



Training Plan: Teaching Name Recognition

Why this cue is useful for your dog to know: Teaching a dog to pay attention (i.e., give you eye contact) when you say his name can be convenient and very practical in many situations.

End behavior: The dog looks at you when you say his or her name.

Step 1: Start with your dog on leash in a place with few distractions. Say the dog's name, click, and then quickly give her a treat. Repeat 10 times. Give her a treat regardless of whether she is looking at you.

Step 2: Wait until the dog looks away from you, then say her name. When she looks at you, click and reward with a treat (C&R). Repeat until she looks at you 4 or 5 times out of 5 when you call her name.

Tip: If she doesn't look at you, repeat Step 1, making sure that you are saying her name in an excited tone to get her attention. If that doesn't work, say her name, put the treat in front of her nose so she sees it and then move the treat up to your eyes. When she looks at your face, C&R.

Step 3: In this step, your dog will learn to respond to her name when there are more distractions. With the dog on leash, go to a place that has a bit more distraction. Whenever she is not looking at you, say her name. When she turns to look at you, C&R.

Step 4: In this step, your dog will learn to respond to her name at a greater distance. Go to a place with few distractions. Wait until she is a few feet away from you, then say her name. When she looks at you, click and give her a treat when she comes to you.

Tip: If she doesn't come to you, that's OK. Toss the treat to her. Remember, you want her to learn that it's good to look at you when you say her name.

Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

Practice name recognition often and everywhere. Practice when your dog is right next to you and when she is several feet away. You'll also want to practice inside and outside, with cars going by, around other dogs and around other people. You can also get other people to play the "name game"; when they say her name and she looks at them, she gets a treat.

Notes

You want your dog to learn that when she hears her name, good things happen. So, don't ever say your dog's name in an angry or frustrated way. You want your dog to look happily toward you whenever you call her name.

If you get stuck between steps, create an intermediate step with duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.