



## Object Exchange (Give or Drop it)

The basic exercise is called an object exchange.

**Step 1:** Give your dog an object (very low value item to start, something he doesn't normally guard or care about)

**Step 2:** Say the word "Give" while picking up the object.

**Step 3:** Give him a *really, really* good treat in exchange for the object. (Something you have hidden in your pocket or pouch).

**Step 4:** Give the original object back to your dog.

Repeat these steps several times in a row.

Do spot checks at random times – give the surprise treat but do only one repetition.

Practice a few sessions with boring objects the dog has NEVER guarded to establish the pattern. Give it to him, take it away, supply the fringe benefit, and give the object back. Over and over. We want him to do exchanges in his sleep. Then, do your best to "rank" in order of how "hot" they are (i.e. how likely the dog is to behave possessively around them), objects your dog guards. The list should include his toys, bones, anything he has ever guarded as well as forbidden and novel items like laundry, garbage etc.

\*Start with the easiest first, practice exchanges on each item until the dog is perfect. **Spot check to make sure he is perfect on the first repetition any time, any place.** Then, start working on a new object, one higher on the list. When you have completed every object, change handlers and start at the easy, random objects again. The second person will usually progress more quickly up the hierarchy. If the object guarding is person-specific, that person should go last. Their progress may be more gradual so be patient.

The spot checks will really come into play when you have reached the level of working on bones etc. This is harder than an exchange in the context of a series of exercises reps where the dog is “warmed up”.

In severe, compulsive guarders, we ration the food so that, if they want to eat, they must voluntarily give up objects. These increases in motivation are helpful if progress is slow in general, slow for a particular object or slow for a certain individual. Don't be afraid to let your dog go hungry for a day if he won't do nice exchanges. Don't get mad, just say “too bad for you”, walk away and try again tomorrow. If you are getting frequent guarding, it means you are trying to go too fast. Relax the pace. Repeat previously successful levels and then insert intermediate steps between your last success and your problem level.

## Object Exchange Hierarchy (creating a list)

Ex: For Bob the Wheaton Terrier

Bob's hierarchy from easy to most difficult items he will guard is listed below. Remember that the “easiest” level is something Bob is *already good at*.

- 1) Banana
- 2) Small yellow bird
- 3) Rubber hot dog
- 4) The ball head (on a rope)
- 5) Big blue dog
- 6) Sam's gift (squeaky toy)
- 7) Leaf
- 8) Small Kong Bone
- 9) Water bottle
- 10) Bully stick

Once his confidence about relinquishing objects grows, the dog's rations can be returned to normal. The goal is for a formerly paranoid dog to absolutely love and look forward to you taking things away from him. It is a fabulous transformation to behold. When he is perfect, you may cease practice sessions and simply spot check regularly . Maintenance is important. **IF YOU SLACK OFF ON THE SPOT CHECKS, EXPECT REGRESSION.** Be Consistent with your spot checks. Schedule them.

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