

Dog: Name Recognition and Attention



Benefit

Just like you would turn to look when someone says your name, dogs can learn to do the same. If your dog learns to pay attention to you when you say his name, he is more likely to hear when you give him verbal cues, see where you are going, and learn what you are trying to teach him.

What You Need

- Soft treats like cheese or jerky cut into pea-sized pieces.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.
- Two minutes several times daily.

How to Train It

Step 1. Put several pieces of food in one hand. In a cheerful voice, say your dog’s name. When he looks up at you, click or say “yes!” and immediately hand him a treat. As soon as he swallows, say his name again. When he looks at you, click and hand him a treat. When he swallows, repeat—name, click, treat. Do several trials.

Step 2. Next, say your dog’s name, click or say “yes!,” then praise him just before giving him a treat. When he looks up at you for the next treat, say “yes” and bring your hand up a few inches above your dog’s head. If he looks up to follow the lure, click and treat him.

Step 4. In the beginning, ask for only a few seconds of focused attention before clicking and treating. Have another treat ready so you can reward your dog for looking back at you when he has finished the treat. Each time, try to bring the lure an inch or two higher, aiming to get your dog to look up at your face.

Step 5. After a half dozen rewards, turn away from your dog. If he follows you and offers to watch you voluntarily, click or say “yes!,” praise him with “good watch” and treat him.

Tips

- Remember, if you click or say “yes!,” you must deliver a treat each and every time in the beginning.
- End the game while your dog is attentive.
- Throughout the day reward your dog when he is looking at you, especially on walks.