

# "Leave it!"

Use "leave it" as part of your off leash management plan.

**For dogs who are extremely attracted by the smells, sights, and freedoms** of the outdoors and for dogs who are very independent, you may need to combine "leave it" training with the constant use of the long line when outside until the puppy is as old as 12-15 months. Some dogs regardless of how attentive they are indoors find the lure of outdoors more reinforcing than you are. You must apply both your management and reinforcement skills to teach your dog how to act outdoors.

## **Management:**

- 1. Long line on the dog ALWAYS.** Whether the dog is working or playing or peeing - the long line is on. (As the dog begins to mature and develop more focus on you then the length of the long line can be shortened till eventually it is nothing more than a tag line.)
- 2. Your attention on your dog never strays if the dog is not in a down or sit stay.** You are always watching, ready to reinforce right choices and to stop inappropriate choices before they happen (always noticing and reinforcing calm watchfulness).
- 3. You have taught "leave it" inside and are prepared with great food and toy rewards outside to use "leave it" when the dog is being distracted or lured away from working with you.** When your dog begins sniffing, trying to greet other dogs or people, wandering off, and doesn't give eye contact when using his name, then step on the long line, say "leave it", and the moment the dog changes the distracted behavior and looks to you, click and treat. Then play, making yourself fabulous so the "leave it" will always mean its worth my while to stop this and go see what my handler has for me. **You are working toward a dog that assumes the party is with you - period!** You can't just go out and let your dog exercise itself. You don't want your dog to learn that he can find better reinforcers than you've got by not listening to you.

## **Reinforcement:**

**All the best running, tugging, chasing games are done outdoors.** Going outside should be the place your dog believes he can have the most fun with you. If your dog isn't bouncing around, always looking at you for the next good game, then you need to work on your reinforcement relationship. If you haven't put your complete energy and attention into developing a great play relationship, your dog will believe the rest of the world is more fun than you are. So if your dog doesn't want to play with you, but instead wants to head into the woods, you know that you need to raise his pay (play!). Outdoors should mean 2 things to your dog - bathroom duties or playing/working with you. If you let your dog learn to self reinforce (crittering, chewing rocks, carrying sticks, swimming by himself, etc. ) you've put the dog in charge of his own paycheck.

### **1. Play the games that your dog shows you he is attracted to:**

- a. Chasing** (thrown objects: balls, kongs, sticks, Frisbees) To make chasing games work

means playing 2 or 3 toy so that the dog has to return to you to keep playing. Always capitalize on the dog's belief that "What's mine is mine, and what's yours should be mine" That means you always have to have what your dog wants.

**b. Tugging** (combine chasing for exercise with tugging for those dogs that love holding on and pulling. You'll swap the tugging toy for an identical version of it and start the throw/tug game again.

**c. Scent games:** hide the toy and let all that their sniffing behavior get used. Throwing the toy in dense areas combines chasing with scent work. Combine stay with hiding and then release your dog to find.

**2. Food and your clicker or the word "YESS"** to mark any good choice while outside working and/or playing. Food reinforcement works particularly well for self control behaviors like:

\* **watching and not growling at strange people or dogs,**

\***watching and not chasing**

\* **coming back immediately when asked to leave it or recalled**

\* **attention to you when a distraction is near** The clicker or word "YESS" and food are best used to reinforce good non-moving behaviors and toys are the best reinforcement for moving behaviors.

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