

TRAINING RESOURCES



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SAY PLEASE PROTOCOL (or using “real-life” rewards)

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How does your dog ask for what he wants? Does she get dinner by barking? Does he get through the door by shoving past you?



In any home, whether it has dogs in it or not, good manners are appreciated. Things like pushing past your parents to rush outside or bugging them for candy while they were working were probably not allowed when you were young and they show that your relationship with your dog is not as strong as it could be. There's no need to yell at your dog when he does things like bolt out the door or bark, whine, or jump for attention. What you need to do is teach your dog how ask for what he wants or needs in a way that fits with your family.

As with all of the training methods that we recommend, we want you to set your dog up for success. **Cue or show the dog what you want her to do (in words that she knows or by reinforcing behaviors you like), and ignore the tricks you don't want in your dog's toolbox for getting what he wants.** You get what you pay for with dogs. If it works for them, they'll keep doing something, even if you don't like it.

The Say Please Protocol is similar to "Nothing In Life Is Free," because you allow the dog to earn his keep. I prefer "Say Please" because, as Kathy Sdao titled her thoughtful book on NILIF (and more), "Plenty in Life is Free." (She also has a DVD - [click here](#)).

Never put training over a consistent, loving relationship with your dog. This version of the Say Please Protocol is a way of living with your dog that will help him behave better because he gets many chances to practice training, for a variety of rewards, and he won't have to come up with his own way to ask for what he wants. left to their own devices, dogs tend to use doggy ways to get what they want - bolting, taking, barking, etc.

The Say Please Protocol is also an effective way to convince your dog that you are worth paying attention to, because you have a wide variety of important reinforcers. I particularly like this while you are doing the work to help your dog stop resource guarding toys, beds, etc. or with new dogs in your

home. The Say Please Protocol takes advantage of something called the Premack Principle, which says that the chance to do something that the dog is more likely to do (going out the door) will reinforce a behavior the dog is less likely to do on his own (sit and/or wait at the door).

How to teach your dog to Say Please

- First, teach your dog some behaviors that he can do on cue. Use positive reinforcement methods to teach him some cues. At first, SIT is quite sufficient. This will be your dog's default way of asking you for something. TOUCH (hand to nose), DOWN, and STAY are also useful behaviors. "Bow," "Speak," "Sit Pretty", and "Roll over" are fun tricks to teach your dog. It's all tricks to the dog, of course. You can also look to see if your dog is already doing a cute behavior to get your attention, and put that on cue. (See the Ahimsa Dog Training Manual for how to teach Touch).
- Once your dog has mastered one or more cues, you can begin to ask him to Say Please. Before you give your dog the things that he tends to bolt, bark, or jump for (setting down the food bowl, treat, a walk), first ask him to respond to one of the cues he has learned (obviously don't starve your dog or skip walks - if he's not responding to the cue, you need to train more first). One way is to simply have your dog sit, look at you, or touch your hand for all of these things, so that he his default method for getting what he wants is to sit instead of bolting forward for it. Soon, you won't have to ask for it; you can just stand there waiting and he'll offer a polite sit, to see if it works. You can ask him to do other cues as well, although the "sit" is your dog's primary way to Say Please. For example:

Before any human in the family over 8 years old does this (examples only):	FIDO:
Clip Fido's leash on to go for a walk	Sits until the leash is on.
Set Fido's dog dish down	Lies down and stays until the bowl is set down AND he is released.
Play a game of fetch after work	Sits Pretty/lies down/sits/etc. each time you throw the toy.
Give Fido a stuffed Kong	Sits

Note that you will pick the types of things your dog has to earn, and what behavior(s) your dog needs to do. For example, my dogs must say please (sit) before I allow them up on the couch or bed with me. I can also deny that request. They're welcome to jump on the bed if I'm not on it (in fact my bed has a dog bed on it at this moment). I don't require anything from my own dogs before petting. That's my own choice, to use petting as a free gift rather than a reinforcer. That said, if they were biting at my hands or barking at me for attention, then I'd need to use the Say Please Protocol for petting. Don't go overboard and miss out on your relationship. Any time you can give a real life reward after doing one of the 'tricks' like sitting or lying down is good, but you don't have to take all the fun out of having a dog!

- If he barks at you or looks at you like he's never heard the word, "sit," turn your back for 15-20 seconds or walk away, then come back to start again (either with the same cue or something easier). Keep in mind that he may not actually know the cue in the context you are asking, and may need

extra help at first. Or he may be so excited about the toy/treat/leash that he temporarily forgets everything he knows. **"Extra help" includes pausing for about 15-20 seconds after they do any unwanted behavior, getting the dog's focus and then giving a visual signal, a lure, or asking for a different cue.** (It's technically a little less time, but we tend to count fast as humans).

- **ALTERNATE VERSION:** You can use this from the beginning or shift into it once your dog has learned some self-control and has stopped doing whatever behavior you didn't like. Reward things like quiet eye contact, four paws on the floor, waiting, etc. Basically, reward anything you like with something the dog wants. **But make sure to still put a pause in between the behavior you don't like and the reward for good choices. Otherwise, you end up with things like the Jump-Sit chain, where the dog jumps up to get your attention and then sits.**
- **Be proactive!** Don't just wait until your dog is obnoxious and then wait for alternate behavior. For example, every time my dog, Peanut, does a play-bow stretch, I do one too and we have a little love-fest. That way, I get some stretching and he knows how to get my attention in a way that I adore.
- It's fine to **ease up** eventually, once the dog has self-control and is fluent at his training. Come back to Say Please if your dog starts bolting, barking, etc. again, or stops responding to cues and needs a refresher as to why these 'tricks' are important. For example, my 9-year-old dog still waits at fences, doors, and stays (standing) at curbs, and he asks before jumping on the couch, but I don't bother making him stay for his food dish and I just hand him his Kong. He's done enough tricks in his life that he'll respond instantly if I asked, but by now, he's earned some free stuff.
- **You need to say please too** - always ask your dog if they want your attention and honor their answer. For example, you can catch your dog's eye and move away. If he follows, put out a hand to his side and scratch a bit. Then stop and if he moves closer, go for more. Or do that yoga stretch thing and the response will be really clear, one way or another. Learn to read when your dog wants your petting (moves in for more) or doesn't (turns her head away, yawns, or moves her whole body away, for example).

The Benefits of Teaching Your Dog to Say Please

The best benefit is that your dog practices the cues that you have taught in many situations, with many different kinds of rewards. Instead of having to do a long training session, you can practice self-control and tricks throughout the day.



Your dog no longer has to ask, "Why should I listen to my human?" because the rewards are things that he wants in his everyday life, not just food.

Some dogs use attention-getting behavior that most humans don't care for - like barking or jumping onto your lap on the couch without permission. Dogs don't do these behaviors because they are stubborn or bad dogs. They do them because they work – period. Requiring your dog to Say Please shows your dog the polite way to get what it wants. If you simultaneously ignore the unwanted behaviors and put a time gap between those behaviors and the

rewards, the problem behaviors will disappear and be replaced with a nice sit. Don't forget to reward behaviors that don't look like tricks, such as walking up and looking at you, play bowing, or softly nuzzling your hand (unless that is out of control).

Dogs that are fearful in a situation may need some cues from you to feel more confident, because it allows the dog to understand some of the rules of the game.

Waiting for your dog or puppy Say Please before dashing off to do what she wants can help keep her out of harm's way (in the car, at the door, etc.).

In a multiple-dog household, making each dog Say Please and releasing them by name can bring some peace and order to your life!