

How to Discourage Begging
Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Most of us have slipped a tasty table scrap to our pet. While the occasional morsel of left-over lean meat, unbuttered vegetables, or plain rice won't harm your dog, even one tiny table feeding teaches your dog to beg for food. If left unchecked, you'll quickly end up with a dog who spends every meal circling the table and relentlessly whining until food is given. While this behavior may not bother you, chances are that a few of your future dinner guests will not appreciate a tongue-wagging dog at their elbows while they try to eat their meal. However, there are ways to curb your dog's begging ways, both before it becomes a habit, and after his distasteful table dependence has begun.

The Health Dangers of Table Scraps

Despite their usually small-portion size, table scraps are a danger to your dog's health. In addition to teaching your dog to beg, human food handouts do not offer your dog the nutrition he needs and can lead to weight problems or digestive disorders. Dogs and humans have very different nutritional needs. Human food - with its rich flavors, ingredients, and spices - are empty calories which are more likely to bulk up your dog's weight than his vitamin and mineral needs. Furthermore, dogs are not accustomed to eating human food, which is why it often causes gas, bad breath, loose stools, or an upset stomach.

In fact, table scraps are more of a danger to your dog's health than they are a reward for his companionship and good behavior. Instead, choose quality nutritious treats to reward your pet. Treats are developed with your pet's nutritional needs in mind. When carefully chosen and given in moderation, they should not interfere with your pet's nutritional needs or overall health.

How to Fix Your Dog's Begging Problem

Though dog treats are the best for your pet, sometimes emotions get the best of us and human food is given to them. Oftentimes, this creates a dog who begs through every meal, whether it is fast food eaten in front of the television or a six-course meal shared with friends around the dinner table. Unfortunately, once your dog begins to beg, he will always beg unless steps are taken to curb his behavior. But teaching your dog to not table beg is not as difficult as it may seem. The key is to be consistent.

The first step is to stop feeding him table scraps, especially while you are seated at the table. You also need to inform friends and family that while they are welcome at your dinner table, your dog is not. The goal is to train your dog to take food only when it is his meal time or when you offer him treats, not when he begs for them.

Begin by having your dog sit while you prepare his food away from the dinner table. Then place his food on the floor while he sits. Only let your dog approach his food dish after you have told him it is "Okay." It may take several sessions but be patient. The key is to remain firm and acknowledge his correct behavior. Until your dog's retraining is complete you may want to also try the following steps:



- Keep your dog in another room while you eat.
- If your dog must be at your side, have him lie down at your side. If he rises, respond with a firm "No" and place him back in the proper position. Remember to praise and reward him for good behavior.
- If your dog refuses to comply with your commands, simply have him stay in another room. Do not respond to his barks. By keeping him isolated while you eat, he may eventually associate begging with being sent away.
- Feed your dog prior to your meal, or try giving your dog a toy that dispenses treats just prior to your meal. Make sure you do not give it after he starts begging, or he will perceive it as a reward.
- Be consistent. Research has shown that if you reward him even once, the bad habit will become even harder to break.

Related Articles:

- [Obesity in Dogs: How to Help Control It](#)
- [Bad Behavior in Dogs May Not be a Training Problem](#)