

### Objective

Dogs who get very excited about treats often take them roughly, which can be painful to your hands and unattractive to adopters. Dogs who have learned to take treats gently are much more attractive to an adopter than a dog who chomps on their fingers when they take a treat.

### What You Will Need

- Treats

### Overview

You will use a game of consequences to teach dogs to be gentle when taking treats. For instance, if you are offering a treat to a dog and they jump toward your hand, you will remove your hand and put it behind your back until they are sitting nicely again. This way, you will gradually be shaping calm behavior when taking treats.

### Protocol

- Hold a moderately tasty treat between your thumb and first 2 fingers. Make sure the treat is completely covered and offer it to the dog.
  1. Be confident in putting your fingers right up to the dog's mouth. Avoid jerking your fingers away out of fear that the dog will be too rough as this will increase "snatchy" behavior.
- If the dog lunges/jumps toward your hand to roughly take the treat, remove your hand and put it behind your back. Wait until the dog calms down, and then try it again.
- Continue this back-and-forth motion until you can put the treat in front of the dog's nose without them snatching it.
- At this point your fingers should still basically be covering the treat. Expose some of the treat and allow the dog to start taking it. As long as they are gentle, you can let them have it.
  1. If at any point they are too rough when trying to take the treat, put the treat behind your back for several seconds. Then start over with the first step of the protocol.
- The more that you practice this, the gentler you can require the dog to be. Your starting criteria are the amount of force the dog used the first time they took the treat.
  1. From there, slowly require less force before you deliver the treat to them.
  2. The end result is when you feel only their lips and tongue when they take the treat from your hand.

### Troubleshooting

- Be aware that high value treats are more likely to elicit a hard mouth when the dog takes a treat. If the dog is having trouble taking treats gently, try swapping out your treat for something of lower value. You can increase the value of the treats once the dog can successfully take lower value treats gently.