



## Biting the Hand That Feeds: Resource Guarding

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It seems well fed dogs should not need to guard food, toys and other resources but they still do. A dog in the wild would not last very long if every time it had a piece of meat, it gave it up to another dog, the same way we would not survive if someone took our paycheck every week. We must teach our dogs to relinquish valued items to us.

A meaty bone or tasty treat are natural items for a dog to guard, but dogs will also guard tissues, sleeping areas and shoes. Some breeds are more likely to protect items than others, but it is more likely to be seen in formerly stray or sheltered dogs. It is natural for your dog to not let other dogs take its toy from it but it should be able to exchange items with you. If your dog has a long history of resource guarding, it will take longer to treat the problem. Do not attempt this technique if your dog has bitten in the past. Seek professional help.

### Step 1:

Give your dog something to chew on, such as a bone or favorite toy. Let your dog chew for a while and leave it alone.

### Step 2:

Find a very delicious treat such as a piece of chicken or steak.

### Step 3:

Choose a command to give your dog when you would like it to release an object, like "give." Have a delicious treat in the palm of one hand. Say "give" and show the dog the treat in your open hand.

### Step 4:

When the dog drops the object say "yes" and give the dog the treat. When the dog is focused on the food, you can take the object.

### Warning!

- Make sure your movements are slow and precise. Do not taunt the dog with the treat.
- Do not attempt to take the toy or object if the dog is growling or has his ears pinned back.
- Do not allow small children to practice this exercise with the dog. Children make jerkier movements and the dog may bite.
- Make sure the treat you give your dog is really delicious. Use a food it will do anything for.
- If your dog continues to growl or attempts snapping at you, stop the exercise and consult a behaviorist.
- If your dog is chewing on something that could be potentially life-threatening, you may need to throw a treat past the dog to get it away from the object in a hurry. You may even throw several treats to distract the dog.
- The more excited you appear to be over an object, the more your dog will protect it. Try to stay as calm as possible.
- Never punish a dog for growling. Growling is the dog's way of telling others to get back. If the dog is punished for growling, it will just resort to biting.