



Isn't using food just bribery?

I am sometimes asked if using food is bribery, and if we will use it for evermore, the simple answer to both is No!

We use food with our dogs as it is a language they understand, everyone likes to be rewarded for a job well done. For humans it is the salary at the end of the month, for our dogs it's a tasty titbit.

Dogs learn through consequences and will repeat behaviours which they are rewarded for. The more we reward them (initially) the more likely they are to repeat the behaviours in the future.

This works both ways, so be careful what you reward.

A small puppy jumping up at us when we come home is quite cute (for most of us), we **reward** them with attention. Because they like attention, they are more likely to jump up again and again..... It's not quite so much fun for us when they are fully grown and have just been on a muddy walk.

If instead of letting our puppy jump up, we wait (or ask them) for a sit, and then **reward** them for that, they are far more likely in the future to sit than jump up!

We use a lot of food in the initial stages of training as we are building up a 'savings account' of rewards which our pups remember. To give you an analogy. If I asked you to sit down, and told you that every time you did, I would give you £5, would you sit down? (I'm hoping you said yes here). We do this quite a few times (quite a little nest egg you have there!). After a while I tell you that instead of giving you £5 every single time, I'll give you £20 every so often, would you still sit down every time I ask just in case this is the time you get your £20? (Thought so!).



Over time in training we start using something called ‘intermittent reinforcement’, in short, we don’t reward our puppies with food every single time they do what we ask (we always praise them though). We mix things up abit and only treat occasionally. Because we have built such a strong foundation at the start our dogs will continue to offer the behavior even if there is no food forthcoming.