

MARKER TRAINING

When it comes to training your dog, it is really important that you master the human side of things. One aspect that is essential is getting the timing of the marker right, to tell your dog exactly when they are doing the correct thing. Too soon and your dog hasn't done the behaviour yet, but too late and your dog is doing something else entirely.

To practice your timing you are going to use the following videos. Say your marker word or click in time to the actions.

In this first clip, mark every time the tip of the woman's finger touches her palm...
In this next clip mark every time the ball touches the floor...

Now mark every time the ball touches the racket...

Same again, in this clip, mark every time the ball touches the racket...

And finally mark when the ball touches the ground.

Play these videos as many times as you need to, to perfect your timing. Putting the time into boosting your own skills will make working with your dog much easier.



HAPPY TRAINING!

MARKER TIMING

When it comes to training your dog, it is really important that you master the human side of things.

One aspect that is essential is getting the timing of the marker right, to tell your dog exactly when they are doing the correct thing. Too soon and your dog hasn't done the behaviour yet, but too late and your dog is doing something else entirely.

To practice your timing you can use actions and events in the world around you. Say your marker word or click every time a car passes you in the street or for each footstep as someone walks by.

The more you practice, the better your timing will become and the easier you will find it to teach your dog new skills with precision.



HAPPY TRAINING!

