



# Leave It

## **What is the behavior?**

The advanced behavior is to have the dog look at the handler when asked “leave it” for an object. But a beginning behavior would be to look away from the object or stop engaging with the object and not go toward it when asked “leave it”.

## **What is the purpose of this behavior?**

“Leave it” is a good tool for a dog to leave an object alone. Some objects could be toys (fetch), acorns, paper towels, cat poop, pills fallen on the floor, etc.

## **How to train it:**

1. Place a treat in your closed hand and wait until the dog is no longer nosing or pawing at the treat; looking away from your hand with the treat or pulling their nose away from your hand even just for a second. A preferred behavior is to have the dog look at the handlers’ eyes or face. Don’t forget to mark the moment as soon as the dog turns away or looks at you; mark the moment with a “yes” then treat with the other hand and a different treat.
2. Adding the verbal cue means saying “leave it” right before you put your hand (with treat enclosed) in front of the dog. Only say it once right before presenting the hand or treat.
3. Once the dog can consistently leave the object in your hand, slowly open your hand. Make a small opening with the treat inside and if the dog goes for the hand, close it. Do this until the dog either pulls away or looks away or looks at you. When they do, mark the moment with a “yes” then treat from the opposite hand.
4. Repeat step 2 slowly increasing the opening of the hand for each interval/step until you can consistently have a treat on the handlers’ flat palm.

5. Then place the treat on the floor covering it with your hand. Wait until the dog no longer touches or paws at your hand. Preferably looking away or even better yet, looking at you. Mark the moment with a “yes” then treat with the other hand. Make sure the dog does not take the treat from the floor and only from your hand.
6. Remember to say “leave it” before placing the treat on the floor. Incrementally move your hand off of the treat and if the dog goes for it re-cover the treat with your hand. When the dog doesn’t go towards the treat, looks away or even better looks at you, mark it with a “yes” then treat with the other hand.
7. Now say “leave it” and place the treat on the floor covering it with your foot while you stand. Wait until the dog no longer goes towards the treat, looks away or even better looks at you. Mark the moment with a “yes” and treat with the other hand and a different treat. Again, make sure to treat with your hand and not from the floor.
8. Slowly shift your foot incrementally away from covering the treat in a stepwise fashion marking the moment when they look away or look at you. Mark the moment and treat. If they do try to go for the treat, simply cover the treat with your foot.
9. Eventually you will be able to say “leave it” , have the treat on the ground and not have the dog go for the treat. If they do go for it, cover the treat with your foot.
10. Once they have mastered that, try saying “leave it” then dropping the treat from where you stand. If they go after it, do your best to cover it with your foot. If they do not, mark the moment with a “yes” and treat from your hand.
11. Next try dropping the treat then saying “leave it”. Following the same rules for covering and treating from above. This is so the dog knows to even leave objects when you do not say “leave it” from the beginning.
12. Now that your dog is consistent and proficient in this, you can start using other objects the dog desires but you want them to leave it alone. Whether that be a toy, which you can use as a reward, or toilet paper, which you should use a high value treat as the reward. Try using other items in order to generalize the behavior. You can even try doing it outside. Remember if you do it outside or with a different item you may need to go back a few steps to remind the dog of what you are asking them to do.