



THE NAME GAME

Why train name recognition and a whiplash turn?

A good response to your dog's name – a whiplash turn – is one of the most vital aids available. If you can get your dog's head to turn, his body will turn; and it can be one of the most useful attention getting devices that you have. Attention is the key that makes training possible. It's well worth devoting a little training time to on a regular basis. This is not recall ("come") training. All we are working toward is for your dog to turn his head.

How to train.

Step 1. You will start by using classical conditioning so your dog associates his name with a positive event. Begin in a quiet place at home. Gather 20 treats in your hand, get next to your dog and say his name in a happy voice. Click and treat. Repeat until all the treats are gone. You are not asking your dog to perform a specific behavior. His name means a click and a treat, a positive event; it is as simple as that.

Step 2. With your dog on leash, toss a treat a couple of feet away. Immediately step behind him as he eats the treat and say his name. Watch his neck. As it begins to turn, click. You can either treat him by hand or toss again and repeat. As you increase repetitions, wait for a complete head turn toward you before you click and treat. Keep practicing, slowly increasing the level of distraction every day.

Step 3. If he does not immediately turn when you say his name, resist the urge to repeat it! Instead, slowly move your hands up his leash without applying tension and stand at his shoulder. Wait (don't ask!) for him to look at you.

Step 4. Repeat in different environments (other rooms in your house, outside in the yard, on the sidewalk, etc).

Step 5. If you have multiple dogs, do this with each dog separately.

Step 6. Refrain from using your dog's name in casual conversation. If this is impossible, choose a specific name by which you can signal your dog (e.g., Nick is now Nicholas).

Step 7. It's now time to begin using your dog's name when he is off leash in the house and not already looking at you. Say his name and when he begins to turn his head click and treat.

Step 8. Repeat often. When he is not looking at you, say his name again. When he turns his head, click & treat. This is a great game to play when you are watching television. Have your treats and clicker ready. On every commercial say his name and click & treat when he looks at you. Then wait until he ignores you and repeat.

Step 9. What if you say his name at this point and he ignores you? Show him the treat but don't give it to him and say, "Oh well! Too bad!" in a happy voice. Or pretend you are eating it yourself. The next time you say his name he will probably be very attentive. Be sure to click and reward well.



THE NAME GAME (continued)

Training tip: Don't teach your dog to tune his call name out! We only want positive associations with his name since we are working toward an instant response. We don't want him to stop and consider whether or not he is in trouble before he responds! Don't use his name to scold or punish him.

Training Tip: Say his name before you give a cue, such as come or sit. Click and treat for compliance. Saying his name does not mean to come to you; it means that he should orient to you no matter what he is doing.

Training Tip: Also reinforce your dog for looking at you voluntarily. By doing this you are teaching him that choosing to look at you is a good thing, not just when you ask for it.