

Using Food As A Training Reward

As new dog owners begin the training process, the question usually arises of rewarding the dog with a food treat for a job well done. The argument is that Fido should learn without being bribed.

While food is not a requirement, when training your dog, you will discover that he will learn new tasks easily if he is rewarded for his efforts through positive reinforcement - like food.

The key to efficient and fun training is identifying the reward for which your dog will perform best. While some trainers swear by petting and praise alone, those who use food rewards or toys often achieve results much faster.

Don't worry about whether, if food is used, your dog will then respond to you only if you have a dog bone in hand. In fact, the ideal protocol for reinforcement suggests that rewards be given continuously only while first teaching a task. Once the behavior (such as sitting when asked) is learned, food should be offered only intermittently and randomly. By using the food at random moments, Fido will learn that a wise dog always will sit and it will become a habit with or without the treat. Most trainers recommend gradually reducing the food rewards until none are given for a learned task - thus developing your dog's "conscience."

