

Does your dog get on the furniture and refuse to get off? Refuse to come when called? Unwilling to share his food bowl or toys with you? If so, a training technique called "Nothing In Life Is Free" may be just the solution you're looking for. "Nothing In Life Is Free" is a way of living with your dog with your dog that will help him behave better because he trusts you and the relationship you have established. Essentially you are setting boundaries so your dog will have an understanding what your expectations are, and what behaviors you LIKE rather than focussing on what you DISLIKE. We will refer to sit in this article as a 'default sit'. This term means the dog offers the sit/down without being asked for it.

How to Practice "Nothing In Life Is Free"

- Use positive reinforcement methods (clicker training) to teach your dog a few cues and/or tricks. "Sit," "Down," and "Stay" are practical useful tricks. "Shake," "Touch," and "Roll Over" are fun tricks to teach your dog.
- Hand feed your dog. Instead of just putting your dogs meals on the floor in a bowl, why not use that opportunity to do a quick training session, feeding your dog its meals by hand – rewarding the dog for kibble each time your dog offering behaviors. Hand feeding enhances the relationship you have with your dog because it gives you more value - increased affiliation will result in your dog giving you more focused attention (paying attention to you).
- Once your dog has mastered a few tricks and can perform them on cue, you can begin to practice "Nothing In Life Is Free." Before you give your dog anything (food, a treat, a walk) he must first offer one of the behaviors he has learned. For example:

YOU	YOUR DOG
Put your dog's leash on to go for a walk	Offers a sit to go out the door
Feed your dog	Offers a sit or down in order for you to put the bowl of food down
Play a game of fetch	Offers a sit each time you throw the toy, as if sitting is your dog saying "Please"

- Once you've given the cue, don't give your dog what he wants until he does what you want. If he doesn't perform the cue, briefly walk away, and start again. If your dog doesn't perform the desired behavior, be patient and remember that eventually he will have to respond your cue to get what he wants.
- Remember – avoid yelling or scolding your dog, (if your dog cannot perform the trick your dog may not understand what you are asking for, or may be too stressed to perform), scolding your dog if/when they get it wrong could cause your dog to fear giving a wrong behavior and consequently stop offering you behavior's all together because they are avoiding punishment or an unpleasant experience.

The Benefits of this Technique

- Builds a healthy relationship between you and your new dog, you are a team!
- Establish that you are a valuable resource to your new dog, and will enhance attentive behavior in your partnership
- Fearful dogs may become more confident responding to cues through positive reinforcement and experiencing success, rather than focusing on what they did wrong. Having some boundaries you're your dog can help a fearful or nervous dog feel more secure.
- Because children are small and excitable and can get down on the dog's level to play, dogs often consider them to be playmates. With the supervision of an adult, children are also able to practice some aspects of "nothing in Life is Free" with the family dog. (It is very important this is supervised)