
TRADE

OVERVIEW

Trade is a way to teach a dog to quickly give up an object they have because they will get something better in exchange. Unless the dog has something that is going to cause them harm, we want to avoid prying things out of the dog's mouth. For some dogs, doing so on a regular basis teaches them that they will have the things they value taken away, and it can cause resource guarding.

Think of it this way: if every time you were reading a book someone came up and took it away, you would start to get upset. Initially, you would feel surprised and not think much of it. Over time, if that happened again and again, you would tense up when that person approached while you had the object of value. You may preemptively yell at them or slap them away to prevent them from taking your belongings.

Dogs prevent others from taking what they feel is theirs by growling, snapping, running away with the object, or even swallowing it. By teaching dogs that "trade" means "you will get something better in return if you spit that thing out," we can reduce the likelihood of resource guarding.

You may still use "give" in situations such as when you are playing with a toy with the dog. When the dog brings you a toy, say "give" and hold onto the toy until the dog loosens their grip. Say "yes" or "good dog" and let the dog have the toy back.

EXERCISE

GOAL: The dog learns to trade forbidden items for something better in return.

Start with a toy that the dog shows interest in but won't play keep away with (a low value object). Have a handful of treats ready or a better toy held out of sight. Say "trade" and toss the treats or second toy on the ground a couple feet away from your dog. When they go for the new item, say "yes!" Repeat at this level until when you give the "trade" cue, the dog looks up at you or drops the object they have in anticipation for the new object.

MOVING ON

1. Say "trade" and wait for the dog to look up at you/look away from the object they have. Say "yes" and toss the reward away from the dropped object.
2. Continue to work with higher value objects (try to get a favorite toy away from the dog instead of a toy they don't care much about).
3. If you use the "trade" cue, you MUST offer something better in return. Using "trade" to take things away from the dog without giving something in exchange will make the dog feel tricked and stop responding to the cue.
4. The dog may pick up objects intentionally to get you to trade for them. Simply ignore them, unless it's an object they absolutely cannot have/will destroy.

TROUBLESHOOTING

1. If the dog is carrying the object over to the treats and standing over the object while eating treats, that lets you know the object holds a higher value. Continue to practice "trade" with a slightly more exciting treat.
 - a. If the dog is still not moving away from the object to eat the treats, contact your Foster Puppy Trainer.
2. You can move to rewarding with treats in your hand when the dog starts dropping the toy for the "trade" cue.