



Fade Out Food, Vary Your Rewards: Sit for 3 Things OTHER than Food

Today's tip gets to the heart of your relationship with your dog. It also reflects whether or not your training to date has been truly successful. If your dog will do this, it's a sign that she respects you as the person in charge of everything wonderful and that she enjoys working *with* you. If your dog won't do this, it's still good news because if you do this right, it will change the relationship between the two of you for the better. It's SO simple. You ready? **All I want you to do is request a Sit for 3 rewards every day OTHER than food.** That's it. At least 3 times every day, ask your dog to Sit without having ANY food present. Reward her with something else that's meaningful to her. Not sure what that could be? Don't worry, I'll explain. But first, a word from our sponsors...



"Okay, you can see we're REALLY polite, well-mannered boys. Can you take the picture now so we can go back to wrestling in the grass?"

Let's assume your dog has already been trained to Sit on cue. At this point sitting for a treat is TOO easy and *does not fit into the context of every day life*. In other words, if your dog will ONLY sit when you have treat, **then she's NOT going to listen whenever she knows you don't have a treat**. That's annoying, to say the least.

Sit is a very easy way for your dog to say "please." When she sits she is saying, "Look at me, I'm being polite, I'm under control, I have manners, I respect you!" (*Of course to really MEAN it she has to be sitting still*. Sitting for one second and then jumping on you does not count. If you have that problem and you're not sure how to fix it, email me.)

So what could I possibly mean by rewards other than food? It depends on what your dog likes! Know your dog as an individual (there's another tip that will go a long way if you take the time to do it).

Okay, so here are just a few examples you could use with your dog:

1. Sit before I open a door for you. (When he sits, praise, and open the door – that's the treat, we're going somewhere!)
2. Sit before I invite you up on the furniture.
3. Sit before I throw your toy.
4. Sit before I bend down to give you the belly rub you are requesting with that oh-so-cute-look.
5. Sit before I let you out of your crate or pen or gated area.
6. Sit before I let you into the dog park.
7. Sit before I un-clip your leash and set you free.
8. Sit before we continue this game of tug you are so excited about.
9. Sit before I refill that empty water bowl you are standing over.
10. Sit for the deluge of love and attention that I'm dying to give you.

There are endless possibilities. Can you see what I'm getting at here? Are you getting a feel for how this works? Can you see why it can be SO effective? All right, then, let's do it! **All you have to do is provide the reward right after the Sit**. Remember the reward is anything your dog likes – OTHER than food. This helps your dog to appreciate that listening to you is important in many different contexts – not just when he can smell the treats. It also solidifies the concept that you are the one in control of the resources. This is what makes you fun and worth paying attention to, worth being polite to.

If your dog doesn't know how to sit yet, don't worry, that's easy to teach. Any good training book, or class, or online video can teach you this. Pick a method based on positive reinforcement, please. There is no reason to tap butts or jerk chains. **Make it fun.**

Now – if your dog “kind of” knows Sit but is only responsive sometimes, or is slow to respond, then you need to take a step back. Don’t blame the dog. Get to work. **I would go back to practicing lots and lots of repetitions WITH treats** (or whatever your dog’s favorite reward is). Get the sit behavior really strong, really ingrained. Practice in lots of different environments (all around the house, inside and out, should be a fine set of environs to start with). Work until your dog *clearly* understands the signal to Sit. You’ll know because you’ll get instantaneous responses to the verbal and/or hand signal. Now you’re ready. Let’s go. Get started with today’s tip immediately: Request a Sit for 3 Rewards Every Day OTHER than Food. **You’ll be so pleased with how much more attentive and respectful this makes your dog.** Try it. Have fun! Enjoy the results.

-David Muriello, CPDT

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