



## Resource Guarding (Food/Toy)

Does your dog have a history of guarding food and/or toys? If this is an issue first, you should start by giving your dog regular feedings of his meals in an area where they can eat undisturbed. Do not allow people to take items from them and do not give them any high value or long-lasting food items or toys of any kind (think stuffed Kong's, rawhide chews, etc.). We want you to avoid any confrontations and allow the dog to decompress.

After a few weeks, the dog should be feeling more relaxed and realize that they can eat calmly and quietly. Now, you could start training - using an approach that builds their trust and comfort with you around items of value. But please take your time, avoid pushing your dog past the point where they are not comfortable and causing him to growl, snarl, bite.

### **What to Expect:**

Working through resource guarding will take time and patience. You will need to:

- Monitor your dog's body language so you can gauge his comfort level when they have things of "value".
- Keep high value resources picked up unless you are training.
- When feeding your dog or giving him special food items, crate them or separate them from the rest of the family (and pets) to prevent any accidents.
- Be aware that your dog may try to guard other things that you are not expecting, such as a bed, crate, a particular person, or random household item.

The management portion described above will be crucial to the training process. If at any point, despite taking all the right steps, your dog does snaps or bites, please contact a certified professional immediately for help.

### **What does the training process look like?**

There are many ways to work with this issue. Please contact a professional for more specific help.

#### With a Toy or Non-Food Item

1. Choose an item to start the practice with that your dog likes but isn't very high value.
2. Before you hand it to him, tell him to "take it." As soon as he does, praise him.
3. Have a handful of treats ready. Say "drop it" then toss down a couple treats on the ground about a foot away. Your dog should drop the item to go for the slightly higher value treats. Do not reach for the toy/food; we want him to think that you don't care about it. Praise him when he goes for the treats and allow him to return to the item.
4. If he doesn't go for the treats, you may need to upgrade your treats to something more exciting, such as chicken, hot dogs, cold cuts, or string cheese.
5. Slowly start delaying the time between the "drop it" cue and the treats to see if he will let go of the toy on his own, in anticipation of the treat. Be sure to offer a big reward when he makes this connection!
6. Once he is letting go of the toy/food item with the cue, you can gradually start picking up the toy/food item he had. If at any point you see him stiffen, rush back to the toy, growl, etc. go back a step, he isn't ready for this progression. If he does allow you to pick it up, lavishly praise him, and immediately give the item back!



7. Gradually build towards using higher value items. Remember to have something equally as good or better to trade!

\*\*Always remember to use the “drop it” command before taking the desired item\*\*

### **With a Food Dish**

1. Start with an empty food bowl. Take a small handful of your dog’s meal, put it in the bowl, and then set the bowl down for your dog. Stand away from the bowl.
2. When he is *completely finished* eating, keeping your hand away, drop from a height, another small amount into the bowl or onto the floor next to the bowl. Repeat until your dog’s meal is over. Have a few better treats ready to toss away from the bowl, so you can pick up the bowl while your dog is away from it and put it away.
3. After a few days of feeding your dog this way, give him his full meal in his bowl. When he is almost finished eating, approach and toss a few of the HIGH VALUE treats (chicken, soft treats, spoon full of canned food) into the bowl or onto the floor next to the bowl, and walk away.
4. When your dog is comfortable with your approach (loose, relaxed body, normal pace of eating, may even look at you upon your approach) toss a few treats as you pet your dog one time. Build towards being able to reach for his bowl, or even being able to pick it up, put a tasty treat inside and hand it right back. If at any point, you see your dog stiffen, eat faster, growl, etc. back off and go back a step in the training. He wasn’t ready for the progression. It will take time!
5. Make sure your dog is very comfortable with you doing all of this before anyone else in your family tries this, especially if there are kids in the house. Children should NOT work on this training and should ONLY be involved after the dog is very comfortable and even then, only when there is adult supervision.

### **Important note**

Resource guarding can be a challenge to work through. Remember if you need help never be afraid to reach out to a certified professional dog trainer.