



## The “Nothing in Life is Free” Training Philosophy

The best training class in the world will be of little benefit to you and your pet if you do not take the time to practice at home and to continue practicing the skills you have learned long after the class has ended. Even the nicest dog may start nudging your hand, demanding play or attention, or worse (such as defending food or toys from you), if you allow him to or give in to the dog’s every whim or demand.

The concept of “nothing in life is free” is not a magic solution to all behavior problems, but is rather a training philosophy and a way of living with your dog that will help him behave better because he trusts and accepts you as his leader. Your dog will subsequently feel more confident because he knows his place and role in the family.

### How

- Use positive reinforcement (reward based) training methods to teach basic behaviors. Train at least a few basic manners behaviors, such as “sit,” “down,” “stay,” and “come.” You can also train a few fun tricks, like “shake” or “roll over.”
- Once your dog has a few basic skills, begin asking your dog to perform one of these behaviors BEFORE you give him something he wants, like a biscuit, a walk or a pat on the head. For example, have your dog sit to put the leash on to go out for a walk or lie down until released when you put down his food bowl.
- After you have given the cue for the behavior, do not give your dog the “reward” until he has done what you asked. In all fairness, make sure your dog knows the cue well and understands what you are asking him to do before you begin practicing “nothing in life is free.”
- If your dog does not perform the behavior, be prepared to walk away and take a break. Try again a few minutes later. Eventually the dog will need to comply in order to get what he wants!

### Why

- While most dogs will remain compliant or even submissive with people, some more assertive dogs will challenge their owners for control or push the limits to see what they can get away with. Requiring an assertive dog to earn everything he wants is a safe, non-confrontational way to maintain control over your dog’s behavior. This also works for less aggressive dogs who attempt to manipulate their owners.
- This method gently reminds the dog that you are in control of all of the resources he may desire, such as play, outings, food, etc. Therefore, to earn “real life rewards,” it benefits the dog to adhere to your rules. Since dogs do what “works” for them, this way of life convinces the dog that he wants to do what you want him to do – you will have your dog’s cooperation!