

How to Prevent Begging

Here's how it starts: Your dog smells opportunity at the dinner table and plays you for a softy, fixing you with pleading eyes, licking their lips hungrily, whining pitifully, pawing at your leg or bumping your arm with their nose, until you or someone in your family capitulates by tossing them a tidbit of your meal. Congratulations on aiding and abetting the canine mooch! The same scenario can occur at the kitchen counter if you're prepping food and dropping bits of it to the dog strategically positioned by your side. As long as there's a tasty pay-off, your four-legged beggar won't quit.



Preventing begging...or putting an end to it

The solution is this simple: if you don't want your dog to beg at the table or kitchen counter, don't give the behaviour *any* attention (don't look at them, don't say how "cute" they are, don't tell them "no" -- *ignore*) and do *not* reinforce it by giving them food. The whole household must follow this rule; no surreptitious sneaking of morsels. This way, your dog learns there's zero advantage to hanging around these places.

Besides this most fundamental behaviour change (on your part), you can help set your dog up for non-begging success by doing other things differently:

- Don't leave food unattended at the table or kitchen counter.
- Consider feeding your dog their meal before you eat or at the same time.
- Prevent begging with management: Place your dog in their crate or another room when you're prepping food or eating a meal. Or use barriers, such as a baby gate, to keep them out of the room you're in.
- Teach your dog a "place" cue in which they learn to go to a designated spot – a bed or mat, away from the table or kitchen -- and stay there until you release them. This is also called teaching an incompatible behaviour: if the dog is in their place, they're not begging. Please see our info sheet [Teaching a Place Cue](#).
- Some people really do enjoy sharing food with their dogs. If you want to do this without causing begging, figure out an appropriate place for your dog to be to receive your food offering. For example, if you're working at the kitchen counter and don't want them being a pest glued to your elbow, teach them to maintain a position at the doorway and toss food snacks to them there. They learn that the delivery of food is conditional on them being at a distance and staying in that location. Caveat: If they're already begging at your side, *don't* toss food to move them away. Only reinforce the behaviour you want.

References

<https://www.clickertraining.com/stopping-begging>

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/behavior/demand-behavior/how-to-prevent-your-dog-from-begging-for-food/>



