

Beyond the CGC: Tricks and Behaviors Part 1

Trick training in general is a wonderful way to nurture your relationship with your dog. It can help with communication and understanding (both ways!) and is good for mental and physical health. Plus, it's fun! Some tricks can also enhance your therapy visits. For example: teaching "Paws Up" so a client may more easily reach a shorter dog's head. Or a "Chin" command where the dog rests their chin/head on a specified spot, again usually for petting, or just a cuteness factor. Some tricks can also be done for people who may not want to touch the dog but could use a good laugh.

In this article we will be discussing "Paws Up" and "Spin" and there will be a Part 2 where we will discuss "Chin" and ...hmmm, not really sure yet :)

Spin instructions and video provided by Lisa Gainer

Have you encountered individuals on your visits who want to be included in the excitement of your visit, but don't want to actually touch or be touched by your dog? Labeled as a beginner trick by the AKC, "spin" is easy to teach and is an excellent way to involve those who desire social interaction but prefer no contact with your dog. You can simply demonstrate the hand signal for spin and allow patients/residents/staff to cue your dog! Here's how:

1. Take your dog and a pocketful of your dog's favorite treats (or a loaded bait bag) into a calm, low to no-distraction room inside your home. (Outside may be too distracting to learn something new!)
2. Pinch a single treat in the fingertips of your dominant hand. Lower this treat to your dog's nose.
3. Lure or lead your dog to spin by making a circle with the treat. Stay low to the nose. Commit to counterclockwise or clockwise. (Changing directions will confuse your dog.) If you raise the treat too high, you'll get a loose, jumping spin. We are aiming for a tight, nose-to-tail spin. You'll notice in the video I had to work to adjust and reposition Lily.
4. When your dog completes the spin, say YES! Wait 1 to 2 seconds and deliver the lure to her mouth.

5. When your dog begins anticipating the movement and has "caught-on," fade the lure out. This means, lure with the treat in pinched fingers but reward with a treat delivered from your other hand (taken from your pocket or bait bag). In the video, I was able to fade the lure out very quickly. It may take you several sessions to fade the lure out.

6. Do no more than 10 repetitions per session but aim for 3 sessions a day. Keep the sessions short and fun and use yummy treats! Quit before your dog loses interest.

7. Your goal: stand upright, make the tiny pinch-fingered circle motion with a treat-free hand, and watch your dog SPIN!

8. Before you debut this trick, practice in many different locations to ensure success.

Video: https://youtu.be/1R-nfZQP-H0?si=2bmavlaW_y5GOqBA

Prepared by C4C Canine Program Team for use by C4C Members.