

# RESOURCE GUARDING

## NEED MORE HELP?

Find additional resources at [pasadenahumane.org/behavior](https://pasadenahumane.org/behavior).

When a dog resource guards, they may show teeth, growl, snap, or even bite over high-value objects, people or personal space. This behavior occurs when a dog feels insecure or fearful about their resources being taken away. Fortunately, this is typically a very manageable behavior.

## What Does a Dog Resource Guard?

Different dogs will guard different kinds of things. A resource-guarder will not necessarily guard every single object they have access to. Some things a dog may resource guard are:

- Food
- High Value Treats such as human food, bones, and bully sticks
- Toys
- Their favorite spot on the couch or furniture
- Their owner
- Something they stole off the counter that does not belong to them
- A piece of trash they found on the floor

## Management in the Home

Follow these guidelines to help manage your dog in your home.

- Do not touch, pet, or disturb your dog when they are eating from their food bowl, chewing on a treat, or playing with a toy.
- If there is a particular item your dog tends to guard, such as a bully stick, avoid giving them that object. Try replacing it with an item they can still enjoy that may be less appealing to guard, such as a Nylabone, which is less flavorful.
- Pick a secluded space in your home to feed your dog, such as a pantry or a bathroom. This will keep them separate from other people or pets in the home and allow them to eat undisturbed.
- When the dog finishes eating, pick up the food bowl and put it away.
- Always schedule feeding times. Do not free-feed a resource guarding dog.
- If your dog is known to react when being woken up, do not disturb the dog while they are sleeping. You can try calling the dog over from a distance if you need to wake them up.

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- If the dog is known to guard furniture or people's laps, do not allow the dog onto the furniture or your lap.
- If you suspect your dog may guard their space if you approach them, call them over to you and offer a treat rather than entering their space.
- If your dog has something you need to get away from them, such as a piece of trash, offer to trade it for a treat. Toss the treat to the other side of the room and grab the object while the dog is far away and not paying attention.
- Never scold a dog for guarding an object. This will likely escalate the behavior.
- If your dog is not possessive over toys, play "trade games" with your dog. A trade game uses two toys of equal value to each other. Throw the first toy for your dog to fetch. When the dog returns with the toy, encourage them to drop it. Throw the second toy and pick up the first toy while they are off fetching. This will teach the dog that it is safe to share items with you because they will always get something in return.

Remember, you can always reach out to a positive reinforcement-based trainer to help continue training and management. Be sure to tell them about your dog's resource guarding so they know how to best help you!

**We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at [pasadenahumane.org/behavior](https://pasadenahumane.org/behavior).**

*Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter*