



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

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ANNOUNCEMENT: I need your Ideas!

What topics would you like covered in Dog Talk Weekly? You're sure to have some questions or curiosity about something related to choosing, getting, owning, training and caring for your dog.

Let me know the breed you have or any that you're interested in and I'll use them as *Dog of the Week*. If you have a story idea, send it along. Just send the details to me through my contact form: <http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

Did you miss an issue of Dog Talk Weekly? You can access all issues in the archives here: <http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/archives.htm>

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## **Feature Article: "Leave It" Command And Why You Need It**

Your dog can get into anything, from dead animals to poisonous products. That is the biggest reason to teach your dog to "leave it". But it's not the only reason. Use it to make your dog use more of his intelligence when you are playing games.

The command involves teaching your dog to put something down and leave it there, or in some cases, simply to leave something alone.

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Imagine. You are working in your kitchen when you drop a plate which shatters. If your dog does not understand the "leave it" command, he could cut his feet on the shards of pottery.

Here's another scenario. Your dog is in the yard when he comes across a dead bird or mouse. His first instinct is to go to it and sniff it, probably lick it and in some cases to pick it up or roll in it. There are inherent dangers in this situation. If the animal has been poisoned, that danger is transmitted to your dog. And you certainly don't want your dog rolling in it. The "leave it" command is perfect here.

A few other examples include 1) keeping your dog's nose out of the bag of fertilizer or the dispenser while you are working, and 2) keeping him away from your fire pit which could contain hot embers.

So how do you teach your dog to "leave it"?

First, put your dog on his leash. With your heel on the floor, flex your foot and put a treat beside it. The idea is that you want to be able to lower your foot over the treat when your dog goes for it.

Tell him to "leave it!" Until he understands, he is probably going to insist on getting the treat.

Repeat the exercise, by uncovering the treat so that he can get to it. When he tries, close your foot over it again and say, "leave it".

Now, a question arises. Can you give him the treat after the exercise?

Some experts suggest that you do not - ever. You told him to leave it and that should be the end of it. Others say that it is okay to give him the treat. The point being that your dog has learned to leave the item on your command. You are in charge of if and when he gets it, which is really the point of the exercise.

## **Personal Story: How I Taught Tyler To "Drop" And "Leave It"**

"Dropping" or "Putting" and leaving an item is a new exercise for me. My former dogs were not taught these commands. When I got Tyler, who has very big teeth and powerful jaws, I soon decided that reaching for an item in his mouth was a bad idea. He has a habit of wanting to hold onto the item. When he feels it slipping from his grasp, he will snatch to maintain it.

Fortunately, I've never been bitten, but when I heard his teeth snap shut, that's when I chose to find another option.

His method of play is to drop the toy rather than handing it to me. I'm not sure why he refused to give it to me. He recently learned to do that. My suspicion is that his former owner probably taught him to drop the toy, since I'm pretty sure his family had kids who were afraid of this big teeth. So in my case, it was a matter of retraining him to do the opposite of what he'd been taught already.

Anyway, I digress.

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Dropping the toy was the easy part of this exercise because he already did that. But when I went to pick it up, he would lunge for it. As you can see, this presented the same threat as me trying to get it out of his mouth. That's when I began teaching him to "leave it".

In my case, I wanted him to "put it" in a particular place so I could kick the toy. He soon understood how the game went, except the putting and leaving it part.

On returning the object, he would toss it in my general direction. That wasn't good enough. I wanted him to "put it" near my foot and "leave it" there. So here's how I did it. Fortunately, Tyler is a very intelligent dog, so this didn't take long for him to learn once he realized it was part of the game.

First, "put it".

When he returned the toy, I tapped my toe where I wanted him to put it and said, "Put it". After numerous tries, he got a bit closer, but still didn't hit the mark. At that point, I took the toy, put it into position and said, "Put it there!" "There". This is how I continued to repeat the command.

