

# The "No Free Lunch" Principle

## Goodpuppy™ Social Club



This program, also referred to as "Nothing in Life is Free", was designed by Dr. Victoria Voith. It's a useful technique for treating and preventing many types of behavioral problems in puppies. It can help reduce a variety of attention-getting behaviors, control a puppy that is generally disobedient and overactive, and can also reduce some aspects of assertive behavior and dominance aggression. Many puppies are demanding of their owner's attention, and while they may not be overtly aggressive, they are still interested in getting their own way and will jump up, bark, mouth, steal things, race around the house, chase their tail, or engage in a variety of other behaviors as a way to control the household.

As the name suggests, this approach relies on making your puppy earn everything he gets from the family. Before your puppy gets anything - including being let in or out of the house, fed, petted, talked to, or even looked at - he has to obey a command first. This can be any of a variety of simple obedience tasks like come, sit, down, or stay. If your puppy obeys promptly, he is rewarded with praise, petting, food, and attention - the social interaction and treats that puppies crave. At first, your puppy should be asked to do things that are easy (a brief sit is a good place to start) in a situation where distractions are at a minimum, then later harder commands (down, long stays, etc.) can be used and the commands given when there are outside distractions.



If your puppy makes a demand for attention by walking up and soliciting petting, barking, pawing, trying to get in a lap, or anything else, she should be ignored completely until she responds to a request from you. Puppies are highly social animals, so withdrawing attention when your puppy demands it will increase her motivation to respond to your requests. The idea is not to give your puppy less attention, but to give it to her on your terms rather than hers.

Consistency is critical to the success of this approach. Your puppy has to learn that he can't get what he wants until he first does something for you, regardless of which family member is making the request.



Do be careful to be consistent, as occasional free attention or food will be viewed by your puppy as an intermittent pay-off for being in charge. This will strongly reinforce the unwanted behavior, making it even harder to change your puppy's demanding habits.