

## BARK U Training Guide: How to Prevent Resource Guarding

### What Is Resource Guarding?



Resource guarding is a form of communication where a dog shows discomfort or possessiveness over objects, spaces, or people. It's their way of saying:

- "This is mine—don't take it."
- "I feel insecure about losing this."

### Two Types of Resource Guarding:

- 1. Learned:** Dogs develop this behavior when they repeatedly have items taken away, teaching them they must guard to protect their possessions.
- 2. Innate:** Some dogs are naturally predisposed to resource guarding due to genetics.

### Signs of Resource Guarding:

- Freezing or staring
- Side-eye (whale eye)
- Lip curling or growling
- Snarling or air snapping
- Biting

### Why Prevention Matters

Resource guarding behaviors can escalate if not addressed early. Puppies often start with harmless "keep-away" games or swallowing items out of fear they'll lose them. This can snowball into more serious behaviors if their concerns aren't resolved. Prevention sets the foundation for a trusting relationship where your dog feels secure and doesn't need to guard.

### Tips for Preventing Resource Guarding

- 1. Be Respectful of Your Puppy's Possessions:**



- **Leave Them Alone While Eating:** Avoid taking bones, food bowls, or toys while your dog is engaged with them. Just as you wouldn't like someone grabbing your dinner mid-bite, your puppy won't appreciate it either.
- **Only Intervene When Necessary:** If an object is dangerous (e.g., sharp or toxic), calmly trade it for something better. Avoid forcibly removing items from your dog's mouth unless it's a life-threatening situation.

## 2. Manage the Environment:

- **Clean Up the Space:** Remove shoes, remote controls, and other tempting items from your puppy's reach to set them up for success.
- **Provide Plenty of Approved Chews and Toys:** Offer a variety of safe items for chewing and playing so they aren't tempted by forbidden objects.
- **Set Up Puppy Pens and Baby Gates:** Use puppy pens or baby gates to create safe, controlled spaces for your dog. These setups help prevent access to high-value items (like food or other resources) and reduce the risk of resource guarding.

## 3. Practice the Trade Game:

Teaching your dog to trade makes giving up items a positive experience. Here's how to play:

1. Start with an item your dog is allowed to have (e.g., a toy).
2. Hold a treat near their nose and say "Switch."
3. When they release the item to take the treat, mark the behavior ("Yes!") and return the toy immediately.
4. Gradually transition to trading forbidden items (e.g., shoes or rocks) for high-value treats or toys. This teaches your dog that giving something up results in a reward, not a loss.

## 4. Reinforce Positive Behaviors:

- **Trade for Equal or Better Items:** For example, if your dog has a ball, trade it for a squeaky toy or a higher-value treat. They'll see you as a giver, not a taker.
- **Practice Calm Retrievals:** If you must take something away, avoid chasing or shouting, which can increase stress and guarding tendencies.





## Homework: Practice Prevention

1. **Respect Boundaries:** Allow your puppy to chew or eat in peace unless absolutely necessary to intervene.
2. **Play the Trade Game Daily:** Spend a few minutes each day trading items with your puppy. Gradually increase the difficulty by trading higher-value items.
3. **Set Up for Success:** Ensure your home is puppy-proofed and provide engaging toys or chews to reduce temptation.
4. **Monitor Behavior:** Watch for signs of guarding (freezing, growling, etc.) and take action early to prevent escalation.

## Tips for Success

- **Stay Calm and Positive:** Use a cheerful tone and reward good behavior generously.
- **Never Punish Guarding:** Punishment can make the problem worse by increasing your dog's fear of losing their resources.
- **Start Early:** Prevention is most effective when begun during puppyhood.

By creating a respectful and trust-filled environment, you can prevent resource guarding before it becomes a problem and build a strong, positive bond with your dog.



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