Teaching your dog “leave it” is a cue that may prevent your dog from being injured and may even save his life. It should be taught to all dogs and practiced many times. Hazards that you want your dog to avoid include antifreeze in a puddle, carcasses from dead animals, broken glass or any other dangerous trash on the ground or even a dog walking by on a path.

These are steps on how to approach teaching this to your dog.

1. With your dog leashed, show him a treat and hold it in your closed fist. Tell him “Leave

It”. He will push his nose into your hand, lick your hand, and maybe paw at your hand.

Keep it closed so he can’t get it (Beware your hand may get very slimy)

2. Once he looks away (could be just a split second), click (say the word Yes) then treat your dog with a real yummy food from another source, not the treat in your hand.

3. Repeat this a few more times.

4. As your dog becomes more responsive to this, start lowering your hand to the ground and

repeating step one. At first, he may work hard to get at your hand again when it is lower

to the ground, but he will start to figure out when he leaves it alone and looks away he

will get a Y/T (Yes and treat)

5. Now you want to work with the treat on the floor. Place the treat under your shoe and

angle your ankle so it will hide the treat from your dog. Say, “Leave It”. He will

definitely know it is there. Again, he may start pawing at your foot, pushing his nose into

your foot and try to do whatever it takes to make you move your foot. Once he gives up

and looks away then Y/T. I would definitely recommend you do not wear sandals for this

exercise. As long as he still keeps looking away, continue to Y/T. If he looks back at

your foot, stop treating. Do not repeat the cue, but when he looks away again, then Y/T.

6. When he starts to resist for a few seconds, it is time to lift your foot off the ground so

your dog can see the treat. BE PREPARED TO PUT IT OVER THE TREAT QUICKLY!

Place the treat on the floor, tell him “Leave It”, and lift your foot slightly off the ground.

Cover it back up quickly if he moves to get it. You do not need to repeat the cue. He will

start to figure it out. When he looks away….Y/T!

7. Do step six again and repeat the Cue “Leave It”. As long as he keeps looking away, keep

rewarding that.

8. When he is reliably responding to “Leave It”, it is now time to get braver. Place the treat

on the floor, tell him “Leave It”, and move your foot a few inches away from the treat.

Stay close so you can quickly cover it if necessary. Take it slow. Sometimes trainers like

to see results quickly and move away too far. You want to make sure you are setting up

your dog to succeed.

9. Repeat step eight but now moving your foot even further away. Keep doing this until you

can be far enough away from your dog without him trying to take it.

10. Now it is time to see how well he is really doing. Repeat step nine, but now add one

more treat to the pile and tell him to “Leave It”.

11. Do you think your dog can leave the food that is not far from him while you are standing

away from it? Try this if you know that he is reliably responding to the “Leave It” cue

from the above instructions.

**Helpful Hints**

**1.** Practice in different locations, as well as practice with

different items to make a solid “Leave It” cue. Some dogs may find it harder to leave

a toy, a towel, Kleenex than it is for food. I think one of my cats is starting to respond

to the name of “Leave It”, every time one of my dogs tries to greet him

enthusiastically.

**2.** When stating the cue “Leave It”, say it in a nice friendly voice…not a Strong,

demanding voice.

**3.** If the dog is getting to the samples before you can get your foot over it, then you are

moving too fast with the training. Always set your dog up to succeed. If he gets

random rewards, it will make this behavior harder to teach.

**4.** You can start walking him on leash past items on the floor, BUT make sure you keep

enough distance so that it is just out of reach. When you approach the item, say

“Leave It” and Y/T if he walks by and ignores it. If he does not ignore it, just stand

there and wait until he looks back at you, then reward him for that.

**5.** You can start practicing with food on a crate, or a coffee table.

**6.** Always have a cheerful tone!