



LEAVE IT (DON'T PICK THAT UP!)

Why teach your dog leave it?

The leave-it cue is great for calling your dog away from things not intended for him, like consumables on the street. It's also great for helping your dog to just keep moving when it's time for the exercise portion of your walk, instead of stopping to sniff every smell. (Remember, though, that dogs love to use their noses—give your dog some sniffing time on his walks, too!)

How to train it.

Warm-up.

Step 1. Place a treat in your hand. When your dog shows interest in your hand, hold it still and say, "Leave it." If necessary, close your hand to keep your dog from getting the treat, but don't move your hand away.

Step 2. As soon as your dog pulls away or loses interest, click or give your marker word, then treat from your other hand. Use a treat as good as or better than the one you asked your dog to leave alone.

Floor or ground exercise.

Step 1. Place food or trash or a toy or other object on the ground, just out of your dog's reach.

Step 2. When your dog shows interest tell him, "Leave it." If he looks away or hesitates, click or use your marker word and reward him with a separate treat. If he goes for the item, say, "Ah-ah" (a No Reward Mark). When he stops trying to get at it, mark and reward.

The reward should either be the same type of item he was after, or something better.

You can do this with anything you see on the ground. When your dog notices the object, tell him, "Leave it" and reward any response of looking toward you. Just be sure to stay far enough away for your dog to be unable to reach the object.



Step 3. When you get a 100% success rate with 10 trials (your dog never tries to go for the treats on the floor), decrease the distance between your dog and the food on the floor. Ask someone to help protect the food if needed or have your dog on a leash to stop him from getting at the food if he tries.

Training Tip:

The sooner you give the cue, the better. If your dog is already intrigued by an object, it is much harder for him to leave it alone.