

A SOUND & BEGINNING

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JUST LET IT GO

Resource Guarding Rules

First things first -----**Dog Proof Your House**

Ask yourself: **If I were the dog, is there anything I can get my “paws or jaws” on?**

Bottom-line: No item to steal = No confrontation

Here is the basic concept for pet parents to understand:

There are 2 types of items for a dog to guard

1. **Not valuable:** “Ok, you should have put it away but didn’t”
2. **Very valuable:** “It is unsafe or toxic and could harm the dog or it’s of high value such as a wallet full on money”.

Here are the rules:

If it is an item in the “1” category:

3. Ignore the dog: Do NOT look at, talk to, approach, walk towards, or go anywhere near the dog.
4. When the dog has lost interest in the item, and walked away, THEN you would remove it.

NOTE: For prevention and safety, secure your dog in another area of the home before going back to the item to remove it.

If it is an item in the “2” category:

Ignore the dog until you can get some really good, highly desirable food treats. Now you can do the “**BAIT AND SWITCH**” exchange.

IMPORTANT: BEFORE you proceed, please read the assessment and evaluation highlighted at the end of this article.

Resource Guarding Rules

How to do the BAIT AND SWITCH exchange:

Call the dog by name and toss the really good treat bits to either side of the dog. This is so the dog will leave the valuable item to go and help himself to the treats. This moves the dog away from the valuable item.

Then you may retrieve it.

If the dog should decide to return to the item, before or during when you are trying to remove it, do not attempt to approach the dog to get it.

Back away and go get more “good stuff”.

Toss more treats farther away or just inside the threshold of an adjoining room -- preferably one with a door.

If he is now far enough away, you can retrieve the item or simply close the door keeping him in the other room while you retrieve it, taking it out of sight, and then let him out of the room.

Or

If your dog likes toys, Frisbees or tennis balls, grab one and call the dog to join you outside to play. If he comes, go out with him and play a few minutes.

Come back in **alone** and retrieve the item.

Let him back inside once you have put the item away.

Or

Some dogs will come to the kitchen if you rattle a treat jar or will go to the front window when you ask, “Who’s here?”

Whatever it takes to avoid a confrontation is the goal.

Your job is to separate the dog from the item by using one of the practices described above.

Also if toys ever become something your dog thinks he needs to guard, then they should not be made available to the dog without supervision.

When you want your dog to have a toy, then it would be given to him until he makes the decision to walk away from it.

The toy would then be put away so as not to become a “ticking time bomb”. Because IF the dog should hide the toy and no one knows about it, then when someone approaches it even with no intention of touching it, he still may think he needs to guard it.

This is true for rawhides, bones, or anything that fits the DOG’s criteria for his definition of what is valuable to HIM. You might want to give him these items in his crate or in a separated area where no one is able to bother him.

- When you give it to him it is his until he decides he is done.
- No taking it away from him once given.
- Don’t go back on your promises – you are building trust not fear!!!!!!

Resource Guarding Rules

If someone says, “That is a cop out and you are just giving in to the dog”, then ask yourself this question:

Do you want to take a chance of getting bit?

Or do you want to accidentally send the wrong message to the dog to guard those items if he wants to keep them?

This is not a decision to be gambled on as the result would not be a good outcome.

If you simply **Ignore or Exchange** –this is a pretty good deal for the dog, and you will keep family members safe.

SO HOW DO YOU TRAIN A DOG NOT TO GUARD AN OBJECT?

Teaching a dog to release items when asked is the goal, but if your dog is guarding an object and you have not yet trained for this, don't try it. You need to first teach him that he doesn't have to worry about anything ever being taken away from him without something good happening to him. It's simply a positive association that you want to make solid before you can start using a phrase that your dog will understand to mean, **“Give the item to me please”**.

GIVE AND TAKE TRAINING

Teach your dog to let go of forbidden objects without a fuss.

1. Give your dog a toy he likes but is not his all---time favorite. Starting out with his least favorite makes it much easier for him to give it up and be successful.
2. Now offer him a handful of yummy treats and say GIVE.
3. When he voluntarily drops the object to eat the treats, pay them out slowly and pick up the object with your OTHER hand while he's occupied eating.
4. When he looks up at you again, say TAKE IT! And give him back the object. This is the DOUBLE BONUS for your dog. He gets the treats AND his toy back!

Once he is comfortable with this, repeat the same steps but with a more desirable toy. You will continue practicing and work up to a favorite toy. PRACTICE this until he'll give up the object on cue.

Once you have trained it so your dog fully understands what the word GIVE means, then if he gets hold of a forbidden object, you'll be able to play the GIVE game and he'll give the item up without playing keep---away.

NOTE: Do NOT try to forcibly TAKE the item from your dog's mouth. The dog should drop the object in anticipation of getting the treats, which becomes associated with the cue GIVE.

Resource Guarding Rules

ASSESSMENT and EVALUATION

Before doing the **BAIT** and **SWITCH** exchange, you must decide on how important the item is to you AND how serious is your dog's intent on keeping the item by first assessing **behavior** and **distance**.

DISTANCE: How far away do you have to be in order for your dog to be comfortable enough NOT to growl? Since the dog cannot be doing any aggressive behaviors during the **BAIT AND SWITCH** exchange, you will need to begin at the distance where your dog is NOT exhibiting any of those warning signs, which include:

- Hard stare “whale eye”
- Frozen appearance
- Barking
- Lip lifting
- Growling
- Snapping
- Lunging
- Biting

BEHAVIOR: Is the reaction MILD, MEDIUM or SEVERE?

MILD – If the dog looks concerned but doesn't offer any of the warning signs listed above, you can be in fairly close proximity to do the exchange.

MEDIUM – If the dog growls, barks, or shows teeth but does NOT advance forward, you will have to be far enough away to elicit a MILD response. That may be several feet away or possibly across the room.

SEVERE – If he is looking very tense and you see several of the warning signs listed, do NOT attempt to do the **BAIT** and **SWITCH** exchange. Leave the dog alone if it is not a dangerous item. If it were toxic or worth \$\$ you would have to proceed with caution and stay as far away as you can to do the exchange while keeping a safe distance.

NOTE: If your dog has ever made contact with you in an attempt to bite or actually did bite or bruise you, please seek a qualified professional through any of the following:

- Chicagoland Veterinary Behavior Consultants – www.chicagovetbehavior.com
- Dr Sara Bennett VCA Berwyn Animal Hospital - <http://www.vcaspecialtyvets.com/berwyn>
- Contact a veterinarian in your area who is board certified in behavior <http://www.dacvb.org/about/member-directory>
- “A Sound Beginning” behavioral trainer <http://asoundbeginningprogram.com>
- Karen Pryor Academy for Animal Training & Behavior <https://www.karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer>