



Beginning Homework • Week 2

Heather James, Instructor

Watch

You've already been practicing that sit and watch with a treat lure, let's see if we can get that treat out of your hand. With an "air cookie" (hand looking and smelling like it's holding a treat) proceed to practice the exercise like you have been. As soon as your dog makes eye contact with you "YES" and reward from your pocket, pouch, counter, etc. Practice lots of places, lots of way. Can your dog sit and watch on your front porch? Can your dog sit and watch in the backyard? **Bonus:** Can your dog down and watch? Remember – use the lure if you're not having success. You can work on phasing it out as your dog's skills increase.

Down

Now that we have "sit" under our belts, let's move on to "down". After putting your dog in a sit, utilize a treat and lure your dog's "nose-to-toes". As soon as you see the dog bend their elbows and begin the "down" say "YES" and reward. Continue to reward additional successes until you are easily luring your dog from a sit to a down. If your pup pops up out of the sit, simply reset and try again. Like all things dog, practice in lots of different places. Can your dog down in the car? Down in their crate? Down on the couch? You'll want to practice on lots of different surfaces too. Gravel, grass, concrete, rugs, tile, linoleum and more! Remember – don't use the verbal command until you know you can successfully lure/create the desired action.

Verbal Cues & Hand Signals

Now that your dog can follow a treat lure, it's time to bring in verbal cues and hand signals. Hand signals are easy for your dog to understand and are frequently formed from a modified lure. For example, a "nose-to-toes" down lure will gradually lessen in detail and distance. You were originally luring from "nose-to-toes" but as your dog begins to master it, you will find less movement on your part is required to get the desired action. Before long you can find just a quick turn of your hand will designate the requested "down". Verbal cues can take a little more time, but with enough repetition your dog will learn that the sound you just made will be followed by a lure into a position. To begin, say "sit" – pause one or two seconds to give your dog time to process the request, then follow up with the lure. As soon as the "sit" happens, "YES" and reward.

Recalls

Your dog is just starting to learn how to come when called, but should be able to do so in minimally distracting environments at this time. Remember not to call your dog for anything negative. Every time your dog returns to you should be a happy and celebrated occasion. Is it time to leave the dog park? Get nails trimmed? Stop playing with a buddy? Take a bath? Crate up? These moments are not when you want to call your dog to "come" -but when you should just go collect them. With a friend or family neighbor, play puppy ping-pong. Call your dog back and forth by using the dog's name, followed by "comet" then "YES" and reward. Make it a game, make it fun, and play as often as you can.

Loose Leash Walking

Teaching a dog not to pull on a leash is not a simple task, but if you follow one simple rule, you will make quick progress. Never follow a dog on a tight leash. If you continue to plod along after your dog while they pull you down the road, why would your dog ever stop pulling? It's working out just great for them. We will address walking on a loose leash and the different approaches to working through different scenarios each week, but right now we're going to focus on simply putting something delicious and smelly right in front of their little noses and luring them along while you take a few steps. I realize that at the most basic level, the dog is simply following a piece of food along, but it's the perfect start to a lifetime of walking a dog that doesn't pull on the leash. If you are seeing success with the food lure, try raising the treat away from their nose, walking two steps, then returning the treat to reward with a "YES" and a nibble. Give this a try all around your home and yard.

Stopping and changing direction are also wonderful ways to teach your dog to pay attention where you are, and where you're going. Just a second before the leash goes taut hit the brakes. The lesson is "we do not move forward on a tight leash". You can now head off in a different direction, or begin again moving forward. Repeat these options any time the leash goes tight. I love to practice loose leash walking in a large open field, like a soccer field. On the sidewalk your dog clearly can see where you are headed based simply on the environment. In a large open space you can wander all over, change directions at any time, stop and start without hindering foot traffic, and all-in-all behave in a silly and erratic fashion. This activity will teach your dog they have to pay attention to you and where you are going, and it's a very valuable lesson.

Tell me you read your homework this week and I'll give you 5 Lucky Bones!