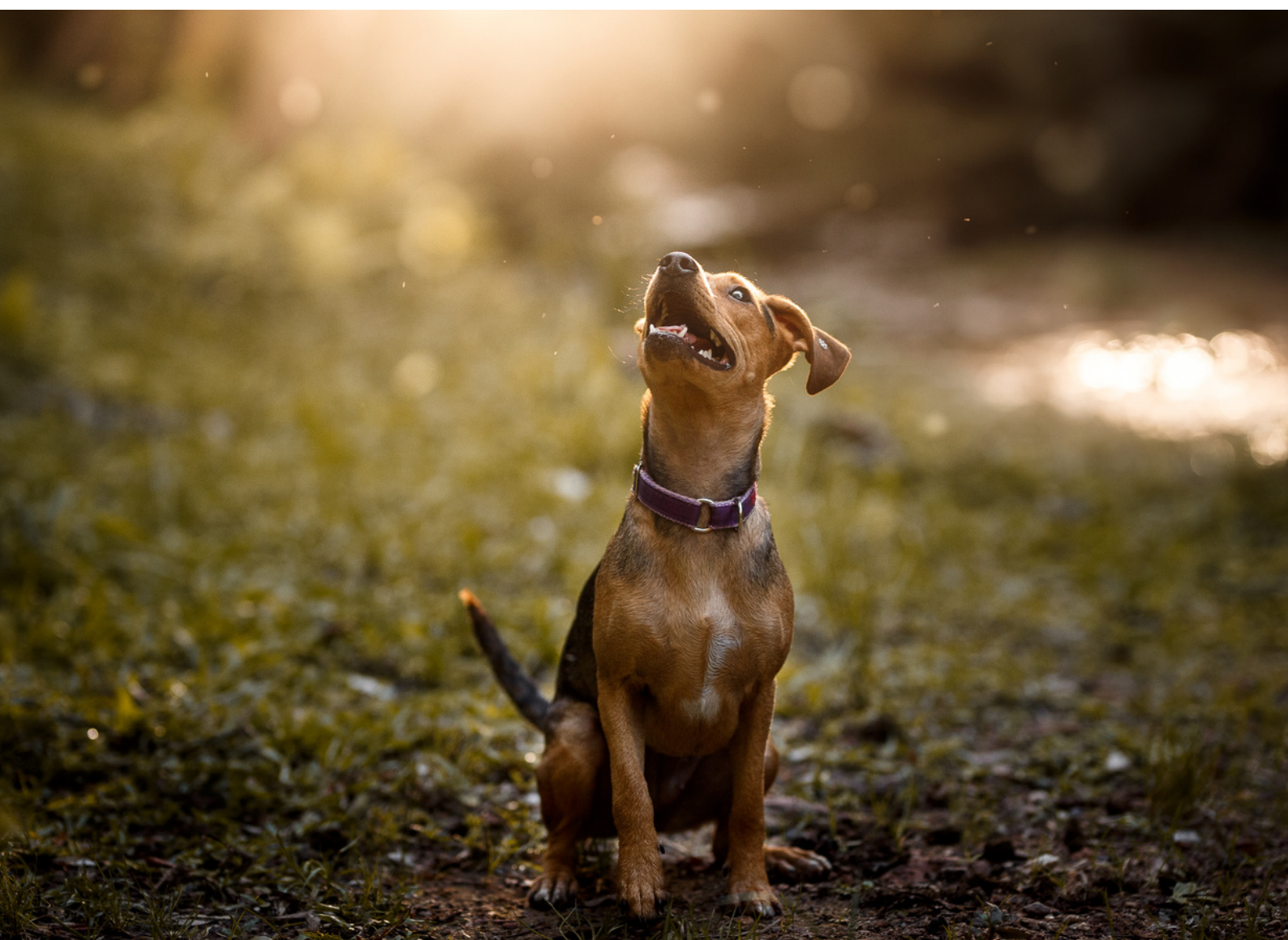
CHECK-INS ON CUE

One of the most beneficial prompts to teach your dog is to look at you. When your dog is focused and looking at you, they will be more likely to respond to other cues they know when you ask them.

One way to introduce this is by making an unusual sound that will capture your dog's interest and when they turn to look, mark and reward them with something they love.

Repeat this process many times, rewarding as soon as your dog looks each time. Practice at unexpected times throughout the day at home and when your dog is excitedly looking at you every time you make the sound, you can start to practice out and about too.

Remember to gradually increase the difficulty and drop back to quieter training areas if they are finding it too difficult to check in.



HAPPY TRAINING!

WHERE'S MY FACE

Focus is an important skill to develop with adolescent dogs. Making it worthwhile for your dog to check in with you will make a huge difference when it comes to everyday life. One game which is excellent for this is 'where's my face'?!

To start with, get some of your dog's favourite rewards and wait for them to make eye contact with you. Mark and reward them, before turning away and waiting again.

Let your dog figure out what to do next... Because it worked before your dog is likely to move in front of you to make eye contact again.

Every time your dog successfully looks at you, mark, reward and rotate again. When your dog is getting really good at this you will see they respond much quicker when you turn away.

Practice turning in both directions.

Soon your dog will be rapidly checking in with you no matter which way you turn. Building up this skill in a quiet location before working around more distractions will help set your dog up to succeed and make it more likely they will be able to focus on you in the wider world.



HAPPY TRAINING!

INTRODUCTION TO TARGETING

One of the ways to effectively build behaviour with your dog is through targeting. This can be a nose target, where your dog follows your hand or another object closely with their nose. Or you can teach your dog to target using another part of their body such as their paw or rear feet.

You need to spend time teaching your dog that moving towards the target gets rewarded. Mark and reward your dog every time they move close and as they start to associate good things happening they will seek out the target more quickly. You can then start to move the target and get them to follow. This can then be used to guide your dog into moving in particular ways or into different positions.

It's a great way to quickly build new behaviour without your dog becoming fixated on the rewards, which are out of sight while you're training. You can also use targeting to encourage your dog to move from one location to another or step onto the scales at the vets.

As with all skills, progress at your dog's pace and don't be afraid to make things easier if they are struggling at any stage.



HAPPY TRAINING!

NOSE TARGETING

Teaching your dog to target your hand and other objects with their nose is great for keeping your dogs attention around distractions, and building more advanced behaviours later.

