



# Sussex Brighton and East Grinstead Branch

Registered Charity No. 206630

## “LEAVE IT” AND “DROP”

It is important that we are very clear with our dogs when it comes to cues. If you use a cue for one behaviour it is important not to use that same cue for a different behaviour, as this can confuse our dogs as to what we actually want from them. “Leave it” and “Drop” are cues that are often confused or used for multiple behaviours. For the purpose of clear training, this training guide will be teaching them as two separate cues for two separate behaviours. “Leave it” means come away from that, you are never going to have it and “Drop” means you already have something in your mouth and I want you to let go of it. These cues are very important as they could be life saving for your dog. You will need your clicker or marker word, some tasty treats, two identical toys and a forbidden item that will be used as the item that we will be asking our dogs to leave.

### LEAVE IT:

Leave it is a really important cue to have trained solidly with your dog. Making sure you can get them away from things on the floor that could potentially cause them harm is vital. When teaching leave it you should always train using an item that they do not get to have after training or at any other time, otherwise you will be teaching your dog that leave it means, you can have it in a minute. The idea of this exercise is to teach our dogs to look away from and so “leave” the item they are being asked to leave and by doing so be rewarded for it.

**STEP 1:** Start with both hands behind your back, one hand containing the item you will be asking the dog to leave and the other hand containing some tasty treats. Ask your dog to sit in front of you and from a standing position bring the hand containing the item you are asking the dog to leave out from behind your back and hold it up near your head and keep the hand with the treats behind your back, as seen in the image below.



**STEP 2:** The dog should look at the item. Wait patiently and keep the item up near your head until the dog looks away from the item and the moment they do, use your marker word and reward from the other hand. Repeat this for at least 5 repetitions at this height until your dog starts to look away from the item more quickly as they begin to understand what is being asked of them. In between each repetition make sure to put both hands back behind your back. When your hand comes out with the forbidden item you should keep your hand with your treats out of sight behind your back and only bring that hand out to reward the dog before putting it back behind your back. This method is called the “teapot method”.

**STEP 3:** Once we have managed to get at least 5 repetitions in a row with our hand up by our head and our dog looking away, we can now add a name to the behaviour as the dog now understand the concept. Put both hand back behind your back and on the 6<sup>th</sup> time of bringing it out you should say “leave it”. You can now continue to use the cue as you continue through the exercise.

**STEP 4:** As our dog now gets the concept that leave it means look away from the item and be rewarded for it, we can work on slowly getting the hand with the forbidden item closer and closure to the ground. The hand should only be lowered by a few inches for at least 5 repetitions each time.

**STEP 5:** You May find that your dog struggles more with this once the hand gets to waist height or below, as they can now actually reach the item being asked to leave. If you find this is the case, return to the previous height your dog was doing well at for a few more repetitions.

**STEP 6:** Once you have managed to get your hand all the way to the floor and your dog still leave the item, you can then move on to dropping the item on the floor and asking them to leave it, as this will simulate what life is really like, such as us humans dropping food on the kitchen floor when we are cooking etc.

### **TOP TIPS**

- Only ever practice this exercise for no more than 10 minutes, as it is an exercise that can cause frustration in dogs.
- To encourage your dog to look away or even move away from the item in question, be patient when holding the item out. At first you can reward even a subtle eye flick away, as we need to give our dogs a chance to figure out what is being asked, but once your dog has grasped the concept, we can wait for them to offer a more obvious look away before marking and rewarding.
- It is a good idea to use items that you would actually want your dog to leave in real life! Such as slippers, pieces of rubbish etc.

## **DROP:**

Drop is the cue used to ask a dog to drop what ever they have in their mouth. This again can be life saving if the dog has picked up something that could be poisonous or cause injury. The best way to teach a drop cue, is by using a technique called "capturing". This is the process of waiting for a dog to offer a specific behaviour and then naming and rewarding that behaviour.

**STEP 1:** Using two identical toys (this works well with tuggy toys, as seen in the image below) engage your dog in a game of tuggy with one of the toys and have the other one behind your back.



**STEP 2:** Once your dog has latched on to the toy and the game begins, play for a couple of seconds and then bring the other toy out from behind your back.

**STEP 3:** Wiggle the second toy around to make it exciting, whilst letting go of the first toy and letting it fall the the ground dead and boring. Pup should let go of the first toy in order to grab the second toy as it is a higher value as it is moving and more exciting.

**STEP 4:** As pup lets go of the first toy in order to grab the second toy say the cue "Drop". Try to time it so you are saying drop as pups mouth opens, this may take a bit of practice.

**STEP 5:** Now pup is latched on to the second toy, you should put the first toy behind your back and repeat the process, swapping back and forth with which toy is being played with and which toy is behind your back. Make sure to say the word “drop” every time your dog opens their mouth to drop one toy before grabbing onto the other one.

#### **TOP TIPS**

- There is no need for a marker word/clicker and treats for this exercise, as the “drop” cue is marking the behaviour and the game of tuggy is rewarding it.
- If you are struggling to get your dog engaged in the game, make sure you are making that toy really exciting. Try snaking it along the floor to encourage them to chase and
- grab it.