

Name Game

Start in a low distraction environment, preferably inside, when your dog is not looking at you say his name. When he turns his head to look at you mark it with a “yes!” and reward with a treat. Do three or four repetitions and then move to a new spot in the house. When your dog is responding reliably inside, move to a quiet spot outside.

If you are having trouble with your dog not responding you can put him on leash to limit his options or start from scratch. When he is looking at you say his name, mark with a “yes!” and reward with a treat. Do this four or five times and then do a few more repetitions as described above.

Increase distraction only when your dog is responding reliably, eight out of ten times you say his name. Remember to stand tall and only say his name once.

Hand Target

Start with your flat hand or two fingers inches from your dog’s nose, when he comes to investigate your hand mark with a “yes!” and reward. Now switch hands, still starting inches from your dog’s nose. Do three or four repetitions and then move your hand a little farther away from your dog. You may ask for a little more movement with each successful round of repetitions, you may also name the behavior Touch at this point. Make sure that your dog is not always practicing the touch in a sitting position. Your dog should touch your hand no matter what position your hand is in. If your dog does get stuck in the sit position, walk backwards a few steps, encouraging your dog to follow, and then present your hand for the touch.

If you are having trouble with getting your dog to investigate your hand you may hide a treat between your index and middle finger for a few repetitions. Make sure that you remove it so that you do not get stuck always having to have a treat in your hand. Some dogs do not like to nose touch, for those sensitive dogs we will accept moving towards and following the hand. For these dogs, mark and reward him for coming very close to touching your hand.

Position Changes

Position changes are the foundation on which we will build everything else. A dog that can move through all three positions, sit, down, and stand, is one that has a better understanding of what each one means.

Sit - While you may have already taught this to your dog, it’s always a good idea to refresh him on what the hand signal looks like and make sure that it is on a clear verbal cue. The sit hand signal starts with your arm parallel to the floor, palm up. Move your hand up towards your shoulder. This closely mimics the sit lure and can be clearly seen from a distance. Practice both the hand signal and verbal cue separately, first in a quiet indoor place, then a quiet outdoor place. Increase the distraction slowly when your dog

is responding eight out of ten times. Vary your body position and where you are relative to your dog so that he does not become dependent on being in a certain location or you looking a certain way.

Down - The down position can be the hardest for a lot of dogs, sometimes it's because the dog does not feel fully comfortable in his environment and others it's because of the surface. If you have a dog that is reluctant to down, do not force him into the position, be patient and reward him getting closer and closer to going into the down. When you have him going into the down with a lure it's time to introduce the hand signal. The down hand signals starts with your arm parallel to the floor, palm down. Push down to the floor. You may have to push all the way down to the floor at first, but you won't have to do that for long. Like the sit, practice the verbal and hand signal separately. Vary your position and where you are relative to your dog.

Stand - This is the most misunderstood position of all. This position can aid in the cleaning of your dog's feet in the winter and can be helpful to both the groomer and the vet. To teach the stand we can either lure it or use the touch behavior. If you are going to use touch, ask your dog to touch your hand when your hand is slightly out of reach. He should stand up to reach your hand, mark and reward. The stand hand signal will change relative to where you are to your dog, but starts with a flat hand at his nose and pulls away two to three inches.

Mix up the order of the positions that you ask for, keep it exciting and fresh. Do a few repetitions with your dog in front of your, then a few with him on your left side, and a few with him on your right. Have fun with it!

Leave It - Take It

Present a treat in your hand, when your dog goes for it close your hand and what for him to back off. As soon as he backs off open your hand and give it to him saying "Take it". Repeat this series a few more times until he is backing off reliably, now you may add the cue "Leave it" as you present your hand. Repeat a few more times.

When he is reliably backing off of the closed hand it is time to start increase the difficulty. Present the treat in the open hand as you had before, close it when he approaches, but this time when he backs off open your hand back up - do not give him the treat at this point - if he goes for it, close your hand again, open it when he backs off. Keep up this open and closed action until he stays back when you open your hand, then and only then may you give him the treat as you tell him to "Take it".

You will want to do this with tossed treats on the floor, but make sure that he is on leash because he will charge after the treat! Cue him to "leave it" and wait for a head turn away from the food, then reward from your hand. You may let him have the treat with a "take it" when you are done working with it.