

Quick guide to...

Leave

It takes a lot of training for a dog to willingly comply every time they're asked to 'leave' something. Here are some possible stages in this process:

- 1) **Food in a closed hand.** If your dog tries to take it (using their mouth or paws) say 'leave'. If they wait patiently and just look at it, open up your hand and say 'take it' and allow them to eat it.
- 2) **Food in an open hand.** Place the food in your palm, and hold it near your dog's nose. Say 'leave'. If they try to grab it, move your hand away, then start again. If they remain still, and wait patiently, say 'take it' and move your hand towards them so they can eat the treat.
- 3) **Food on the floor.** Ask your dog to sit or lie down. Hold a piece of food between your thumb and finger, say 'leave', and move the food towards the ground (not too close to your dog at first). If your dog gets up, start again. If they stay still, give them the treat.
- 4) **Stay near food for longer.** Ask your dog to sit or lie down. Say 'leave' and place the food on the floor about 30cm (1ft) away from them. Count to 5. If they move before then, start again. If they stay still, pick the treat up and give it to them, or say 'take it' and allow them to get it themselves. Gradually build up to 20 seconds.
- 5) **Stay while you walk away.** Ask your dog to sit or lie down. Say 'leave' and place the food on the floor. Take a step back. If you see a muscle twitch, remind them to 'leave'. If you think they're going to try and grab the treat, move towards them to stop them getting the treat. If they stay still, say 'take it' and allow them to enjoy their reward. Gradually increase the distance you can walk away from them.
- 6) **Walking away from food.** With your dog on a short lead, place food on the floor. Ask them to 'leave'. Then take a step back, and ask them to come to you (i.e. a short recall). If they do this willingly, give them a treat from your hand. Ask them to sit and (if they're waiting patiently) say 'take it', and let them have the original treat. Practise until you can do this off lead as well.
- 7) **Walking past food.** Do this on lead in the beginning. Set up a course of foody temptations. Walk your dog through these obstacles. If your dog looks at the food, or tries to get to it, say 'leave' and use the lead to stop them getting to the food. If they walk nicely, without pulling, then reward them with treats from your hand. At the end, ask them to sit, and reward them. Keep practising until you can do this off lead. At the end of the session, remove some of the temptations, then allow your dog to eat the rest of them.

Once all these stages are working well, it's time to practise in the 'real world'. Ask your dog to leave discarded food, other dogs, people who are nervous of dogs, animal poo, stagnant water, and anything else you would rather your dog didn't go to! Reward them with treats when they respond to their name, or the 'leave' cue. Keep them on lead in the beginning.