

Teaching item identification to your dog

One of the most fun tasks I have had training with dogs is item identification. I personally think that this is fun because this exercise and training leads to so many different other exercises and useful tools.

When starting this take one item that the dog already knows and give it a name if it doesn't already have one. For instance, your dogs squeaky toy, if they only have one then call it the squeaky toy or if it is a ball then just call it a ball etc.

- Take the squeaky toy and hold it in front of them and say “touch the squeaky toy”. Commend them for touching the toy.
 - Continue to do this exercise several times until they understand that this is what you want them to do.

Now that they understand that when you say touch the squeaky toy that this is what you want add in another toy. Much the same as the squeaky toy give this one a name as well. We will use a ball to keep it simple.

- Take both toys and hang onto them and show them one at a time and tell them the name of the toy, ensure that they are looking at the toy when you do this.
 - Now that they have the name of the toy tell them to touch the squeaky toy. When they have done this praise them for a job well done. Do it again but now with the ball, again praise them for a job well done.
 - The trick is to make them want to do this, so the more praise the more they will want to do it and continue to like to do it.
 - You should repeat the process of them identifying both toys until they can identify them several times without hesitation. Again praise and commend them for every successful attempt.

Now that you have two toys they can identify you can add more to the bunch and repeat the same process for each additional toy. At this point I like to have them find the toys that I call out, this becomes a fun game for them.