

Food bowl exercises

The main objective here is to prevent puppy having a problem with food guarding, whether it be his food bowl or bones etc. These exercises are designed primarily for prevention, not to fix an existing problem, so if you suspect your puppy may have an existing problem please discuss this with us, and we will try to work out the most suitable approach for your particular problem.

Stay in the room with your puppy while he eats. Walk around him a little not getting too close, if there are no reactions from him to this over a couple of tries then walk around him a little closer while he eats, speaking to him while you walk. Any reactions then speak to us before doing anything more.

Walk around saying 'good dog' and other things. Sit down then stand up again. Sneeze, (not too close). Make noises and bend over. Move chairs around. Don't forget the object of this is not to frighten him but to get him accustomed to strange things that may happen. If he looks at you while you are doing these things say good dog and gently toss a piece of cheese near his bowl.

When you put his food bowl down next sit near him without saying anything, sit there while he eats. Next meal put his bowl down with only 3 pieces of kibble in it and wait, when he finishes and looks at you probably thinking 'is that all?', place a few more pieces from your hand into the bowl. Let him finish those then place a few more. Repeat a few times over a few different meals. This will get him to associate you putting food into his bowl, not taking it away.

Next while he is eating his meal stand near, say his name, when he looks at you say 'good dog' as you drop a piece of cheese onto his kibble. Say his name again and drop another piece of cheese as you say 'good dog'.

Next dinnertime after repeating the above a few times, but before he actually finishes his meal, say his name but this time when he looks at you hold out the piece of cheese in your hand for him to eat. Repeat this a few times also.

Repeat again the next feed, but when you get to the hold the treat in your hand for the third time bit, take away his bowl with your other hand, put some nicer food on top of the kibble he has left, saying 'good dog' place his food back on the ground for him to find the yummiest things you've just given him.

Repeat all these things a few times over a period, then alternate the order and sequence that you do this. When he's looking at you saying 'yummiest nicer things are coming' as you approach his food bowl, you can then have other members of the family repeat the whole process, starting from the beginning again of course and going slowly. Then some men and children, and maybe even some strangers.

If at any stage you strike problems, go back 5 steps and go more slowly, if you still run into problems then seek some help to find out why and how to fix them.

We aim to have him looking at everyone who approaches his food bowl as being a potential source of nicer food, they will not be seen to be taking his food away, but to be bringing him something much yummiest!