Every time he missed the mark, I repeated, "There. Put it there". While I'm certain he knew what I wanted, he seemed to have his own plan. He would put it in the general vicinity. It took weeks to get him to put it exactly where I said. Then, he started putting it right at the tip of my shoe. It was exhilarating to see him be so precise.

Next up, "leave it".

Putting the toy down was only half the battle. He repeatedly lunged at it and snatched it back up the moment he placed it down. At this point, I would put my foot over the toy or on it and say, "leave it."

Initially, he would wait a mere second or two and then charge at my foot and start clawing at it to free the object. I told him to "Wait." After a few tries, he stepped back and sat down.

This is how the process went over a period of weeks until he eventually decided to be more patient.

After he stepped back, I removed my foot from the ball. Told him to "wait". After a few seconds, I kicked the toy for him to retrieve it.

That was about a year ago, but he still gets over excited and will dive for the toy before I have a chance to kick it for him.

There is more to this exercise. He also learned to "get over" (stand beside me rather than in front of me).

As you can imagine, this was a great training exercise because there were so many steps to it, each one being an exercise in itself. It is now a real pleasure to see how

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much he has learned and how well he plays this game. Although, I admit, he still has those days but a quick command and he's back on track.

Try these exercises with your dog.

In my case, the "leave it" command has come in handy many times, from going after unknown objects that have landed in my yard and keeping him away from dangerous garden chemicals to stopping him from trampling my flower beds chasing squirrels.

## Dog of the Week: Yorkshire Terrier "Yorkie"



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The "Yorkie" or Yorkshire Terrier has been a popular pet for decades. Originally used in Great Britain to drive rats from the coal mine tunnels, it is now a dog show favorite. Despite its small size, the Yorkie is brave around small and giant dogs alike. You could say it suffers from delusions of grandeur.

It is crucial that the Yorkie is socialized around other dogs as early as possible, otherwise they can become very antisocial in public. This behavior can

lead to the dog suffering severely if it agitates a larger, stronger and more powerful dog.

For the most part, these dogs make perfect apartment pets. They can be quite the lap dog.

The breed does have some health risks involving the retina, dry eye, dislocation of the kneecap and elbow, openings in the bones of the skull (fontanelle), collapsed air passages, kidney stones and liver disease.

The Yorkshire Terrier is ideal for beginners.

The Yorkie can be expected to reach 7 inches in height, and weight approximately 6.6 lbs. Its long, fine, and straight fur usually is dark steel blue with full, light tan on the breast, head and legs. Its life expectancy is 14 years.

You can read a whole lot more about the Yorkshire Terrier on this page, which also includes more photos for you to enjoy: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yorkshire\\_Terrier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yorkshire_Terrier)

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## Regular Sections:

### - Dog Training

When training our dogs, we sometimes forget to voice our pleasure when they obey commands. This is especially important when you are training your dog from day one. Dogs need to know that they have done something right. Getting a treat is not always enough. They need to make the connection between their action and the treat.

This is accomplished by using what's termed a "marker", a word or sound that tells the dog he did something you like. You use it just prior to giving the reward, and it must come the very second that he obeys. Always remember that dogs have a short attention span, so the longer the gap, the bigger the chance they will not make the connection.

That's why markers are such a great tool. They can be given the very instant it happens, whereas a treat takes a few extra seconds. Besides, some dogs might take longer to make the connection if they only get the treat.

Use these one-word markers consistently during training. That word can be "good", "yes", "right" or something else that you prefer, but it should only be one word. That way, any extra words will not diminish the marker. Plus, these are not "praise" words, as you would mean when you say, "Good boy, Tyler".

They are "markers". They are designed to mark the proper behavior the moment it happens, so timing is crucial.

### - Dog Care

Giving your dog medication can be a challenge. Here are some tips for helping the medicine go down more easily for you and your dog.