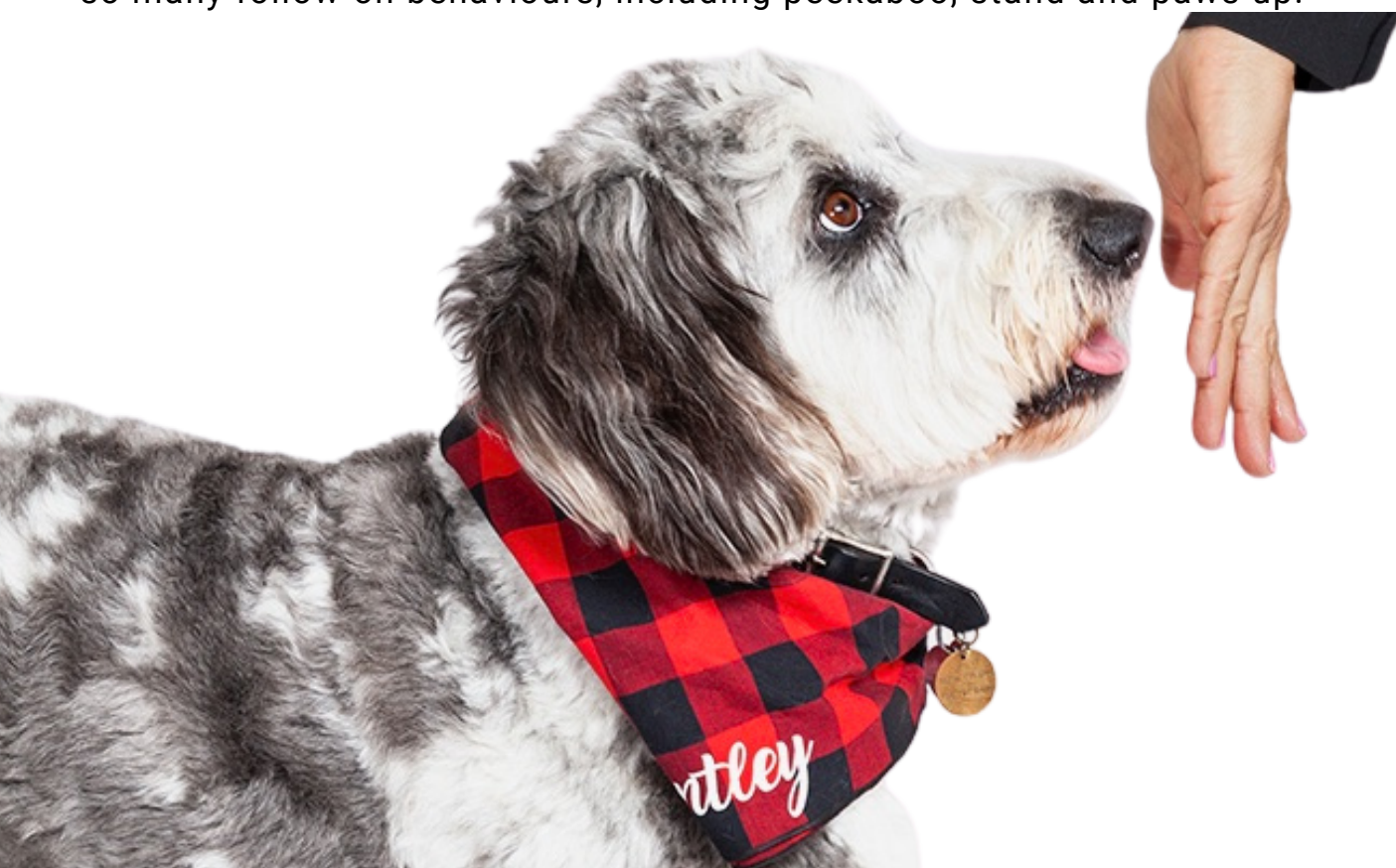
To start with, present a flat hand towards your dog and wait for them to investigate. Mark and reward as soon as their nose makes contact with your hand.

