

TEACHING THE LEAVE-IT COMMAND (Compared to OFF and DOWN)

The “**Leave it**” and the “**Off**” commands are essential commands every dog needs to know. These commands are practical, convenient and can be life-saving. “**Off**” is used to separate your dog from things he is already on or has in his possession. “**Leave It**” is used to keep him away from things you don’t want him to have or touch.

- Use “**Leave It**” when you want to stop your dog from picking up garbage, cigarette butts, chicken bones, and other great smelling treasures when out for your walk.
- The command “**Off**” means for him to remove his body, paws or mouth from whatever he is touching.
- “**Off**” is also used to stop your puppy from jumping up on people as well as to get him “**Off**” the new couch.
- “**Down**” should never be used for either of these situations.
- “**Down**” is used only to instruct your puppy to put his belly in the floor.

When your dog is jumping on you, give the instructive command “**Off**” then quickly say, “**Sit**”. You may not always have a treat handy so be sure to praise him enthusiastically.

Teaching “**Leave it**”

Place your left arm over your dog’s shoulder, your thumb through his collar with your hand on his chest to restrain him until he starts getting the idea of the exercise.

1. Place a small treat on the floor a few feet in front of him.
2. Give him the command “**Leave it**” and wait a few seconds.
3. If he glances away from the treat for just a second or two, say, ”**Good leave it**”, pick up the treat and give him one from your pocket as you say “**Take It**” then praise.
4. If he starts to go for the treat, gently restrain him, put him back in position and give the command “**Leave it.**”

If your dog has not yet learned the “**Stay**” command, have a partner hold him for you. The first time you work with a rambunctious dog, you may have to physically hold him in position for the few seconds necessary for him to succeed.

Once he is competent with this exercise and can hold out for more than just a second or two - go to the next level. This level requires high-value treats he has not had before as his reward. Always treat from your hand. Never give him the treat on the ground while teaching this command. Keep these high-value treats concealed in your pocket.

1. Drop a treat on the floor and walk him on lead by the treat. (not too close at first)
2. When he tries to sniff it, say, “**Leave it!**”
3. When he looks away, **really praise him**. And quickly give him one of the high-value treats from your pocket.

At first, you may have make sure you are between him and the treat as you pass so you can physically block him away from the treat should he bolt for it. Use your body to block instead of using the leash.

The “**Leave it**” command goes against your dog’s basic nature. Luckily it is fairly easy to teach ***IF*** you ignore everything that is not a success and make his successes very memorable with lots of praise, celebrations, and yummy treats.

*What is rewarded grows stronger, what is ignored tends to diminish.
It is your responsibility to make “Leaving it” a really good thing for your dog.*



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