

Trick training is a great way to work on your training skills, keep your dog busy, and make your friends laugh. The first tricks I usually teach dogs are the ones that keep their feet on the floor: crawl, spin, bow and roll over. That way the excitement from learning to do something silly is channeled into something that avoids the dog jumping up. I use lots of treats when trick training, especially at the start. Once your dog gets a good idea of what you want, and has been rewarded for it, he will throw the trick at you, often when you ask for something else, because it "pays" well.

Nutshell Trick Training:

Hold treats close to the dog's nose to help move him into the position you want. Don't bother to name the trick until he has an idea what it is, it's pointless to tell a dog to "roll over" when he has no clue what it means. Start to name it when he's done it a few times...

Name the tricks silly things (to make your friends laugh). My dog doesn't bow until I give the hand signal and say "Bravo!", then the bow happens.

Try the trick 3 - 5 times and then stop, try again later and it will get better faster. You can try several times a day, just keep the sessions short.

Reward baby steps, don't expect perfect trick execution on the first try.

What it looks like (in print):

Crawl: Have your dog lay down, hold the treat right in front of his nose and move it slowly away, treat for even a weight shift forward (first baby step) build up to crawling across the floor.

Spin (for drying off wet feet on a towel): Hold the treat in front of the dog's nose and move it to the side, treat for a head turn (first baby step). Work up to the dog turning all the way around. To the left is one trick, to the right is another.

Bow: That stretch your dog does with his rump high and his front low. If you catch him doing it, name it and praise him for it! Otherwise, while the dog is standing, hold the treat at his nose and **SLOWLY** lower it to the floor between his front paws. Pay for him lowering his head (first baby step) pay **BEFORE** he lays down!

We'll save Roll Over for another day.

Happy Training!