

# Leave It

The “leave it” command is used to prevent your dog from picking things up. It allows you to tell your dog not to touch things that you don’t want it to have. Let’s talk first steps...



1. Show your dog that you have a high-value “forbidden object” in your hand – something you’re going to tell her she can’t have. I use freeze-dried liver cubes for this – they are high-value and durable. Let her sniff it, lick it, even nibble at it, but don’t let her have it.

2. Say “Leave It!” as you hold up the cube, then immediately place it on the floor under your foot, to protect it. (Note: Wear sturdy shoes. Do not do this barefooted, with open sandals, or in your nicest shoes!)

3. Let your dog sniff, lick, nibble, and chew in an effort to reach the treat under your foot. She might even paw at your shoe (hence, the no-sandals or bare feet suggestion). If her tongue can reach the cube under your shoe, tip your toe forward so she can’t lick it.

5. If possible, mark-and-treat again before her nose returns to your foot. You want to reinforce “Look-away, look-away, look-away, keep-looking-away” not “look at foot-look away, look at foot-look away.”

6. After several repetitions, pick the cube up, show it to her again, repeat the “Leave It” cue, and place it under your foot again.

7. When she looks away from the cube easily, move your foot slightly to uncover the treat and give repeated mark-and-treats as long as her nose doesn’t return to the treat. She gets rewarded for staying away from the cube even when it’s visible and seemingly accessible. Keep your foot close! If your dog dives for the food, just re-cover it with your toe to prevent her from getting it. Mark/treat again when she looks away.

8. If your dog completely ignores the forbidden object on the ground, try tapping your toe next to it to draw her attention back – but be ready to cover it up quickly! Remember, she doesn’t have to look back at the cube and then look away – you want continuous “look-away” behavior.

9. Eventually you’ll see your dog’s “Aha!” moment – that golden moment in training when you see your dog really understands. With Leave It, that moment happens when she looks at the exposed treat, considers it for a moment, then looks up at you in anticipation of the mark and treat. Celebrate!

10. Next, place the forbidden object on the floor without covering it with your foot (be ready to protect with your foot!). Repeat numerous times until you can place it in plain view on the floor and she doesn’t try to get it.