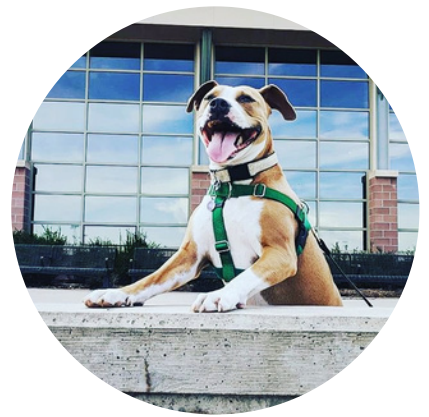


This behavior is so much fun – for your dog! Dogs typically counter-surf for two simple reasons – it's interesting and enriches their daily life, AND it often pays off with some high value rewards! However fun this behavior is for our dogs, it's typically not something we want them to practice in our homes! Not only is this hazardous for your food and other objects on your counter-tops, it can also be dangerous for your dog if they were to find & consume something unsafe.

MANAGEMENT

- This is an essential piece of resolving counter-surfing behavior. If your dog is able to regularly practice getting up on the counters, and regularly receives reinforcement (even in the form of a tiny little crumb of food), then they are likely going to continue to exhibit this very functional behavior.
- While we are working on replacing counter-surfing with better behaviors, we need to restrict our dogs' access to areas that have counters when we aren't around to supervise and redirect.
- Even when we are around to supervise, sometimes our attention can be divided (i.e. cooking dinner) and our counter-surfers can use that opportunity to sneak a tasty snack. Having a good management plan in place can help prevent that from happening!
- In practice, this could look like:
 - Use baby gates or exercise pens to keep your dog out of the kitchen when unsupervised.
 - Keep food put away in cabinets, pantry, and refrigerator and avoid leaving food on the counter as much as possible.
 - When in the kitchen cooking, use tethering to keep your dog restricted to certain areas. You can either tether your dog to your waist so you can supervise closely, or pick a doorknob nearby instead. We will combine this with some station & settle skills in the training plan.



ENRICHMENT

Because dogs often chose counter-surfing as a fun activity when they are bored and don't have other, more positive outlets, we have to consider enrichment as a key part of our behavior modification plan for counter-surfing behavior. When considering your dog's enrichment needs, you also have to take into account your dog's age, breed, & preferred activity level. A dog with a high drive for hunting and working will be getting a lot of mental benefits from their counter-surfing routine, and we need to be ready to replace that with other outlets instead!

Here are a few simple enrichment ideas:

- Do training games or food puzzles for many of your dog's regular meals.
- Keep a freezer full of frozen Kongs & other stuffable toys for a regular mental exercise when your dog needs it!
- Teach your dog sniffing games on the ground, like find the treat or the toy.
- Add in some extra walks, runs, hikes, or other physical activities to your dog's weekly routine.
- Take a training class just for fun, or teach a new trick!

100 Days of Enrichment

[Here](#) are lots more great ideas for adding enrichment to your dog's daily routine.

Most are low cost, low involvement, and fun for both you and your dog!



TRAINING

The goal of training in our counter-surfing behavior modification plan is to replace the unwanted behavior with better behaviors! Remember, if your dog is given lots of opportunities to rehearse the unwanted behavior because of a lack of management, your training exercises will be fighting an uphill battle!

Four Paws on the Floor: This game is as simple as it sounds! In your kitchen or other counter-surfing area, watch your dog and look for times when they have four paws on the floor. Mark and reward, then keep watching. Do they raise their nose up towards the counter surface, but keep their paws on the floor? Mark and reward! You can add in mild distractions on the counter-top (think baby carrots or something else dog-safe) as your dog is ready!

Search the Kitchen Floor: This game is super fun for your dog, and taps into the enrichment piece we discussed earlier. Teach your dog that your kitchen floors contain hidden gems for them to find, instead of looking for those exciting finds on the kitchen counters! Before your dog enters the kitchen, routinely plant a food puzzle or just some loose kibble around the base of your kitchen cabinets. When your dog comes in and finds the treasure, play and reward more, making this discovery the most exciting thing in the world! Repeat, making it a fun routine to come into the kitchen and search for nice resources - in an appropriate place!

Settle on Station: Teach your dog where you WANT them to be, so that they are out from underfoot while you cook and in a spot where they can't reach the countertops while your back is turned! Start by teaching your dog how to go to a station and settle, adding in some distraction and duration. (See video instructions below.) Then add in kitchen-specific distractions, like turning to wash dishes, pull something out of the refrigerator, etc. At first, reward your dog at each step of the way, and if your dog can't quite hold a long stay on their place just yet, use tethering as a backup.

Pro Tip: Pick a "station" spot near your kitchen where you want your dog to be while you are cooking. This could be a rug you already have out in front of a door! Pay them well for hanging out at that spot!

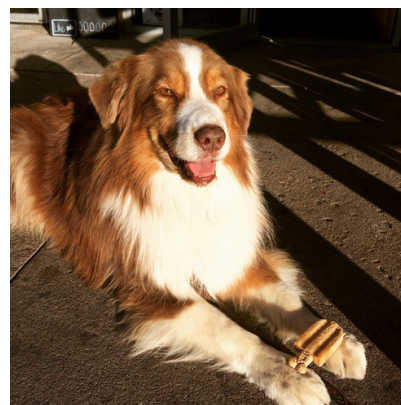
VIDEOS: [Settle on Mat](#)

[Settle - Add Duration & Distractions](#)

TRAINING, CONTINUED

Smell Chicken Find Person: This game is all about teaching your dog that when they smell food above their heads, this is a cue to turn back to find you instead of launching themselves up to help themselves!

- **Set-Up:** Find a container with a secure lid (we like to use reusable yogurt containers for this). Put your food resource in the container and close the lid. Place it on a shelf, chair, or other elevated surface.
- **Step 1:** Bring your dog into the room. Let them go investigate the resource container. Don't discourage their interaction with the container by pulling it away or calling your dog. If they are too excited about the container (pawing at it, picking it up with their mouths, etc.), reset and put the container on a slightly higher surface.
- **Step 2:** As soon as your dog looks away from the container towards you, mark, open the container, and deliver a piece of the resource or reward from your hand instead.
- **Repeat:** When your dog is turning away from the container promptly, mix it up by changing your body position, the height of the container, or whether the lid is on or off of the container. You can do this with the container on the counter in your kitchen, building up to harder and harder types of food distractions!



OTHER COUNTER-SURFING RESOURCES

- [Clickety-Split Dog Training - Blog Post](#) - Some great ideas here about channeling our dog's natural foraging tendencies (that often cause counter-surfing behavior) in a more positive direction.
- [Pawsitive Futures Training & Behavior - Video](#) - Great summary of counter-surfing and training games to resolve this problem.

VIDEOS: [Smell Chicken Find Person](#)