

NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE

Nothing In Life is Free (NILIF) is a program that we use to help teach dogs how to be better prepared to live in a human society. NILIF will help improve your dog's behavior and teach him to learn to trust and accept people as his leaders. The advantages of using NILIF are that it is a technique that all people, regardless of age, size, or personality-type can do; it is nonconfrontational, therefore it never puts the people or dogs involved at risk; and it helps build a dog's confidence by providing clear rules and enjoyable outcomes for good behavior. Having your dog consistently follow your commands at home, in low stress situations makes it easier for him to follow commands when he is distracted or anxious. NILIF uses only positive, reward based training to teach these valuable lessons.

Pushy, rude but normal dogs- NILIF teaches dogs good manners. Many dogs learn how to get the things they want, like petting, food, being played with or getting treats by being affectionate, but pushy. They paw at people, jump on people, push their way into a situation or even bark and whine to get attention. NILIF is like teaching a child to say, "Please" and "Thank You".

Fearful dogs- NILIF makes your dog's life more predictable and offers him lots of chances to earn good things; this can help lower his anxiety. It also teaches him to trust you as a leader; this can help build his confidence and provide a sense of security.

The Rules of NILIF

1. Your dog must "work" for all the "good things" in life

Work = obey a command the dog knows well

Commands you may want to use include the basics like: sit, down and stay or you may choose to have your dog do some more complicated tricks like: shake hands, rollover, wave or play dead. Anything you can teach your dog is fair game. If your dog does not already know commands well you must teach him a few commands/tricks before you begin NILIF. Use only positive reinforcement methods to teach commands.

Good things = anything your dog wants or likes

This includes, but is not limited to: being fed, getting treats, being petted, being greeted, having his leash put on, having his leash taken off, having doors opened to come inside or go outside, being invited up on furniture, being played with, being brushed, being spoken too, having his belly rubbed, having a ball thrown to fetch, going in or out of the car, and greeting a guest.

2. Pushy, demanding behavior is ignored

Pushy, demanding behavior = anything your dog does to get your attention and "make" you do something for him

This includes, but is not limited to: whining, pawing, nudging, mouthing, jumping on, staring at, and barking at you.

Ignored = no attention AT ALL

Scolding, saying “NO”, pushing the dog away or giving a command are all forms of attention. Instead, you should turn your back on your dog or even walk away. Wait until he is leaving you alone to give him the opportunity to earn something good.

3. Give the command only once

Once = if your dog does not do what you want him to do, then you don't do what he wants you to do

If he doesn't obey, walk away, turn your back on him or just ignore him. In a minute or so give him another chance to earn something good.

4. Everyone in the household and anyone who interacts with your dog on a regular basis must follow the NILIF rules

Everyone = spouses, significant others, dog walkers, neighbors who drop by every day, and, especially, children

Dogs often view children as either playmates or lower-ranking members of the “pack”. NILIF teaches dogs to view children as leaders, just like the grown-ups in the family.

5. Be patient, especially in the beginning

It may take your dog a little while before he realizes that he really, truly has to work for the things he wants. After all, up until this point everything in life was free!

An Example of NILIF in Action:

It's your first day of using NILIF and you're ready to take Fido for a walk. You pick up his leash and he comes running over to you. You tell him, “Fido, sit.” Fido is so excited that instead of sitting he runs around you wiggling and wagging his tail and jumping at the leash in your hand. You don't repeat the command, scold him or push him away when he jumps up. You just calmly put the leash down and walk away. In a minute, you walk back to the leash and pick it up again. Again, Fido runs over and is too excited to listen to your command. You repeat this procedure (get the leash, give the command, Fido is too excited so you walk away) 10 times before Fido finally sits. When he sits you clip on the leash praise him and take him for a nice long walk.

The next day when it's Fido's walk time it takes 6 tries before he sits to have his leash put on. By the end of the first week of NILIF Fido is sitting automatically when you pick up his leash!