If your dog struggles initially, you can always rub a treat on your hand to get them interested and help them succeed.

After a few repetitions, hold your hand further away, so that your dog has to take a step in order to make contact. Practice in all directions and with both hands so your dog understands all the variations.

From here you can start to create a moving target, by continuing to move your hand as your dog is approaching. This is a really important step if you want to use hand targeting to teach your dog new behaviours in the future.

When your dog has mastered the art of nose targeting, you will be able to teach so many follow-on behaviours, including peekaboo, stand and paws up.



HAPPY TRAINING!

COUNTING GAME RECALL

When it comes to adolescence, recall is often one of the most challenging aspects. In addition to training your usual recall cue, it can help to have a back up that your dog loves responding to.

One option could be to train your dog the counting recall, as inspired by Chirag Patel. This is where you count out treats to the ground one at a time as you say 1,2,3, 4 and so on.

At first your dog won't realise what you are doing, but when they notice that there are treats on the floor they will come running over. Praise and let them eat the food off the ground.

Move away and start counting out treats again.

As you practice this your dog will get quicker and quicker at responding and you'll only have the chance to count to a lower number.

The reason this works really well is that it is unconditional. You are counting out treats to the floor and your dog knows that whenever they hear the game start, rewards can be found on the ground beside you. It doesn't matter how quickly your dog comes back, they always get rewarded in this game.

You will want to start in a quiet area of your home or garden and when you have built up your dog's response, take this game on the road to a variety of places.

With practice, in time you could even use the counting recall game to call your dog back when they are running away from you.



HAPPY TRAINING!

BACK AWAY RECALL

There are lots of ways to build a great recall.

One game you can play involves waiting for your dog to look at you before quickly backing up so that they follow.

Let your dog explore on their lead or long line and when they naturally look up at you, start backing away and enthusiastically encouraging your dog to move towards you. As soon as they start to come, excitedly praise them and when they get close, reward them with something they love.

Practice lots and your dog will be rapidly running back to you every time. You can then add a cue word of your choice. Simply say the cue chosen cue as soon as your dog looks at you, before you start moving.

Remember to keep training sessions short and fun.



HAPPY TRAINING!

LOOK AT THAT

Teaching your dog to automatically disengage from distractions in the environment and focus on you instead is a brilliant skill for adolescent dogs. In effect the distraction becomes a cue to check in with you.

To start with you are going to reward your dog whenever they look at another dog, person or other distraction in the environment.

Once you have made the association that these distractions mean good things come from you, you can start to wait for your dog to look at you without prompting when they notice the distraction. When they look to you, move further away from the distraction and reward.

Begin at a distance and give your dog as much time as they need. If they take more than a few seconds, consider increasing the distance between you and the distraction to make it easier for your dog next time.

If they're doing really well, and promptly checking in, you can start to work closer to distractions

Practicing this in plenty of environments around different distractions will help your teen remain calm and focused wherever you are.



HAPPY TRAINING!

TEACHING A WALKING POSITION

One of the best exercises to help your dog learn to walk calmly by your side involves teaching your dog the position you would like them to walk in, before you even attach the lead. This is great because the lead can be a big distraction for some dogs who might find its movement exciting and other dogs who need careful introduction to unfamiliar equipment so they don't become frightened.

To start, show your dog the treats you have and reward them by your side, where you want them to walk.

Walk away from your dog and as they catch up to you, mark when they are within reach and feed them a treat beside you again. If you always reward in the same place, your dog will be more likely to seek out this location as you walk together.

Practice moving away and rewarding your dog whenever they choose to come close to your side being sure to feed low enough that they keep their paws on the floor throughout.

As they get good at this you can start to walk further with your dog beside you before rewarding.

Working on teaching your dog to walk beside you without the lead will really speed up how quickly they can master the art of walking nicely on their lead.



HAPPY TRAINING!

