

VIP Dog Training

Become your dog's VIP (Very Influential Person) with these these three training exercises.

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To train your dog and become his Very Influential Person, understand and operate on the supply-and-demand principle. Your dog demands food and attention, and only you can supply it. Below are some exercises to train your dog so he recognizes you as his VIP.

VIP "Resource": Food

Materials: Breakfast Kibble

Behavioral Goal: Leave It

How: This is an impulse control game. Sit in a chair near a table where you can place a bowl of your dog's kibble (out of his reach). Hold a piece of kibble in your fist and place it on your lap. If your dog tries to get the food, ignore him. Don't say a thing. When he gives up, slowly open your hand; if he goes for it, close it. Repeat this until you can open your hand and he doesn't go for it. Praise him and give him a piece of kibble from the bowl on the table. Gradually, make this more difficult by making him wait longer for the reward after you open your closed hand. When you are sure he will no longer go for the opened hand, you can add the cue ("Leave It!") just as you start to open your hand.

VIP "Resource": Your Attention

Materials: Your hands, eyes, and voice

Behavioral Goal: Greeting behavior

How: Act as if your dog is invisible unless he sits for attention. If he jumps on you or pushes his way into your chair, simply look over his head, block him from getting up, and act as if he is invisible. As soon (be patient) as he sits, look at him and praise and pet him. If he starts jumping or pushing when you give him attention, start over.

VIP "Resource": Location/Space

Materials: Doorway

Behavioral Goal: Don't Bolt Through Door

How: Walk with your dog toward a door. If your dog tries to push past you to the door, block him with your body. Repeat this until he stays back as you approach the door. Praise him when he does. Reach for the doorknob. If he springs into action, immediately take your hand off the doorknob and start over. Gradually, reward your dog for waiting by opening the door a little at a time. His reward for waiting is going to be a release ("Okay!") to go through the open door.

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