



Enhancing the bond between dogs and their families

Nothing in Life is Free Program

Do any of these situations sound familiar to you?

- *"My dog doesn't listen to me. I tell him to do something and he ignores me."*
- *"My dog is out of control! He's always jumping on people, stealing the kids' toys, won't come when called, and practically drags me down the street when we go for walks."*
- *"My dog digs up the backyard and gets into the garbage in the house."*
- *"My dog paws at me for petting and barks at me to play with him."*
- *"My dog will listen to me some of the time, but he's not very reliable."*
- *"My dog usually does what I ask of him, but I would like to improve his responses."*

In some of these circumstances, you will need some additional work on specific issues, but in all of these cases - and with just about every dog, as a matter of fact! - you can benefit from implementing a "Nothing in Life is Free" program.

What is a "Nothing in Life is Free" program? It means what the name implies: your dog should not receive everything for free. Simply put, give your dog a job! We all work for a living.

Whether we collect a paycheck or not, we all have jobs of some sort, and usually several. How many different jobs do you have? Are you a parent, spouse, child, sibling, caretaker, housekeeper, bill payer, driver, grocery shopper, gardener, cook, etc.?

"Nothing in Life is Free" means you should have your dog do something for you before he receives something of value to him. What is valuable to your dog? Food, treats, walks, play time, and petting are some examples. Before he gets his dinner, have him do a sit/stay for you. Before he gets his favorite treat, have him do a trick - shake, rollover, etc. Before he goes out to play or for a walk, have him do a down or a wait at the door until you give the OK to go out. Before he gets some play time or petting from you, have him do a sit. As he gets better at it and learns more things, ask him to do more. Instead of just a sit for some attention from you, have him do a sit, down, stand, and a shake. Then show him lots of love!

You are not being mean to your dog by making him work for things. You are giving him a job to do and a chance to work his brain. Dogs need mental stimulation as well as physical exercise. The smarter the dog, the more mental stimulation they need. If you don't provide the outlet for that energy, your dog will find another outlet. And the outlets they choose are often not ones that we like!



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This also helps you to gain better control of your dog. He will begin to see you as a stronger leader, and he needs a strong leader. If you don't provide that leadership, you might find your dog taking over that role. Does your dog give you commands and you obey? It's OK, you can admit it! We've all done it. The dog paws at you for some petting, and you can't resist those big brown eyes staring up at you. So you pet him. Your dog just successfully trained you to pet him at his cue of pawing you! Your dog drops the tennis ball at your feet and you don't notice. He barks at you until you pick up the ball and throw it. Guess what? Your dog is training you to throw the ball for him when he gives you the cue - barking at you. You probably didn't realize what a great trainer your dog is! Or what a good trainee you are!

Let's turn that last scenario around. Your dog brings the ball and drops it at your feet and starts barking at you. Rather than doing what he asks, have him do what you ask. Ask for a sit, then throw the ball only once he is sitting. Now he's getting what he wants - you to throw the ball - but it's on your terms. He has to sit first. Now you're being a good leader!

