



Begging

When you walk into a friend's house and smell something good cooking, many of you would gravitate toward the kitchen. Your dog is no different. It is normal for them to be interested in that good smelling stuff you are making or eating. And face it, those sweet puppy eyes gazing at you are tough to ignore. Remember, begging is a learned behavior. If your dog barks, whines, drools or paws at you while you are eating, it is usually because they have been intentionally or unintentionally rewarded for the behavior.

Some people are adamant about never letting their dogs have people food. Other's cannot resist sharing a tasty tidbit. Rest assured, feeding from your plate or giving attention during mealtime can create begging. If you share food from your plate with your dog even one time, they will come back for more. The easiest way to prevent begging is to not let it start in the first place. The first time your dog looks longingly at your plate, ignore them! Eventually they will give up and walk away.

If you, a family member or a friend has already succumbed to your dog's pleading eyes, you will have to work a little harder to prevent the behavior from reoccurring and to teach a replacement behavior. Here are some tips to put you on the road to success:

1. Manage the situation and prevent your dog from practicing the behavior. The idea is to remove the dog from the area where you are eating. This could be eating at the dinner table, on the sofa or leaning over the kitchen counter. Consistency is crucial. To prevent access to the food areas, you could use a crate, gates, an exercise pen or a leash.
2. Feed your dog their meal while you are eating. They eat in their space; you eat in yours. Because many dogs eat much faster than their human counterparts, you might consider utilizing a slow feeder bowl, a food/treat dispenser or a long-lasting chew. This way, your dog is occupied while you enjoy your meal.
3. Teach an alternate behavior. If your dog knows Stay, put them in Stay away from where you are eating. Another alternative is to teach your dog to go to their bed or a predetermined place away from where you will be dining. You could even have them back up to the threshold of the area where you are eating. Teach new behaviors separately from mealtime at first. Practice Stay or Place while having a pretend meal or snack. You will be less likely to feel frustrated as this is a training session, not a meal. Use management as discussed above during actual meals. Sit at the table as if you are eating. When your dog approaches, stand and turn your back if your dog comes close or stares. When they give up and move away, toss a treat from your pocket.
4. Reward good behavior! This seems like a no-brainer, but it can be easy to focus on a problem behavior rather than when your dog is doing something right. It is a great idea to reward your dog when they move away from the areas where you are eating. Consider keeping a few of their favorite treats in your pocket so you can toss treats away from the dining area to encourage distance between your dog and your food.
5. Do not give in! Once a dog has learned that persistent pestering will get them food, they will keep it up. If you feel strongly that you must share something with your dog, do not give the



morsel from your plate. It is far better to save that amazing snack and use it to reinforce your dog for doing something right at a different time and in a different space.

6. Try not to yell at your dog for begging. Yelling may be meant as a deterrent, but it is still attention and as such, may be reinforcing for some dogs. For other dogs, it creates confusion and distrust and may make other training more difficult.

Imploring puppy eyes are tough to ignore. Remind yourself that your dog is not starving. Also, it is important to remember that many people foods can be dangerous for your dog. They can cause gastrointestinal upset, vomiting, diarrhea, obesity. Some foods can even be fatal. Show your dog you love them through engaging in activities you can do together like playing fetch, walking or training.