

Dinner bowls for dogs are a primary distinction for us and dogs. If it were not for their dinner bowls, dogs would still be wolves or wild packs of dogs. Our domesticated dog, still DNA wolf, is the same when it comes to survival skills AND their digestive system, with the exception that most of their food is now roasted, broiled, baked, processed AND chosen by humans!

Using feeding time as an integrated part of daily living with our dogs builds a trusting relationship that can be shared with most members of the family with supervision. Dinner bowls and feeding are a daily occurrence, just as supplying wholesome nutrition for our energy and activities. It is an easy way to begin training with puppies or reshaping behaviors with any dog. It is easy, quick and helps to build a trusting relationship while teaching the dog how to watch-me, sit, wait and gentle.

Whether it is welcoming a new puppy, adopted dog or changing behaviors of present dogs in the family, using “diner” training is empowering for you as a respected pack leader who supplies what dogs need to survive, and most dogs find great pleasure in ... FOOD.

Most puppies (dogs) are fed twice a day. Oftentimes, three is the recommendation. For sake of keeping this short and easy to digest in our busy day-to-day lives, let's explore 2x a day feeding. If you are

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Let me repeat this, feeding your dog 2X a day gives you 14 training opportunities every week. 8-week old puppies are a clean sponge ready to soak up lessons. They will sit on their own, while waiting a few seconds as you hold their dinner bowl saying, “watch me” and “sit” before giving them one or two kibbles (kibbles being used as an example). If they jump, put the dinner bowl back on the counter, and repeat the sequence. Jump too much, walk away for a few seconds and observe. This takes approximately 10-seconds. Dogs eat their food in about 30 seconds, more if they are older, recovering from illness or introspective!

Mouthing puppies quickly learn how to take a kibble “gently” from you. Begin slowly and with compassion. They are learning something new. Children under 12, perceived as littermates, need supervision.

Multiple dogs or if integrating a new dog into the household, requires separate dining areas, especially if one is a puppy, older adult who may eat slower or an unpredictable adopted dog with unpredictable behavior. True colors usually don't present themselves until dogs are settled in. Older, survival coping mechanisms may kick in. Being mindful of these transitions can help you prevent incidents like biting or resource guarding.

I have multiple dogs. The most easy, safe and successful way of feeding multiple dogs, especially those who have a spatial bubble or are food obsessed is doggy diner training. Each dog is taught where their dog diner is and to sit. This may take practice depending on your individual situation or dog. When I say “DINER”, they find it a joy, and game, (even the oldest dog) to get to their diner first. When they sit, they get their food. Of course there are exceptions at various life stages and days of YOUR life too. If a dog is older, slower or sick, they deserve preferences. Puppies need quality time and space to learn. If you are in a stressed or in hurry, a stuffed Kong in a crate will help a pup expend some energy foraging for food.

The calmer the situation, the quicker the learning experience. Take a deep breath. You have to anyway to live.

Children can be involved teaching the basics of sit, watch-me and the bearer of all things good ... FOOD, with supervision. Raising awareness between children and dogs is valuable, teaching them to respect another species. With practice and routine, most dogs comfortably settle into our household routines. Be mindful that when learning, there is no “wrong” way for the dog to do this, as long as they give you something you like/desire. Then praise or smile BIG.

Desensitization, gently taking food from hands and learning how to live in pack begins with Doggy Diner!

This is not a behavior modification plan for resource guarding dogs that see their dinner bowl, space or the entire neighborhood as their possessions. It is one of the most empowering changers of unwanted behavior when YOU take responsibility as a respectable pack leader. You become the giver of coveted resources – things needed for survival and/or pleasure.

Think about this the next time you automatically fill the food bowl and throw it on the floor without knowing what your dog is doing. Intentional training, in the present moment is far more effective.

Being conscious of life rewards (resources) that your dogs needs and loves is powerful and easy. You begin teaching new behaviors, maintaining that special connection with your dog, and changing behaviors that you do not like. In the process, we grow as individuals too in this wiggly waggy busy world.

Enjoy the Journey!