



TREAT & RETREAT

In order to play the Treat and Retreat game, you must have some tasty high-value treats, a dog leash (for safety, if you don't trust your dog around people), and some willing helpers.

Here's how to carry out this behavior-altering game:

1. Provide your helper with a supply of kibble and a second bag of tasty, high-value, bite-sized treats.
2. Tell your helper to avoid making direct eye contact with your dog when they meet, as many dogs find this threatening.
3. Upon meeting your dog, in your home or elsewhere, have your helper toss a high-value treat past the dog. This way your dog gets to retreat to get the treat.
4. Repeat many times with different people and at different times of the day, in different locations.

Once your dog is enjoying the procedure, it's time to make it more difficult.

5. Have your helper toss the higher-value treat in between them and your dog (but very close to the dog) so the dog must move closer to the person. Then right afterward toss a lower-value treat (the kibble) past the dog.
6. Repeat with different people at different times of the day in different locations.

When your dog is clearly enjoying this game, you can make it more advanced.

7. Have a helper gradually toss treats closer to themselves so the dog comes closer (then toss one far away so the dog can retreat).
8. Repeat with different helpers, different times of the day, in different locations until the dog is consistently more relaxed and starts taking more initiative in happily greeting people.

As long as your dog is now happily approaching the helpers with relaxed body language, soft eyes, and wagging tail, you can move to the next step. If not, go back a step.

9. Eventually – and only as long as your dog is relaxed and comfortable with your helper –allow the person to hand-feed the higher-value treat to your dog, and right afterward, gently toss a lower-value treat (the kibble) past the dog.

It is worth taking the time and making the effort to help your defensive dog become more comfortable with approaching strangers. The less stress in their life (and yours), the better the quality of life for both of you. The less stressed they are about encounters with strangers, the less likely an unfortunate incident will occur at some point in their future, and the more likely the two of you will be able to enjoy a long and happy life together.