



Teaching Fido to Learn To Earn

Dr. Yin's Leadership Protocol (11/10/09 update)

A. Introduction

B. Overview

- Say Please by Automatically Sitting is the Foundation Behavior
- How Say Please by Sitting for Everything Helps Owners Become Leaders
- The Benefits: How it Changes Your Dog's Perspective
- Why Training All Day for All Resources and Kibble is Important
- The Necessity and Benefit of Tethering Your Dog to You (forming a connection)

C. Implementing the Program

- Say please by sitting automatically
- Two leave-it exercises
- Now apply these to other resources and situations

A. Introduction

It seems like common sense that the first step to fixing many behavior problems is to gain leadership skills, but does that mean you have to boss your dog around? Twenty years ago the general consensus was that leadership with our dogs was all about calm intimidation—throwing the dog into a dominance down on his side or forcing him into an alpha roll until he taps out and withholding all affection until he was behaved.



Since then, updated methods based on the psychology of behavior have trickled down to the world of pet dog (and cat) behavior. The new way for gaining leadership is by controlling all the resources that motivate the pet and



Page 1

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require the pets willingly work for these items instead of getting them for free. Now, the focus is on using all valued resources to reward desirable behaviors while simultaneously removing the rewards for undesirable behavior.

This overall approach has been called *nothing in life is free, no free lunch, or the learn-to-earn program*. Each behavior consultant has his or her own variation. The following presentation is my own version of the Learn to Earn Program for Gaining Leadership with Your Pets.

B. Overview

B.1 Say Please by Automatically Sitting is the Foundation Behavior

In this learn to earn program, you will use everything your dog wants to your advantage as rewards for training purposes. The dog will learn to earn everything she wants by politely and automatically **saying please by sitting**. She will at the same time, learn that performing undesirable behaviors such as jumping on you cause the potential rewards for those behaviors to go away.

For the fastest training dogs should earn their meal throughout the day when you are home. That means no food in the food bowl. Instead you'll carry food around with you in your pockets or bait bag or have it available in easily accessible containers in throughout the house. Then throughout the day, when you are home, you'll reward appropriate behavior.

B.2 How the Learn to Earn Program Leads to Leadership

This program consists of your setting clear rules for the dog to sit for all resources. It's your job to communicate the rules by immediately (i.e., within 0.5 seconds) reinforcing correct behaviors as they occur, and preventing the dog from receiving rewards for undesirable behaviors.

Leadership is established when you can set clear limits for the dog's behavior and can effectively communicate the rules by always rewarding correct behaviors as they occur while preventing or immediately removing the rewards for undesirable behaviors before they are accidentally reinforced. The owner must stick to this plan long enough for the good behaviors to become a habit. When owners can meet these criteria, their dogs will consider them to be consistent, predictable, and able to guide them. Alternatively, when rules



Page 2

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change randomly the dog may view the owner the same way you might view a boss who keeps changing their mind. Overall with the Learn to Earn Program, rather than complying out of fear, dogs can choose to follow human direction because doing so leads to rewards and then doing so becomes a habit. This model reflects a good understanding of the underlying cause of improper canine behavior and leads to a stronger dog-owner bond.

B.3 The Benefits: How the Program Changes Your Dog's Perspective

Because dogs learn that the only way they can get what they want is by sitting and looking to you for permission, the learn to earn program teaches them

- to control their emotions (self control) even if that means remaining calm in order to get attention from you.
- to pay attention to you, your words, signals and guidance are important.
- when faced with a difficult situation, they can and should look to you for guidance.

Consequently, the learn to earn program is useful for dogs with fear, anxieties (including separation anxiety), arousal issues or hyperactivity, inability to focus on their owners, well as just general lack of training and unruly behavior.

B.4 Why training all day, for all resources, and all kibble is important

This training throughout the day and for all resources, including each kibble may seem a huge inconvenience but doing so will make a huge difference. Here's why we do it.

- **So your dog will develop a habit rather than a trick:** If you only train in specified sessions, your dog may just learn to behave during those training sessions. The things you do such as pulling out a treat bag or placing a special collar on, will become the cues to behave for a short time rather than all the time.
- **Because you're training your dog all day anyway:** Whether or not you're aware of it, every time you interact with your dog, you're either training your dog behave desirably or your training undesirable behavior. For instance if you reward your dog for sitting to greet you when you come home on day one and remove rewards for jumping to get your attention, yet later in the day your dog comes over in a less excited state and you pet her when she shoves first her nose and then her front paws



Page 3

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onto your lap, you're negating your earlier training. That is in one instance you're training her to politely ask to be petted; in the second case you're training her that it's ok for her to push her way in. So regardless of whether you think you're training your dog all day, you are. If you're unaware of what you're doing, you may be spending more time training bad behaviors than good behaviors.

