

PUPPY TRAINING

Why do Dogs Counter Surf & Steal?

Dogs are natural food scavengers. They will eat many items that we humans know are inappropriate. Almost every time a dog jumps at the counter, it is reinforced by what it finds up on the counter. It doesn't matter if you yell at the dog, physically punish it, give it a time out or anything else—the dog still managed to get that Thanksgiving turkey and it was good while it lasted.

Management is the key to stopping counter surfing. If you don't have anything on the counter for the dog to get, then there is no reason for him to jump. Keeping temptations out of reach is what is really required and successful. This type of management is very difficult for most people so here are some things you can do to stop counter surfing.

Train your dog to "leave it" by teaching your dog what you want him to do. Place a small piece of food on the floor with your hand covering it. Verbally cue "leave it" at any attempts to get the food. Practice this until your dog is leaving the food immediately after you give the cue "leave it". Praise for calm behavior and ignoring the food. Then place the food on the floor uncovered but be poised to cover it should your dog decide to grab it. Praise for calm behavior and ignoring the food. Practice this until your dog is consistently leaving the food. Practice placing the food on the coffee table, the counter, etc. Methodically add distance between yourself and the food. Practice for turning your back and work on having him leave the food while you go out of sight. Begin these by making the time very quick and returning to praise him.

Another method involves booby traps. BOOBY TRAPS are when you leave a temptation available but gimmicked when the dog tries to touch it; something sufficiently startling or aversive occurs.

1. The most common booby traps would be a mouse-trap, a commercial product called the "Snappy Trainer" is a great tool.



2. You can sprinkle enticing food with hot sauce, cayenne pepper, bitter apple spray, lemon juice, etc. Provided your dog doesn't love strange things and doesn't thoroughly inspect food before eating, you have a chance at teaching your dog that food on the counter tastes nasty.
3. Some people report success from arranging a pile of tin cans or pie plates that will fall with a crash when jostled. If you use pop cans put several pennies or pebbles in them and tape the cans shut with duct tape. Select some very delicious, tempting and smelly food to use as the BAIT. Put the food in a plastic container with a lid (small butter containers work well) and punch some holes in the lid of the container. The container should keep the dog from getting the food.
4. Try placing several pop cans right at the edge of the counter with just two or three inches between them. One jump from your dog will bring down all the cans and make a terrific racket, which will also bring down the dog.
5. Try stacked empty soda cans in a pyramid fashion with a loop of string around the bottom row. The bait of choice is tied to the string and left within the dog's reach. The dog grabs the bait and upsets the stack of cans, which fall with a crash. The dog runs for cover and in so doing learns a lesson.
6. Put the food on the cookie sheet—the smellier the better. Put the cookie sheet far enough back on the counter so that the dog can't easily see it. Surround the food with soda cans that have pennies placed inside. Attach the string to the tray in such a way that you can hide while still holding the string. Wait for the dog to come in and find the food. As soon as it commits to being bad, pull the string. The trick here for the dog not to see that you are putting the string to make everything come crashing down.

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The MORAL is: PREVENT your dog from having opportunity to learn to regard the kitchen counter, kitchen trash can and outdoor trash cans as sources of food to be raided. Teach your dog that food on a table is YOURS as if it were in your hand, even if you leave the room for a few minutes.



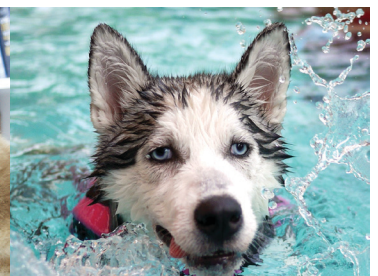
Dog Training & Behavior



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