

The Happy Hound

Havin' Fun with Tricks & Good Manners!

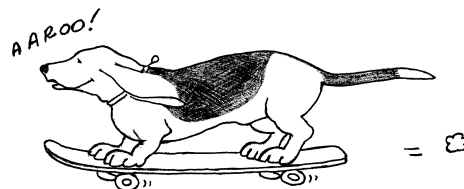
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Fred, Dog of Destiny, Creative Advisor

Wait for the Food Bowl (or the next truly exciting thing)

I start out using this with the food bowl and then begin to transfer it to all sorts of things. Once the dog gets that he has to wait for the good thing to come, he's willing to try waiting for many good things that just might come.

I like using metal food bowls because the sound of kibble hitting the bowl is such a delightful sound. Well, if you're a dog. So, portion out your dog's meal in a plastic bowl. Take a handful of that and drop it enticingly into a metal food bowl on the counter while your dog is milling around in the kitchen. Hold the metal bowl up to your chest and ask your dog to sit. As soon as he does, say "Wait" and begin to lower the food bowl towards the floor, several feet away from your dog. When his butt leaves the ground, say "Oops!" and whisk the food bowl away. Ask for a sit, then a wait, then begin to lower the food bowl again.

You will probably be able to get the food bowl a little lower each time before your dog's butt leaves the floor. The point of this exercise is that if your dog's butt leaves the floor BEFORE you say "Free dog!" and release him to eat his meal, the food will go away.

If your dog can't handle this and starts getting way too excited, take the food away and put it in the cupboard and give your dog another chance when the next mealtime comes. Nothing like figuring out that impatience doesn't pay!

Each day, you're going to ask for a little more. Here's an example sequence.

Day 1. Dog sits and waits while the food rests on the floor for 1 second.

Days 2-3. Dog sits and waits while each meal the food is left on the ground for 2 seconds longer (and you are able to stand up to your full height) until the dog is waiting 10 seconds before you say "Free dog!"

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Days 4-6 Dog immediately drops into a sit or a down (you don't care) as soon as you say "Wait." You set the food bowl in front of your dog and walk _ way around the dog and RETURN before saying "Free Dog!"

Days 7-10 Dog immediately drops into a sit or a down (you don't care) as soon as you say "Wait." You set the food bowl in front of your dog and walk _ way around the dog and RETURN—while saying a number of words that begin with F (such as Fee, Fi, Foe Fum....what a really Fine dog to wait until I say "Free Dog!")

Start mixing it up and making it more difficult. Never going so far in any one day that your dog beats you to the food bowl. Right now, I can put the food bowl in front of Jake, tell him to wait, pick up another dog's food bowl, walk out the back door, close both the storm and screen doors, feed the other dog and come back and say "Free dog." It probably took me about a month to get there.

Note: ALWAYS come back to the food bowl, before you release your dog. You don't want him to think that the "cue" for breaking a wait is you walking out the door....

Note: If your dog/puppy can't handle this and starts getting way too excited, step on the leash with one foot so that he can't reach the food bowl when it is placed on the floor. Once you place the bowl on the floor out of reach, wait for your pup to sit, then release the leash and say "Free dog!"

Over time, your dog will become more calm and you won't have to step on the leash to hold him in place while he waits.