

Targeting and Touch

Objective:

In this lesson we teach the dog to look to you for cues. These exercises are the foundation of all positive dog training. They will create a strong bond and respect between you and your dog. As you work on these exercises the dog will become more focused.

But the ultimate goal is not to teach a dog to obey your command for a treat, or because it was cued. The primary objective of this lesson is to teach the dog to 'choose' to obey you. Once a dog decides it wants to obey you then 99% of behavior problems will disappear.

This lesson is a foundation for our behavioral modification (preventing and stopping obsessive behavior including aggression and nervousness). It is also used in our START and URBAN DOG programs.

Technical Terms:

Operant Conditioning, Behavior Extinction, Primary Reinforcer, Secondary Reinforcer, shaping, goal behavior, engagement, trigger, reactive, free shaping,

Commands Learned:

- Ready
- Break
- Touch
- Good
- Yes!
- Oops

2 Exercises:

1. Timing Exercise - mark and reward
2. Working with a secondary reinforcer
 - a. Introduction to 'touch' command

Exercise #1

This exercise is for the handler. Your timing will determine whether this exercise succeeds in hours, days, or weeks. The dog will figure it out - but no one wants to spend weeks luring and target training when they could have succeeded in only a few hours.

In exercise 1 we want you to drop something. Click or say your marker word at the exact same moment the object hits the ground. Practice saying 'good' as your marker word. But when you say 'good' you want to keep it one syllable, more like GUD. This is not a 'good dog' reward. It is a marker that tells the dog 'I want you to keep doing this behavior/task and keep doing it.

In part 2 of this exercise someone else will drop the object.

Exercise #2

This exercise is for the dog. It is the foundation of Shaping. Sit comfortably on the floor with an object on the floor in-front of you. I have empty clean cans, cones, empty plastic containers, and bowls. It doesn't matter what the object is, or whether the object has a distinctive noise when touched.

Tap the object and encourage your dog to touch it with its nose. The instant the dog touches it mark the behavior. Then treat.

Repeat 3 times and then give the 'break' command. Pet the dog and let it play. Then repeat the exercise. Do not let this exercise exceed 5 minutes before you take a minimum of a 10 minute play break.

After the dog is doing the behavior happily then add the 'touch' command in a happy, playful voice.

After Training

Remember to play with your puppy after training. This is a great time to teach your dog that when it works it is rewarded. Dogs will endure a lot of stress if they know they will have a play time after.

Play time also gives them a chance to shake it off. It also gives you a chance to build relationship and trust with your dog.

Never forget that play is a vital part of the training process, especially for ball drive and high drive dogs like working breeds, herding breeds and terriers.