- **To get overnight success:** Because most dogs eat a least 100 pieces of kibble per day, if you're using the dog's regular meal as a reward she'll get lots of rewards during the day and consequently learn the new behaviors quickly. Then, if, on top of that you add other resources such as petting, attention, play, when she wants these things, you'll increase your potential rewards even more. Add to this, removal of all rewards for undesirable behavior and now you have a formula for changing the dog's behavior patterns virtually overnight (meaning days to weeks instead of weeks to years).
- **Often when they are misbehaving it's because they want a resource anyway. If you're aware of what they want, you can use it to your advantage.** For instance if your dog gets overly excited to go on walks, meaning she jumps around when you want to put the leash on and then dart out the door, you can train her that that the leash only goes on if she sits and she on get to go out the door if she sits and focuses on you until you give her a release word. That is, ultimately for these behavior, the reward is not food, it's getting the leash on and going out the door.

B.5 The necessity and benefits of tethering your dog to you at first

In the first days of training your dog should be tethered to you on leash at all times when she isn't in her crate or pen or tethered to an object near you.

The reason dogs should be tethered to you or to furniture or confined at all times is that this way

- She's always near making it easier to reward good behavior. Otherwise you tend to forget and miss opportunities, which makes the training take exponentially longer.
- Because she's supervised it's difficult for her to perform bad behavior.
- Tethering to you teaches your dog that when she doesn't want to pay attention to you, she can't just blow you off and walk away and then get rewarded by something else, such as a toy that she grabs. That is, by



Page 4

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tethering her to you help prevent rewards for undesirable behavior.

In general a dog should stay on this tethering stage until she readily and automatically quickly sits when she wants something—food, attention, to go out the door, etc— **and also has a 100% come when called the first time you call even when there are distractions in the house.** For dogs that I work with in my house, this takes just several days or at most a week. I use a Buddy System hands free leash (www.buddysys.com) for the tethering to me or to furniture.

C. Implementing the Program

#1 First Teach Your Dog to Automatically Say Please By Sitting for Treats

(Watch videos at www.AskDrYin.com)

Just hold a treat when you have a hungry dog (on leash) and quietly wait for her to sit. Once she sits, immediately give her a treat (kibble or treats) followed by a few more for sequentially for remaining seated. Then take a few steps backwards, far enough so she has to get up and follow, and then repeat the exercise. Repeat the exercise 5-10 times and stop while she still wants to play more.

Randomly play this repeat sit game during the day. The goal is that she thinks sitting is fun and trotting after you and sitting fast becomes a game. Even try to get 10 repeat sits in a minute. When she can do this easily, start rewarding her on a variable ratio where she may get rewarded every 1-3 times she performs the behavior correctly.

#2 During the Day Keep Her Tethered to You When You're At Home (or to furniture when you're at home) and Reward Her For Saying Please Until the Behavior Becomes a Habit

Once she knows this sit for treats well, which usually takes just 5-15 minutes, then throughout the day when you're home and she's tethered to you reward her with treats (kibble) for sitting. If she tries to nudge, paw or jump on you to get the treats, stand still like a tree and ignore her until she sits. For instance if you're working at your desk and she puts her paw on your lap,



Page 5

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immediately stand up so it's clear that doesn't work, then when she sits and looks at you, give her a series of treats. Or if you walk to the kitchen and clean the counters and she sits, reward her with a series of treats. As she improves use fewer treats and space them further apart.



Remember that when he's attached to you, he only gets to move from place to place if he's on a loose leash. Pulling makes you turn into a pole that's firmly planted and thus that remains completely stationary until the leash becomes loose. You can tell when you've been consistent because as soon as he hits the end of the leash he comes back to look at you. If when he hits the end his first reaction is to pull harder, you know you've accidentally trained him that pulling gets him where he wants to go.

#3 Next Apply this Exercise to the Game of Leave-it version 1

(For a more complete version of this exercise read How To Behave So your Dog Behaves). This exercise teaches the dog to 1) look to you for guidance in new situations, 2) that he can't get what he wants unless he asks you for permission anyway, 3) that blocking means he can't get by, and 4) that a release word such as "ok" means he can have what he wanted.

Toss a treat on the ground and then block him from getting it. If he tries to make a dash, quickly sidestep (like a basketball player on defense) to make your block. Avoid grasping his leash with your hands. Each time he makes a move, thwart him by positioning yourself in his path. Because you're not confusing him with chatter, he'll figure out that he can't get to what he wants and then sit and look at you. Immediately give him a treat while he's still sitting and then give a few more for remaining seated. When he's stably looking at you instead of the treat move aside so he has a clear path to the treat but be ready to block him again if he starts to get up. Give him a string of treats for looking at you and when he's stably looking at you then release him with an "ok" and point to the treat to indicate he can get up and get it.





