Respecting What Your Puppy Values

A gentle guide to food, toys, chews, and learning to cooperate

Puppies often find certain things especially valuable. Wanting to keep a favorite chew or toy is natural. Our goal isn't to prove we can take things away; it's to help puppies feel secure and learn that people can be trusted.

Everyday habits that help

- Let your puppy enjoy meals and special chews without unnecessary interruption. A quiet space is a good thing.
- Teach easy trades with an ordinary toy: offer something your puppy likes better, reward a voluntary release, and sometimes give the toy back.
- Help your puppy enjoy your approach by occasionally adding a treat or something pleasant, without taking away what it already has.
- In multi-dog homes, feed separately when useful and give each dog its own space for high-value chews. Sharing is not required.
- Teach children to leave dogs alone while eating or chewing. Adults should manage all interactions and separate children and dogs when active supervision is not possible.

Notice what your puppy is telling you

Moving away with a toy may simply mean your puppy wants privacy. Freezing, stiffening, hovering over an item, staring, growling, or snapping can signal greater discomfort. Give space; don't punish a warning or test whether your puppy will guard.

What if your puppy finds something unsafe?

Prevention helps: keep unsafe objects out of reach and practice trades with safe, low-stakes toys before you need the skill. If your puppy is guarding an item, avoid a confrontation and contact your breeder, veterinarian, or a qualified reward-based behavior professional for guidance.

A note from the breeder

Some breeders use occasional, supervised enrichment exercises with young litters to observe how puppies respond to handling, food, and exchanges. These are not daily mealtime routines or exercises new owners need to repeat. In particular, repeatedly taking valued food away can make some dogs more worried about losing it.

The idea to remember: A comfortable, cooperative puppy matters more than a puppy that is expected to surrender everything.