

STOP YOUR DOG BEGGING FOR FOOD

Begging for food is a very common behaviour in dogs as lots of them are highly food motivated. However, this behaviour is also often reinforced by us as owners, as it's easy to feel guilty when faced with those signature 'puppy-dog' eyes. If you do want to discourage your dog from begging for food though, consistency is key.

You can find our video of advice on stopping your dog begging for food on the Battersea YouTube channel, or the Pet Advice section of our website.

STEP 1 – PREVENTING THE BEHAVIOUR

If you're bringing a dog into your family from a young age, it's a good idea to help them form good habits from the start. This way, you should be able to avoid begging becoming an issue. In order to do this, make it a rule that your dog is never given food from the table, the sofa or anywhere else that you eat. It's important that everyone in the household is on board with this as if a dog is given food even once, it becomes far more difficult to discourage the behaviour in the future. A dog won't understand the meaning of "just this once" but will instead learn that their persistence will be rewarded, and that eventually the food will be theirs! It can be tempting to give in, but stay strong.



STEP 2 – DEALING WITH BEGGING

If your dog already begs, or picks up the habit, then we need to show them the behaviour no longer works. To do this, try your best to ignore them completely whenever they beg. This means not looking at them or talking to them, even to tell them to stop begging, until you've finished eating. A slight glance in their direction can encourage them to keep trying as they're getting a response from you. But, if their begging is never successful, they will eventually give up. This will take a lot of time and patience, but your consistency will be rewarded.

STEP 3 – GIVE THEM A DISTRACTION

If your dog is keen to learn, it can be a good idea to teach them an alternative behaviour you can ask for which will stop them from begging.

A good starting point is to teach your dog to go lie down and settle in a specific place, such as their bed or a mat. Information on how to teach a dog to go to their bed and how to settle more generally can be found on our YouTube channel. Once they know the cue to go to bed, or settle down, you can ask them to do this whenever you are sitting down to eat.

STEP 4 – CO-ORDINATE MEALTIMES

If your dog is motivated by food, then it's a good idea to use their own food to distract them from yours. For example, routine is great for your dog so you could get into the habit of giving them their meals at the same time you are due to eat. For extra distraction you could put their food in a slow-feeder or a long-lasting enrichment toy like a Kong to slow them down. If your dog is begging for snacks outside of mealtimes you could give them a treat or chew and ask them to settle with it in their bed. Your dog will be less likely to beg for your food if they have their own, long-lasting treat or meal to keep them occupied while you are eating. Remember, if you're giving your dog treats during the day you should adjust the amount of food you give them at mealtimes to avoid overfeeding.