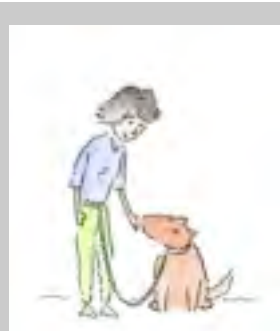
Teaching Fido to Learn To Earn

Dr. Yin's Leadership Protocol (11/10/09 update)

Repeat this exercise until he immediately sits down and remains focused on you until you give the release. At that point you can add a cue word "leave-it" right before you drop treats. You can also start practicing in more realistic settings, such as by randomly dropping food in the kitchen or a toy in the living room, telling him to "leave-it" and then blocking him if needed so he doesn't get it.

#4 Then add the Leave-it Game version 2

In this version you toss the treat out of leash range and then stand completely still. When he pulls to the end of the leash and you fail to budge, he'll soon figure out pulling gets him nowhere. He'll turn back and sit in front of you. Give him a sequence of treats and then when he has a stable "watch" then say the release word and point to the treat. Make sure he can get to the treat on a loose leash or you will have negated what you just did. Note that this exercise helps teach him that when he gets to the end of his leash he should turn and then sit and look at you.



#5 Now Require That Your Dog Sit Politely for Everything She Wants. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct_uYoQx12A)

Say please by sitting automatically to be petted: This is the most difficult exercise for people because humans tend to pet pets without thinking. This exercise is especially important for dogs that jump on people for attention or that are highly motivated for petting and attention and anxious when they don't get it when they want it (such as with separation anxiety). In this exercise only pet the dog when she's sitting. Pet in short 5 seconds bouts so that you can reward her for remaining sitting. Remove your hands and even stand up straight and look away if the dog even starts to get up. For wiggly dogs you can start by giving treats while petting so the dog will hold still, and





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Dr. Yin's Leadership Protocol (11/10/09 update)

stop petting and treat giving at the same time. Then work towards petting followed immediately by giving treats before the dog starts to wiggle. Then pet while the dog's getting treats but space the treats out in time. Then stop giving treats altogether and just reward with the petting. For dogs that are really wiggly, hyperactive, or anxious, require that they lie down instead of sitting to be petted.



Say please by sitting automatically to get the leash on or have taken off: Wait for your dog to sit politely before you go to put the leash on. If needed you can give treats while putting the leash on. If treats are needed, practice putting the leash on at least 5-10x in a day. That way by day two or three treats will no longer be required.

Say please by sitting automatically to go through door: The leave-it technique applies to waiting to go through doorways. Instead of letting Fido rush past you, first wait until he sits to open the door. Then when you open the door, block him as you learned in the leave-it exercise from coming out. Only let him through the door when he's sitting stably and focused on you.

Say please by sitting automatically to get out of the car: If your dog loves riding in the car, and in particular getting out, then have her sit patiently before you let her out of the car. Again use the blocking exercise to train this. Ultimately the goal is she automatically sits and waits for your release word and doesn't need any treats.

Before you toss a toy: When Fido wants to play fetch, wait until he sits to toss the toy to him. If he has huge arousal issues around toys, then actually teach him to sit or lie down and remain seated even after you toss the toy. This exercise is particularly important for dogs that get more aroused and unruly during or after playing fetch and with those who are possessive over their toys.



Page 8

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Say please by sitting in order to get your to approach: For dogs that are overly dependent and who whine or bark when you are out of their reach because they you're your attention, tether them to furniture and walk away. Then go up and pet them only if they will sit when you are just outside of their petting range. When they understand this association, then graduate to expecting them to sit if they want you to approach. That is, we want them to learn that whining, barking, and howling do not work to get your attention; rather, sitting or lying down and controlling their emotions is what gets you to approach and pet them.

These are the standard times when dogs should say please by sitting but also tailor the "please" to your needs. Some dogs may need to understand in additional situations that they only get what they want when they are calm and collected. Overall these exercises will help your dog be calmer, more focused and exhibit better self control. As a result he'll be able to be more attentive to your signals and directions.

To view video of these exercises go to:

- www.AskDrYin.com/elearning and watch the Say Please By Sitting chapter of the MannersMinder Course (This is currently the most complete set of videos)
- www.AskDrYin.com: View free videos on the movies page. View the ones with the words "please," "sit," or "leave-it."
- Stay tuned for the **online animal behavior course** at www.AskDrYin.com/elearning on puppy training. This course goes all of these exercises during a puppy's first week in a new home will have the most complete version of the learn to earn program.
- **Or watch the videos on the DVD Dr. Yin provided during the consult.**

For more detail on how to do the individual exercises, read section 3 of *How to Behave So Your Dog Behaves*.



Page 9

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