



THE GAME OF CHOICE

The Game of Choice is the first step in developing self control in your dog. Rather than always having to tell your dog to “Leave It” which is external control, this game develops your dog’s ability to control their own impulses simply by controlling the resource your dog wants, rather than by trying to control the dog. They learn to control themselves in order to earn the resource.



Sit in a comfortable spot that allows you to hold your hand at your dog’s shoulder level. Hold several treats your dog likes in your closed fist. Anchor your elbow to your knee and offer your closed fist to your dog. Allow your dog to lick and chew at your closed hand. Do not try to stop them or say anything, simply wait. Once your dog stops trying to get the food and backs off, open your hand flat. If your dog dives back in to get the food simply close your hand. Do not say anything, do not pull your hand away or push the dog back. By closing your hand you are controlling the resource and asking the dog to control themselves. Once they back off again open your hand. Continue this until they do not dive in for the food when your hand is open (this may take a few minutes, be patient). Once they are controlling themselves in the presence of the open hand (at the beginning only wait a second) then mark “Yes” and deliver a piece of food to your dog by picking it up with your free hand and delivering it to their mouth, if they come forward to take the food it goes back to your hand and your hand closes. They must wait for the food to be delivered to their mouth.

Practice this exercise each day in various places in the house, while out for walks, and using different foods of different value.

Section: **Self Control**

Difficulty: paw print

Prerequisites
- **None**

Goal: To develop self control around food in the handler’s hand.

QUICK STEPS

1.
Place a few treats in your closed hand and offer it to your dog.
2.
When they stop trying to get the food and back off, open your hand.
3.
If they maintain self control and don’t dive for the food, mark “Yes” and deliver a treat.
4.
If your dog tries to grab the treats from your open hand, simply close your hand and go back to step one.

REMEMBER!

This game is about developing self control. Do not tell your dog to “leave it” or to “stay”, let them figure out the game.