

THERE IS NO FREE LUNCH!!!! (Or EARN WHILE YOU LEARN!)

There is no free lunch! Your dog must earn everything – and I mean everything! – by first responding to the simple requests you make, i.e. sit, down, stay, etc. Only actions that you initiate are acted upon. For example, if your dog drops the ball at your feet wanting to play, no play. Play is always initiated and carried out by you only. It must be your idea, not his. If he nudges you for a pat on the head, he doesn't get one. He only gets patted and rubbed when you, the pack leader, decide the time is right.

All activities – meals, going outside, play, even attention, are initiated by you. (This does not apply in the initial stages of Clicker Training, for at that time we are going to reinforce for offered behavior, until we have put what ever skill we are working on, on cue.) In addition, the dog must obey a simple obedience command before you allow him to engage in any of these activities. Request a down before dinner, going out, playtime or any activity your dog likes. You must go through doorways first. Use your body to block the dog instead of a sit, stay command. The body block is easy and is in the dog's own language. As you open the door and the dog tries to push past you, simply move your body to block him. Continue in this fashion until he looks up at you in wonderment, and submission. When he hesitates and looks to you for permission, then release him. If the dog is going outside, just open and close the door without letting him out. When he finally looks at you and steps away from the door, reward him with a treat, or by letting him out. Do this consistently so he learns he must wait for you to say okay, and not simply rush through the door.

If you put your dog on the payroll, and are consistent, he will learn that all good things and all necessary things come from responding to your requests. All you ask of him is compliance, which is well within his abilities. You will impress upon him that you are the leader of the pack without having to lift a finger, scruff a neck or raise your voice.

Not all dogs require 100% No Free Lunch. But most can benefit from being on the payroll at least part time.

When I feed my three dogs they are asked to “wait” while I put their bowls down. Sometimes I then walk around the house. They continue to “wait” until they get a release word. Then they can eat. Dominant dogs may always need to earn everything, 100% of the time. And why not? It is very easy and no stress!

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