

Using Training Treats to Train Your Dog

Training with treats is very effective during the 'learning' phase of training. While some dogs need only our approval or a pat on the side as a reward for good behavior, others need a little more incentive to respond consistently to our commands.

Treats are an excellent way to reinforce desired behavior if they are used correctly.

To keep pets from becoming dependent on treats for behavior that is expected of them, we recommend limiting treat-giving to the learning phase of training. When teaching the 'Down' command, for instance, place the treat by your dog's nose and slowly lower it to the floor while you give the 'Down' command verbally. When she lies down, reward her with the treat. Repeat until you are confident she understands what behavior is expected when you issue the 'Down' command.

As you advance into the testing phase, replace the treat with verbal praise and patting. The goal during this phase is to have her respond to your command in order to receive praise and avoid firm (never harsh) correction. You can occasionally give a treat during this phase, but do not let her see it until you have a proper response to your verbal command.

The only time I recommend consistently using a treat throughout training is for the 'COME' command. This is the most difficult command to teach and you may need every tool in your toolbox to get your dog to respond consistently. You have to make them want to come to you, and a treat - together with praise - is often the reason they will choose you over the many other temptations that are 'out there.'