

# Minimizing Reliance on Treats

## Decreasing reliance on food

Put your dog on leash with treats concealed in your pocket, a treat pouch, or a container. Cue a behavior, or lure the behavior without a treat, using only your hand. When your dog does the behavior, say "Yes!" or click, and **then** reach for a treat.

You've completed step one, eliminating bribes! Treat **AFTER** a known behavior is performed (reward), never **BEFORE** (bribe). Reduce your reliance on food even further with the techniques below, to ensure your dog is motivated to behave whenever you ask.

### STEP 1

**Put an end to bribing**

### STEP 2

**Reward anytime, anywhere**

### STEP 3

**Vary the type of rewards**

### STEP 4

**Try a variable schedule**

### STEP 5

**Reward only AFTER a behavior**

### STEP 6

**Stash treats inside & outside home**

### STEP 7

**Toys, play, access to the outside, etc.**

### STEP 8

**See the Trainer Tip**

Food is a powerful tool to teach and reinforce behavior. However, if not used properly, it may seem like your dog learns to respond only when they see food first. In fact, some dogs might not realize that grabbing treats is *not* the first step in a training session, or that good behavior can pay off even when food is not around. Use these proven strategies and your dog will learn that cooperating with you is always a great idea, even when treats aren't at hand.



## TRAINER TIP:

Once a dog knows a behavior *very well*, the best way to maintain it is to reward *unpredictably*—not every time (variable ratio schedule). For example, try varying the number of "sits" required before a treat is given.

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