

Learning "Touch"

This month we will work on teaching "Touch" because many of us have been home with our dogs for a long time already...

There are a few reasons to teach your dog to "touch" including the alleviation of boredom and it also works well as a distraction.

First, find a target for your dog to "touch". Some people use their palm as the target. I usually start with an actual target (old CD, coffee can lid, mouse pad...) so I can also teach the dog to leave me and come back. Keep the target small so it's portable and versatile.

- Step 1:** Decide what "touch" looks like for your dog. Is it a paw, a certain paw, his nose, or something else? I teach my dogs to "touch" with their nose, as I do not like a dog who greets feet first. For the rest of this instruction I will use the dog's nose as my example.
- Step 2:** Hold the target in your hand and reward your dog for attention to the target. This may start off slowly but patience is a virtue, especially when training. If the dog touches the target with any minuscule part of his nose, "throw a party" (reward well). After the first rewarded "touch" your dog will become more interested in the target and begin to "touch" more often. Now you add the command "Touch!" and reward appropriately with each "touch". If they are sloppy I will wait and reward for a neater or more forceful "touch". You need to decide what you want it to look like.
- Step 3:** Start to move the target. Switch hands or, instead of holding it, put it on the floor, still rewarding for what you want.
- Step 4:** Move the target away from you and send the dog to "touch" and return (Come!) to you for his reward. At this stage I do things like stick it on the side of the fridge or in my housemate's shoe, wherever your imagination takes it, as long as the dog can always reach it.

Note - "Touch" can move to other items other than your target. Make sure they have the concept of "touch" completely and then move it to something else. Dogs who are too interested in other things (dogs, cats, toddlers) on their walks can be asked randomly to "touch" your palm as a distraction.