



## RESOURCE GUARDING PREVENTION FOR PUPPIES

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People install all sorts of security measures to protect the things they value. Likewise, dogs may guard resources using measures at their disposal, such as freezing, creating distance, growling, lunging, and biting. While we can certainly relate to a dog's desire to retain ownership of the things they want, this sort of behavior does not bode well for a companion dog or their family.

Most very young puppies don't show obvious (growling and biting) signs of resource guarding. But, all puppy parents should prioritize anti-resource guarding exercises because prevention is much, much easier than cure. Without early intervention in the form of loads of anti-resource guarding exercises a pup can quickly develop into an adolescent dog with burgeoning guarding issues. Once a dog reaches adulthood and learns that threats to people allow him to successfully retain ownership of something he wants, the result may be injury to people.

### Notes:

There is a genetic component to behavior, and some pups do exhibit early indicators of a stronger genetic predisposition to guard. If a young pup is inclined to stiffen, growl, snap, bite, or run off to hide with valued items, or when moved from resting spots, the pup's family should immediately discuss and address the issue with an experienced trainer.

### Resources a Dog Might Guard:

- Food
- Bowls
- Toys
- People

Locations (like a dog bed or a spot on the couch or bed)

# Anti-Resource Guarding Exercises

Be sure to take make time and to take time to go gradually with each exercise so that it is easy for your pup to enjoy the process. The ideal goal is to help your pup learn to not just tolerate having things taken away, but to look forward to it. This ideal outcome would be due in great part to a long history of lots of repetitions which creates a positive association between having things taken away and getting something as good (sometimes better) in exchange.

## Object Exchanges

1. Hold a toy (like a food stuffed chew toy) for your pup to chew on. From your other hand offer him a small, tasty, healthy treat as you take the toy away. Repeat this many times every day.  
Give your pup a chew toy. Let them enjoy it for a few moments while you sit next to him, and then reach to take it away as you give him a small, tasty, healthy treat. Give the chew toy back to him. Repeat this many times every day.
2. Give your pup a chew toy. Let him enjoy it for a few moments as you walk away. Return to your pup and reach down to take the toy away as you give him a small, tasty, healthy treat. This way your pup is learning to accept people taking things away in a more real life scenario (i.e. when walking up to him and bending down over him). In the future, if your dog gets a hold of something you want to take from him, you will most probably walk or run towards him to do so.
3. Practice with varying chews and toys. Your dog will consider some more valuable than others and you want to make sure he is comfortable having even the most prized possessions taken away.
4. When taking away your pup's most favorite things, choose a small, healthy food reward they are especially fond of to give them in exchange.
5. If your pup is showing any signs of stress, including stiffening body posture, chewing more rapidly/intensely, trying to cover the toy with his body, turning his head away, trying to run off with the toy, growling, snapping, or biting, be sure to contact your trainer immediately to discuss.

## Food Bowl Games

1. At least a couple of times a week, plan to make meal times opportunities to practice anti-food bowl guarding.
2. Place a small amount of your pup's food in the bowl. When they are finished, reach down and toss a couple of more pieces into the bowl.
3. Place a small amount of your pup's food in the bowl. When they are finished, reach down to take the bowl away as you offer a small, tasty, healthy treat from your hand.
4. Place some of your pup's meal in the bowl, let them eat some, reach to take the bowl away before they are finished and as you simultaneously offer a small, tasty, healthy treat.
5. Practice walking away from your pup and approaching to drop food into their bowl while they are eating. This is a simple way to help your pup look forward to people approaching the bowl.
6. Practice walking away from your pup and approaching to take the bowl while you simultaneously offer them a small, tasty, healthy treat.
7. If your pup is showing any signs of stress or concern, including stiffening body posture, eating more rapidly as you approach, or growling, be sure to contact your trainer immediately to discuss.

## Learn to Earn

People are motivated in part because doing a good job in school or at work is how we earn praise, good grades, awards, degrees, and money. You can likewise motivate your pup to do a good job (i.e. respond to your requests and exhibit mannerly and polite behavior) by harnessing the power of the things he wants:

- Attention
- Toys
- Food
- Access to Environments and anything else that might be considered a Life Reward

Put your pup on a Learn to Earn program whereby in exchange for responding to your requests to do something (such as hand targeting, sit, down, stand, exhibiting self-control and waiting, etc.) you can give him access to the things he wants. Too often people only ask their pups for mannerly behavior and responsiveness to requests prior to giving them a treat. Make access to **everything** contingent on being cooperative, responsive, and polite. This is a vital part of helping your pup develop stellar manners and preventing many behavior problems, including resource guarding..