

Nothing in Life Is Free

Nothing in life is free is a way of living with your dog that will help him behave better because he trusts and accepts you as his leader and is confident knowing his place in your family.

Using positive reinforcement methods, teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks. "Sit," "Down" and "Stay" are useful commands and "Shake," "Speak" and "Rollover" are fun tricks to teach your dog. Once your dog knows a few commands, you can begin to practice "nothing in life is free." Before you give your dog anything (food, a treat, a walk, a pat on the head) he must first perform one of the commands he has learned.

Most dogs assume a neutral or submissive role toward people, but some dogs will challenge their owners for dominance. Requiring a dominant dog to work for everything he wants is a safe and non-confrontational way to establish control. Dogs, who may never display aggressive behavior such as growling, snarling, or snapping, may still manage to manipulate you. These dogs may display affectionate, though "pushy" behavior, such as nudging your hand to be petted or "worming" its way on to the furniture in order to be close to you. This technique gently reminds the "pushy" dog that it must abide by your rules. Obeying commands helps build a fearful dog's confidence; having a strong leader and knowing his place in the hierarchy helps to make the submissive dog feel more secure.

Dogs establish a social structure within the group called a dominance hierarchy. This serves to maintain order, reduce conflict and promote cooperation among pack members. In order for your home to be a safe and happy place for pets and people, it's best that the humans in the household assume the highest positions in the dominance hierarchy. Practicing "nothing in life is free" effectively and gently communicates to your dog that its position in the hierarchy is subordinate to yours. Because children are small and can get down on the dog's level to play, dogs often consider them to be playmates, rather than superiors. With the supervision of an adult, it's a good idea to encourage children in the household (aged eight and over) to also practice "nothing in life is free" with your dog.