

“Touch” Is a Foundation for Training

How to teach dogs verbal cues

The “Touch!” cue—or hand targeting—is a simple beginning behavior to teach and put on a verbal cue. Since it’s easy for you to teach and for your dog to learn, it sets everyone up for success in future training. Hand targeting is the act of a dog voluntarily touching his nose to your index and middle fingertips. It’s just a little bump. This little bump is a giant behavior, though. You can use it to give your dog or puppy something to do instead of something you don’t want them to do—for example, redirect a puppy away from chewing household items, biting, or jumping. “Touch” gives fearful dogs a way to say hello to new people, and can be used to get a dog to come to you. It’s a foundational behavior in trick training, too. This cue is a must for all dog parents!



STEP 1

To teach “Touch!” follow these steps:

Present index and middle fingers very close to your dog’s nose (just an inch or two away.)

STEP 2

As he bumps his nose on your fingers (most likely out of curiosity), click or mark the behavior with an enthusiastic “Yes.” Repeat several times.

STEP 3

When your dog understands what to do, start gradually moving your fingers farther from his nose. Mix up the position of “Touch!” by placing your fingers to the left and right of his nose. Start saying “Touch” as you present your hand.



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