

INTRODUCING IT'S YER CHOICE

“It’s Yer Choice” was popularized by agility competitor and online dog trainer [Susan Garrett](#). The concept of the game is simple: teach a dog that in order to get what he wants, first he must do what you want.

It is usually taught in two stages:

1. Food in the hand
2. Food on the floor

This is a great game and the dogs learn quickly. This is a game used to teach the dog self-control. This will help you teach leave it, stay, and all sorts of other self-control behaviors!

IT’S YER CHOICE: FOOD IN THE HAND

- Start out with food in the hand. To start, hold several treats in your palm and close your hand around them.
- Keep your hand about level with the dog’s nose when they’re standing up. If you put your hand too high, your dog can’t check it out or get to it – you’re forcing control by controlling the environment instead of teaching the dog to control himself. For this reason, always err on the side of holding your hand lower rather than higher.
- Present your closed hand with food in it to the dog. Let him sniff, chew, paw, etc. at your hand. Whatever he wants. Ignore any interaction with your hand; if he backs off, however, start to open it.
- Most dogs will immediately return when your hand starts to open. When this happens, quickly shut your hand again.
- When they back off again, open it again.
- Continue this until the dog is intentionally staying away from your hand while the treat is sitting on your open palm. At this point, use your other hand to reach over and lift a piece of the treat up and give it to your dog.
- Continue the game until all the food in your hand is gone.
- You can make the game a bit harder by pausing a bit longer between rewards, essentially asking for more self-control for the same reward.

IT’S YER CHOICE: FOOD ON THE FLOOR

- Once the dog has mastered the game with food in your hand, you can move the food to the floor.
- Start with food on the floor by covering it with your hand.
- Once the dog is doing well with this, stand up and use your foot to cover it.
- The concept here is the same — the dog can fuss at the covered food as much as he wants; when he backs off, you uncover it. If he goes back toward it, you cover it back up. If they stay back, you bring food to them.
- You can make this harder by slowly putting the treats on the floor closer and closer to the dog.
- This can eventually be used to teach a dog to leave food on the floor alone entirely and is an easy way to teach a dog to ignore food even if you place it on their paws or between their front legs.

The most common problem with playing this game is when puppies sharp teeth or dogs with long nails who choose to insistently chew or scratch at your hand, hard enough that it hurts!

Rotate your wrist, removing their mouth in the process or sliding my hand out from under their paw. This tends to communicate quickly that that method will not work to get them the food, and they quit. Also, "Ouch" said pretty dramatically works too.

The concept *do what I want, and you get what you want* can be used to teach all sorts of games involving self-control.

Have fun with this and impress your family and friends that you really are training the dog!