



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department Gentle Food Reward Taking Games

Goal Mouth Behavior for Taking Hand Delivered Food:

- Puppy uses lips and or tongue to take the food.
- Puppy only opens the mouth slightly, avoiding a large open mouth style to take the food.
- Puppy avoids closing teeth on human skin.
- Puppy is patient as delivery of food reward begins, waiting for the food to be delivered directly to the puppy's mouth.

Keep Food Rewards Fun for the Human Too

Newly weaned puppies receive bite inhibition training from 6 to 8 weeks of age. Puppy raisers can maintain a puppy's desirable manner of taking food reward through games that remind the puppy of just that.

Food Reward Taking Games Overview

All food reward manners games are giving "free" food rewards (no marking) for a desirable style of taking the food. Avoid marking ("Nice") when practicing food reward taking. This is because food reward will be withheld until the puppy takes the food gently. When marking behavior ("Nice"), *always directly deliver food* to the puppy, even if they take it roughly. This is what makes the marker "Nice" notable to the puppy.

Video reference (supporting documentation)

GDB Video "Gentle Food Reward Taking Games"

The "Ouch!" Game

("Ouch!" is a high pitched, short duration reaction to rough food taking. Puppies learn to react to this initially from their littermates during play. This "Ouch!" is mimicking the "Yelp" puppies give one another when one bites down too hard in play.)

Goal: Apply a volume and pitch level of "Ouch" that gets a reaction from the puppy but does not scare them. "Ouch" should not sound angry; it should be high pitched and very short in duration. The hand holding the food should also react during the "Ouch" (as if the hand was hurt) by jerking away from the puppy's mouth.



Listen to an “Ouch” that mimics a puppy yelp.

1. **React** to an attempt to take the food undesirably with a high pitched “Ouch!”, without giving the food. As you react with “Ouch!” remove the reward from the puppy’s mouth several inches.
2. **After** just a couple of seconds offer the food reward again. If the puppy is gentle, release the food to them.
3. **React** with “Ouch!” again if the puppy is still rough (removing the reward a few inches). If the puppy is persistently rough, increase the volume of your “Ouch!” making it clear you were hurt by their teeth.
4. **Observe** the puppy’s reaction to your “Ouch! The puppy should stop what it is doing (react to your yelp). If the puppy does not seem to react at all – “Ouch!” louder. If the puppy is very reactive to your yelp, prepare yourself to “Ouch” at a much lower volume the next time the puppy is rough.

The Removal Game

1. **React** to an attempt to take the food undesirably by quickly removing it away from the puppy, high over your shoulder. This removal is sudden and the food is fully removed from the puppy.
2. **After** just a couple of seconds offer the food reward again. If the puppy is gentle, release the food to them.
3. **React** with a sudden removal again if the puppy is still rough (full removal over your shoulder).
4. **Deliver** the reward if the puppy is gentle.

Note:

The Removal Game can be combined with the “Ouch!” for puppies being persistently rough; meaning upon the “Ouch!” the food is fully removed for a few seconds over the handler’s shoulder.

Reminders

- ✓ If you mark behavior with “Nice”, you must directly deliver food. If the puppy is rough, you can then work on the food delivery after you have rewarded for that “Nice”.
- ✓ With persistently rough puppies, every time you mark behavior with “Nice” and deliver reward, follow it up with a few “free food” deliveries to practice gentle food taking.