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## The Leave-It Command

This command instructs your dog to leave it alone-do not touch. It is a safety cue to prevent dogs from picking up things that could harm them. It also comes in handy if you drop that steak that's ready to go on the grill!

Here's a step-by step on how to train the Leave-It Command:

**Step One** -- start with two treats. One is low value, like a dry biscuit or piece of kibble, and the other is something of high value like a piece of chicken or cheese. Place the low value treat in one hand and cover it, making a fist. The hand with the higher value treat is hidden behind your back. Offer the fisted hand to your dog so he can smell it and then say the word "leave it", ONLY ONCE (more than that and the word will be a distraction to them). Your dog will continue to sniff and investigate the hand with the low value treat, and the second he gives up and backs or looks away, say your reward marker word ("yes" or "good"), and bring the high value treat from behind your back and give it to him. Repeat this until you get a success rate of 8 out of 10 times -- that is, your dog immediately backs or looks away from the treat when you say "leave it."

**Step Two** -- Now place your fisted hand down to the floor. Repeat the steps that you did above. Do not move on to the next step until you have a success rate of 8 out of 10 times.

**Step Three** -- Now for the hard part. Up to this point your dog has learned to leave things that he can smell but not see. Place a low value treat in your hand and as you are taking it to the ground, say the word "leave it". If your dog doesn't move towards the treat for just a split second, use your reward marker and then reward. If he does go towards the food, block him with your hand, or cover the treat so he can't have it. Slowly build duration by withholding the reward longer while he looks at the goodie on the floor. You will more likely have immediate success at this step if you spend extra time on steps one and two.

**Step Four** -- Now drop a goodie on the floor and just when you release the goodie, say "leave it." Reward him when he does not go for the goodie. Step on the treat or body block him if he does. Build duration by withholding the treat longer.

**Step Five** -- Put a plate down with goodies. Put your dog on a leash and place him about 4 -5 feet from the goody plate. Start walking towards the plate, and when he gets close to

it, say “leave it” and when he stops or turns around to you, reward. If he goes for it, say uh-uh and pull back on the leash.

**Step Six** -- It’s now time to take this out on the road and when your dog shows interest in something, say “leave it” and reward when he backs away. For my dogs when off leash, I say “leave it” and then “come” so I move them away from the temptation and back to me where it is safe and I can leash them.

Remember to take each step slowly and go back a step if they aren’t getting it at the next level.

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