

NOTHING FOR FREE

What is it?

A training strategy that uses everyday situations to reward good manners and practice obedience without setting aside hours of special practice time.

Applying the principle of Nothing For Free is simple. Whatever your dog wants, he has to work for. From now on, doors are not opened willy-nilly; balls are not simply thrown. For those, and countless other privileges, ask your dog to say please by sitting, doing a down, spinning or performing whatever trick he knows.

With this strategy, you and your dog both win. You get a well-trained, polite dog and he gets what he wants (his belly rubbed, his leash taken off at the park). What's more, you have laid the foundation for an enjoyable relationship for a lifetime.

How to use it.

Step 1. Make a list of all the things your dog wants and enjoys.

Step 2. Vow to yourself never to give those things away for free again. See them all as training opportunities and ask your dog for an obedience behavior or trick you want strengthened.

Step 3. Give him what he wants as a reward for that behavior.

Step 4. Repeat, every day, everywhere.

When to use it.

Before throwing a ball, Frisbee, rope-toy, etc.

Before giving him a toy.

Before putting the food bowl down.

Before handing over a treat or chewie.

Before opening a door.

Before putting on a leash to go for a walk.

Before taking off a leash at the park or beach.

Before dishing out a belly rub or good ear scratch.

Before hopping into or out of the car.

Before allowing your dog onto the couch with you.

Training Tip: Be patient. Practicing commands in new situations can be a challenge. For instance, a sit at the door when your dog is eager to get out for a walk is harder than a sit in front of you.