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Every day we update it with fun videos, memes and photos. And it's not just behind-the-scenes photos (although you'll definitely see lots of Tampa and Justice), but photos of your precious pups! Just send a great pic of your dog to [dogstermag@luminamedia.com](mailto:dogstermag@luminamedia.com) and put Dogster Instagram in the subject line.

## Leave it!

**M**y husband made us some gluten-free pancakes the other morning and, of course, made a few extras so the dogs and parrots could have what I thought would be a "little" taste. As I'm focusing on my own pancakes, out of the corner of my eye I see him go over to our Min Pin-Viszla mix, Justice, and I hear a plopping sound. I look over to see that my husband had dropped a pancake the size of my head in front of Justice who was frantically trying to fit the whole thing in his mouth like he hadn't eaten in a week. I ran over to grab the pancake before Justice choked, yelling, "Leave it! Leave it!" Justice must have misunderstood me and thought I was yelling, "Eat it! Eat it!" as he quickly inhaled the whole thing in his mouth before my hand could descend to take it away.

Now, we all know Justice didn't misunderstand. He certainly knows what "Leave it" means, but I don't have him to the point that I can trust he'll do it no matter what. And that's not good, because it could save his life one day. The verbal cue "Leave it" is so important that dog trainers believe if you are only going to teach your dog a handful of verbal cues, this is one of those must dos. In this issue, trainer Annie Phenix recommends teaching it for a very important situation: encountering snakes, other dogs or other humans when you're out hiking with your dog. "Leave it" can keep your dog safe from dangerous foods, animals, humans and all kinds of nasty situations.

And not to get too philosophical, but "Leave it" is probably something we humans should be working on, too. Bad foods that will raise our cholesterol and increase our waistline, toxic people, relationships, jobs, just overall bad situations. Maybe if we could just tell ourselves, "Leave it," and we 100 percent comply, think how much better our lives would be. (If I had just said "Leave it" when the waitress offered that free chocolate chip cookie sundae at dinner last night ...)

For now, I'm working with my dogs on this "crucial cue," as Annie calls it. Once they get it down, perhaps they can help teach me.



  
Sr. Group Editor



  
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### BEHIND THE COVER:

How much more adorable can you get than this photo of Merrick getting a bath? Taken by photographer Illona Haus of Ontario Canada ([scruffydogphotography.com](http://scruffydogphotography.com)), Merrick is Illona's own dog, rescued shortly before this photo was taken when he was 6 years old. Since then, Merrick lived a wonderful life with Illona and his fellow packmates. Sadly, he passed away recently from liver disease. Illona said, "It would be very sweet to see him on the cover of *Dogster*, especially as he has a rather large and loyal following on Facebook and social media who are still dealing with his loss."