

Nothing in Life is Free

Dogs are social creatures that typically crave attention from humans. We may assume that they are craving positive attention, but negative attention is attention too. Help make sure that your dog gets positive attention and positive reinforcement from you, their trusted person. This mindset will help you modify behavior in a positive, educational way that will help both you and your dog in the long run.



How to practice “Nothing in Life is Free”

- It all starts with training and mastery of basic commands. Teach your dog things like “Sit,” “Down,” and “Stay.” These are helpful in everyday situations as well as behavior modification. Once those are mastered, you can add in trickier ones like, “Shake” and “Drop It.”
- Once your dog knows these commands, start using them as a step to get what they want. For example:

You:	Your Dog:
Want to put your dog’s leash on to go for a walk	Must sit until you’ve put the leash on
Want to feed your dog	Must lie down and stay until you’ve put the food down
Want to play a game of fetch after work	Must sit and shake each time you throw the toy

- Ready to go for a walk? Ask your dog for a sit until the leash is attached. Ready to put down the food bowl? Make sure they stay in a down until the bowl is on the floor. This helps reinforce that in order to do something they like or want to do, they need to do something as well.
- Make sure that your dog knows the behavior well and understands what you want before putting this into practice.

The benefits of this technique

- Requiring a dog to work for everything they want is a safe, non-confrontational way of reinforcing the positive ways a dog behaves in the relationship.
- This technique even works well with the affectionate, “pushy” dog. A dog doesn’t have to display aggressive behavior such as growling, snarling, or snapping to influence a situation. They can nudge your hand to be petted or “worm” their way onto the furniture in order to be close to you.
- As a dog succeeds in learning more behaviors and tricks, their continued success will increase their confidence, which will reduce their stress and lead to them feeling comfortable in any situation.

Why this works

- It encourages good behaviors by providing the guidance that dogs need.
- It is an effective but gentle way to build healthy communication within the relationship.

“Nothing in Life is Free” and children

Because children are small and can get down on the dog’s level to play, dogs often consider them to be playmates. With the supervision of an adult, it’s a good idea to encourage children in the household to also practice “nothing in life is free” with your dog.