

## Teaching 'Leave It'

The 'leave it' cue teaches your dog an invaluable lesson in impulse control that can be exceptionally useful in reinforcing good behavior. The 'it' in question might be food that has fallen on the floor, something your dog picks up on a walk, a squirrel, another dog, or even a child. This cue teaches your dog to take his nose/attention away from something enticing.

### STAGE ONE:

1. Hold a piece of food in your closed hand so that your dog does not have easy access to it. Then place a food reward in your other hand and hide it behind your back.
2. Extend the food toward your dog's nose and let them work out how they are going to get it out of your hand.
3. Your dog may try smelling, nibbling, or pawing at the treat, but do not give it to them.
4. Keep your hand in the same position in front of your dog. The goal is for them to back away so it's important you do not pull away. Once they hesitate momentarily, either by stopping and moving their nose back or by turning their head away, immediately mark it with a click or "yes" and give them a treat from the other hand.
5. Repeat this exercise a couple of times until your dog consistently makes the decision to take their nose away from the food.
6. Now add the words 'leave it' when you go to offer the hand with the treat. This will build up an association between the cue and the action. Repeat this process a number of times.

### STAGE TWO:

1. Put the food on your open palm so that they can see and smell it. You will show your dog the food in your open palm and ask them to 'leave it.' At this stage it may be harder for your dog now that they can actually see the treat right in front of them.
2. If the dog tries to get it, cup your hand over the treat and say 'uh-uh.' Repeat as necessary.
3. If your dog does leave it, do not reward them with the treat from the hand that you have asked them to leave. Give them the food reward that you are hiding away in your other hand.
4. You can begin to up the ante by putting the food on the floor and then repeating the process, still cupping your hand over it quickly if the dog makes any advances towards the treat.



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STAGE THREE:

1. Put a leash on your dog and walk them past a treat on the floor.
2. If they reach for it, say 'leave it' without jerking the leash, and praise and reward them if they leave it.
3. If they grab the treat, don't try to get it out of their mouth. Go back to the previous stage where they were successful and build up the cue until they are ready to try again.

Good luck and happy wags from the AAA team!