1. Since most dogs seem to love tuna, crush the pill into a small bite of this fish. The strong odor of the fish will help to disguise the scent and taste of the medicine.
2. If your dog must take a medicine through a syringe, desensitize her to it by filling it with chicken broth and let her lick it. Squirt some of the broth inside her mouth so that she gets used to the idea and realizes that it's a good thing. After a few times, your dog will associate the syringe with something tasty and therefore will not mind taking the medicine.
3. Hide the pill in a tasty food. Hot dogs is a good choice because dogs generally love them and they make great "pockets" to hold the pill. Give your dog one or two small pieces of hot dog first and then the one with the pill in it. Praise her when she takes each piece and she will not differentiate one piece from the one with the pill.

These methods are far more palatable than holding the dog down and shoving the medication down her throat. This merely causes the dog unnecessary stress, something your dog does not need when it is already feeling under the weather.

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## - Dog Games – Clean Up

Here's a fun "game" you can teach your dog that will also help you to keep his areas tidy. You can already see how useful this game can be, can't you?

A good way to proceed is to buy or find a basket that will be used to store all of his toys. You can place it out of the way when not in use. It's best if it has a flat bottom and open top to make it easy for your dog to drop his toys into it.

1. Put the basket where he can access it, a little out from it's usual place. You want your dog to always know where it is and get used to going there. Scatter his toys near the basket. Show him one of the toys and lure him towards the basket, saying "clean up".

If you like, you can drop the toy into the basket so he gets the idea.

2. Give the toy to your dog to hold in his mouth. With a treat in your hand, instruct him to "put it" into the basket (or "clean up") in exchange for the treat. Seeing the treat, he is sure to drop the toy to receive it.

(If you have trained your dog as per the feature article in this issue, you can simply expand his use of that command in this instance. This will help to shorten his learning time, since he already knows that one. Or to expand his command base, you can use "clean up".)

4. It will take a few practice runs for your dog to grasp the "clean up" command, but when he does, you can easily instruct him to put his toys away whenever you need to do so. Start with one or two toys and gradually increase the number.

**Personal Experience:** I frequently use the term, "Clean up" your mess, when Tyler leaves crumbs on the floor. I don't know about your dog, but this one certainly isn't big on getting those tiny pieces. Unlike my former dogs who sniffed up every tiny bit. Maybe bigger dogs don't think those small pieces are that important.

## - Dog Trivia

Dogs love to play hide and seek. Digging for hidden treasures, following a scent trail to find an object or person, finding a squeaky toy or hidden ball provide great mental exercise for your dog. It gets them very enthusiastic. That's why you really don't even need to give her a great for accomplishing the task. Having found it through her own deductions will be sufficient reward. So much, in fact, that she'll be wanting to do it all over again many times without your coaxing. Although, your participation will make it even more exciting for her as she hears you rooting her on.

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## Do You Need Professional Dog Training Advice?

Who *can't* use input from someone who knows all the secrets to developing a cooperative and abiding dog? I know I sure could. In my travels, I came across a program that has received high praise for its effectiveness. It was created by a professional dog trainer. I like that his instructions are so easy to follow.

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Shortly after opening the package, I discovered what I needed to do to stop my dog from pulling on the leash. Admitted, it's not a permanent solution because Tyler is so demanding, energetic and dominant. He KNOWS how to heel. He just refuses to obey. And I'm not physically strong enough to stop him. It's probably me, but I did make huge progress with this advice. At least he doesn't drag me off into the bushes any more.

Take a look at [Secrets To Dog Training](#) by Daniel Stevens. Dogs love to play catch, fetch things and in general, please their owners. In his book, he demonstrates how to train your dog to do all these things, and more.

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**Dog Nutrition** is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at <http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

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To protect yourself and me, please only send in your own work. That way we will be absolutely sure. I appreciate your help in this regard.

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And there you have another issue of Dog Talk Weekly.

I hope you enjoyed it!

Sylvia

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