the dog
1. Hold a handful of treats in each hand. The left hand is the reward hand, the right hand is the “poison” hand.
 2. Hold the reward hand behind your back, offer the poison hand to your dog using a closed fist.
 3. After nudging/licking your hand, your dog will eventually pull their face away. When the dog disengages with the poison hand, reward your dog with the other hand.
 4. The poison hand is the hand your dog never gets rewarded from, because we are teaching them to leave it alone.
 5. After multiple repetitions of this with the dog quickly disengaging from the hand, the “leave it” cue can be added.
 - a. Offer the poison hand and say “leave it”
 - b. When the dog disengages, say “yes” and reward with the reward hand.

FURTHER STEPS

1. Place treats on an open palm of the poison hand. Close hand quickly if the dog breaks and tries to grab the treats.
2. Place treats on the ground/a flat surface, poison hand covering treats slightly. Cover all the way if dog breaks and tries to grab the treats.
3. Place treats on ground/a flat surface, with no hands nearby to cover. Can use foot if needed to block treats if dog breaks.
4. Progress to objects other than treats.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- If the dog is continually breaking at one level, drop down a level.
- If the dog is biting at/pawing at the reward hand, keep the fist closed. When the dog disengages from the hand (stops biting or stops pawing), then you may say “yes” and reward. You can also remove the hand and start again if the dog is not disengaging from the closed reward hand.