CHANGING DIRECTION FOR FOCUS

One of the ways you can encourage your dog to pay closer attention to you is by changing direction to mix things up a bit. Create interest and excitement by being unpredictable and fun.

This will help not only build great focus on the lead but is perfect for laying the foundations of a brilliant recall too.

When you are walking along with your dog, try mixing it up a little bit. Suddenly change orientation and dash in a different direction. As soon as your dog sees that you're not beside them anymore, they will look around and come rushing towards you. Reward them when they get close.

Start by practicing this on a regular length lead before working on a long line and eventually off lead too when your dog has a reliable recall.

Keep your dog guessing and ramp up the fun. How quickly can they keep up with you?



HAPPY TRAINING!

REGAINING YOUR DOG'S ATTENTION

There will be times when your teenage dog loses focus and becomes distracted by things in the environment. Sometimes these distractions can cause your dog to become frustrated, worried or overly excited. It might only take a matter of moments for your dog to go from seeming calm and relaxed to pulling, barking, and bouncing around on their lead.

Knowing how to spot the early signs that things are changing and what to do to help your dog can prevent them reaching this stage.

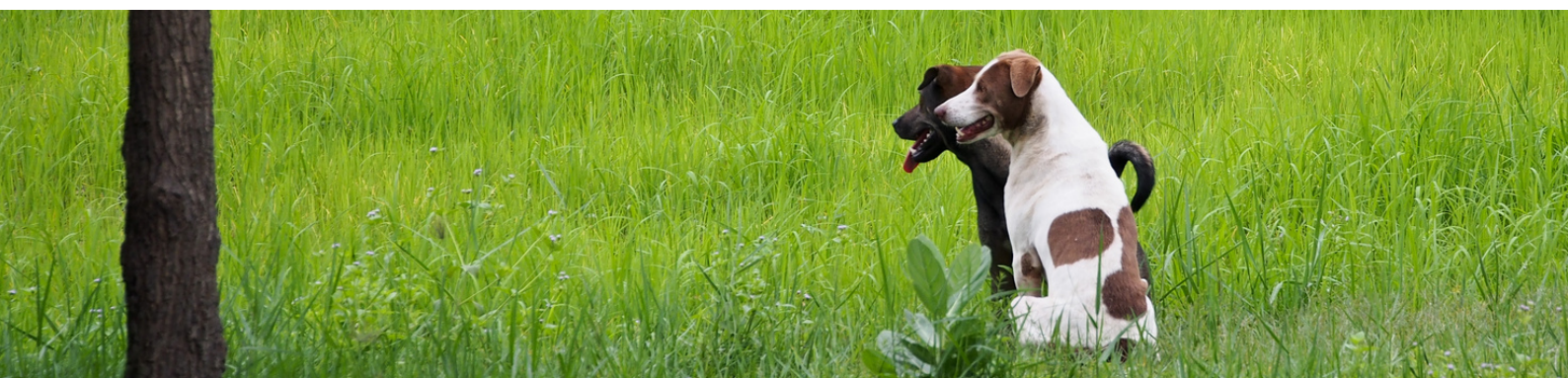
When you see your dog show interest in something, watch for changes in their body language that might signal they are getting worked up. They might start to stare - watching intently for more than a couple of seconds, close their mouth, hold their breath or shift their weight forward.

At this point proactively getting your dogs attention and moving further away can help them to cope with the situation better.

Subtle things like taking a deep breath or moving the lead slightly might be enough to gain your dogs attention again. If not you can try stroking the lead so your dog can feel the vibrations or moving into your dogs peripheral vision so they notice you.

When you have your dog's attention back you can move further away from the distraction so that your dog can feel more calm again. Depending on how elevated your dog was getting you might even want to throw a treat to get your dog to move quickly away with you or sprinkle some food on the ground to get them searching with their nose, and help them relax.

Being prepared by knowing what to watch out for and how to respond will help you set your dog up for success as they grow up.



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