



# Counter Surfing

Karen Reese, CPDT-KA, ACDBC, Fear Free Certified Animal Trainer

If you have ever left out a fresh sandwich on the counter only to turn around and find your dog has snagged the snack for himself, you may be living with a counter surfing canine. Dogs may counter surf - or jump up on counters to find things to snack on - because it is natural for dogs to explore the world around them looking for food. Of course, this is not a behavior that we want to continue so we must teach our dogs that there is nothing delicious for them on the counters.

## Management

The first step to success is to make sure that you do not leave anything on the counter that your dog might want to grab. This includes food, crumbs, dishes, used paper towels, etc. Living with a dog that counter surfs will teach you to have a very clean kitchen! Do not feed your dog food from the counter. If you would like to give your dog something delicious that you have cooked up for them or if you prepare their meals on the kitchen counter, take the food to another room and give the dog to it outside of the kitchen. Make sure that all members of the family and guests to the house follow the same rules to keep things consistent for your dog. Also, when you are cooking or preparing food you can consider keeping your dog outside, in a kennel, or in another room with a closed door to avoid any mistakes.

## Train your dog to do something more appropriate

When your dog is in the kitchen they are very tempted to try to grab a snack when you turn your back. Teach them to stay out of the kitchen so they aren't as tempted. When your dog enters the kitchen coax them out of the kitchen and say "out" once they have left. It can also be helpful to reward your dog with a scratch on the chin or even a food treat the first few times. Repeat this every time your dog enters the kitchen and you are in the kitchen so they will learn that you will not allow them to stay in the kitchen. If done consistently (about 100 times since it can take a dog that many times to learn something) you can say the word "out" and the dog will learn to leave the kitchen since the word is paired with you making them leave.

You can also teach your dog "off" to take their feet off of the counter. When the dog puts his feet on the counter, get him to get down from the counter by gesturing for him to get down, no need to get forceful or pushy with him, and as soon as his feet hit the ground say "off". Repeat this every time his feet get on the counter and then, after about 100 times, your dog will connect the word "off" with taking his feet off the counter.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at [behavior@operationkindness.org](mailto:behavior@operationkindness.org) or visit [www.operationkindness.org/training](http://www.operationkindness.org/training).