What Every Dog Should Know and Why

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Every pet owner usually teaches their dog the cue "sit", or at least attempts. It's a great one for impulse control BUT here are the top 3 cues every dog should know and why they need to know it!

"Focus", also called "watch me" or "look" means that your pet looks up to focus on you and takes their focus off other things in the environment. The benefits of this cue are:

- ✓ Create calmer pets
- ✓ Pets are less distracted by their surroundings
- ✓ Less likely to get into trouble

"Leash Walking" is a vital aspect of training. Keeping dogs loose on the leash and under control make things better for you, your pet and other pets. The benefits of proper leash walking are:

- ✓ Enjoyable walks
- ✓ Less reactive dogs
- ✓ Reduced fear
- ✓ Lowers chances of injury/ accidents

"Touch", or "target training" with your hand, has been perceived as a novel trick. Teaching "touch" as one of the very first cues can help make future cues easier and may reduce the likely hood of your pet nipping at hands. The benefits of this cue are:

- ✓ Leads to better recall
- ✓ Better "heel"
- ✓ Easier to redirect in difficult situations
- ✓ Positive association with hands, less likely to bite hands reaching out

How to Load Your Clicker

What is "loading the clicker"

"Loading your clicker" means to teach your pet that the sound of the clicker means treats are coming. Clickers are used by many professional trainers for all kinds of species.

Step 1

Find what treats your pet likes to eat. Before clicking begins you must first make sure your pet will find your treats worthy. If your pet doesn't like them it won't work.

Step 2
Finding a quiet place with minimal distractions. It's best to condition the clicker in a mellow environment like your home.

Step 3
Click your clicker and give your pet the treat. Make sure there is not a delay from the time of the clicker to when they receive the treat, it must be right away during the conditioning process.

Step 4
Repeat! You may need to do this over several days.

How to Reward Your Dog

Types Of Rewards

- A reward is based on the preference of who is being rewarded and your
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- Repetitive speaking can confuse a dog and make things unclear. Be sure not to repeat yourself when asking for a cue.
- When working with a new or adopted dog note that direct eye contact can make a new dog feel uncomfortable. Keep your eyes on your dog without looking directly into the eyes of your dog.

Mark

- A mark is a way we communicate to our dog that they did the correct action. Most of the time people tell their dog they did something right by saying "Good Job".
- Although "Good Job", "Good Boy/ Girl" and "Good, Sit" are ways people commonly mark their dog, you should choose a shorter word, such as "Yes", or use a clicker.

Clicker

- A clicker is a type of training tool used to mark your dog.
- People use clickers because the sound stays consistent through the training. When verbally speaking, such as saying, "Good", your emotions can change the sound of the word. When you're excited the pitch of your voice changes.

- The dog first has to learn what a clicker is before using it with training. You introduce it by clicking ONE time and then giving a tasty treat.
- Condition the sound of the clicker in a distraction free area, such as your home.
- Every time you click you always follow it with a treat, even if you clicked on accident.
- Don't double click or use the clicker to get your dogs attention.

Release

- A release word is used to communicate to your dog that they are done with the cue. A common word used is "okay".
- You can practice your release word with the cue "sit". After the dog has sat for a few seconds say "okay" and slightly turn away from your dog. Your dog will typically get up from the sit position.
- The word "okay" can sometimes get overused and becomes confusing to your dog. Think of an alternative word that is exclusive for training; "release" or "done" can make a better release word.

Reward with Treats

- Tasty treats are a good way to help make your new adopted dog feel comfortable.
- Use a variety of treats and rotate which one you use to keep your dog interested.
- Make sure treats are cut small. Big treats crumble and dogs will lose focus trying to eat the crumbs.
- Soft treats cut into pieces the size of a pea work best for training
- *Note; new adopted dogs can be nervous with environmental changes and new people. When a new dog is nervous they may not want to eat.*

Non- Food Rewards

- You want to always be able to reward your dog when they did something amazing or correct. When you don't have a treat in your hand you can still reward them.
- Think of items your dog truly enjoys. Items they enjoy may be a toy, going for a walk, petting or verbal praise.
- Petting for praise, referred to as tactile reinforcement, may not always feel like a reward to your dog. Most dogs feel uncomfortable with overhead petting and it will make them nervous. Tactile is also depended on who is providing it. The veterinarian may not make the dog feel as comfortable as the owner does with a scratch on the rump. Highly motivated dogs may think of petting as a distraction from the task and cause your dog to loose motivation.

How to Teach Your Pet "Focus"

"Focus", also called "watch me" or "look" means that your pet looks up to focus on you and takes their focus off other things in the environment.

Step 1
Lure your dog with a taste treat by having him sniff it in your hand then bring your hand up to your face. You are not yet using a verbal cue.

Step 2
Click the moment your dog looks up towards your head. Avoid direct eye contact as this can make dogs nervous. Dogs blink, look away and sniff the ground as one of many signals they do to tell others that they want to avoid conflict.

Step 3
Create a hand signal by holding the treat and pointing towards your head like you're luring them, but with a finger point towards your face! You are now creating a physical cue. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Step 4
Say your cue "focus" with your hand signal and treat. After some practice your pet should be doing it consistently and understanding the hand signal. We are teaching the cue word.

TIP
Do not repeat your cue word. Give your pet a moment to think it through. Repeating yourself creates confusion for your pet.

Step 5
Attempt a hand signal with your verbal cue "focus" with NO treat in hand, click and then give a treat from a pocket or treat pouch. Don't go "cold turkey" and practice this way several times.

Step 6
Use a verbal mark word instead of a clicker and provide intermittent food rewards, toys or other life rewards. Always reward your dog even if it's a simple "GREAT JOB!" they recognize excited, high pitch tones and it makes them feel good.

How to Teach Your Pet "Touch"

"Touch", or "target training" with your hand, has been perceived as a novel trick. Teaching "touch" as one of the very first cues can help make future cues easier and may reduce the likely hood of your pet nipping at hands through positive association with hands.

Step 1
Hold a tasty treat in a closed fist. Make sure it's a treat you already know they like.

Step 2
Click the moment your dog looks up towards your head. Avoid direct eye contact as this can make dogs nervous. Dogs blink, look away and sniff the ground as one of many signals they do to tell others that they want to avoid conflict.

Step 3
Create a hand signal by holding the treat and pointing towards your head like you're luring them, but with a finger point towards your face! You are now creating a physical cue. Practice, Practice, Practice!

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Say your cue "focus" with your hand signal and treat. After some practice your pet should be doing it consistently and understanding the hand signal. We are teaching the cue word.

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