

Training Tips - Hand Target and Chin Instructions

A hand target can be a useful tool. It can be used in many ways to help control or distract your dog. It can be used to assist with heeling and recalls, to distract a dog that is a bit reactive, or in therapy work to have them press their nose against someone's hand. It is a very easy "trick" to teach, probably the easiest!

"Chin" is also easy and is trained using the food as a "lure" to get your dog to rest their chin on your hand, then eventually to any object you point to. This is a great way to get a dog to rest their head on someone's lap or knee. A touching way to comfort someone during a therapy visit!

HAND TARGET INSTRUCTIONS:

Hold some treats in your left hand. In a swift movement show your right palm to your dog and wait for them to touch their nose to your palm. When they do, give a clear "YES!" and then a treat from the LEFT hand. Be sure to praise with a "Good girl/boy!" as you are feeding the treat. Repeat. Do not be tempted to move your hand closer to the dog. Let them move to your hand.

When they are immediately touching their nose to your right palm every time, say the command "Touch" then show the hand. Continue to reward from the left hand. Quickly start to phase out the food treats, and reward with food on a randomized schedule.

You will then want to start using either hand to have them touch and start holding the hand in different places (higher, lower, between your legs, etc), then help them generalize the training and start doing the "touch" out in the yard, then on walks. Then eventually around major distractions (like other dogs). Once the "touch cue" is understood, you can even teach your dog to touch other objects with their nose if desired.

Trouble Shooting:

If for some reason your dog does not touch her nose to your hand right away, you can hold a tiny treat between 2 of your fingers in your right hand near the palm and still keeping the palm flat. This will entice her. As soon as she touches your hand say "Yes" and let her take the treat. The very next time try again WITHOUT the treat between your fingers and proceed as described above.

CHIN INSTRUCTIONS:

"Chin" is a variation of the nose target. For chin you will use a small piece of food to lure the dog to rest their head on your hand (opened, flat palm, palm facing up). Do not be tempted to raise your hand up to the dog's chin. As above with the nose target, they will move towards your hand to get the treat and as soon as their chin touches your hand, say "yes" and let them have the food along with verbal praise. Make sure they are making good contact with their chin to your hand. Add the cue "Chin" and then lure them into place. Quickly phase out the lure but still use the food as a reward. When they are doing it reliably, you should phase out the food reward, but ALWAYS give verbal praise!

For both behaviors you can build "duration" (how long they hold that position) by waiting a few seconds before giving them the food reward. Gradually increase the amount of time before they get the food

reward. It is also beneficial to teach a "release" command that "frees" the dog from whatever you have told them to do. But that is a subject for another article.

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