
Step One Training Plans

Treasure Hunting

Getting your dog to use their nose is the best enrichment you can give them. Some dogs will be able to move through the steps below quickly, and some will need time to build their confidence. The key with the game is to keep it easy and fun and end it while your dog is still enjoying it. Once your dog is proficient at the game inside, take it outside!

Step One:

Whether inside or outside, have your dog on a leash. Make sure you and your dog are looking in the same direction. While holding the leash, throw a couple of treats three or four feet in front and release your dog.

While your dog is eating the last treat, call him back and repeat two more times.

Note: there is no cue at this time other than calling your dog back. This step is to help them understand the game without any verbal distractions.

Step Two: Creating the trail

Throw a treat, release your dog and then immediately throw another treat a few feet in front, then another and call your dog back after the third treat.

Repeat this step WITHOUT giving any verbal direction except calling your dog back.

Note: if your dog cannot find a treat, that is ok. Don't help him or give direction. The next round, be sure to throw treats in that direction so he can find it as a bonus later.

Step Three: Introducing the cue

Now that your pup has gotten the hang of this game, you can add your cue. Examples include "go find it!", "get your treat!", "find the treasure!", etc.

Have your dog on leash and toss two treats ahead just like in step one. BEFORE releasing your dog say your cue (go find it! Find the treats, etc).

Repeat three times.

Note: If you have done all three steps, this is a good time to stop for the day.

Step Four: Increasing the Treat Radius

If your dog has a solid "sit/stay" ask him to sit stay. If that is too difficult, you can tether your dog somewhere while you place treats in plain view while he watches you. If your dog is too stressed out to be tethered, you will need a second person to hold your dog for this step because you want him to see where you are putting the treats to set him up for success.

Once you have placed three or four treats in plain view, give your cue (go find it! Find the treats) and release your dog. Once he has found the last treat, call your dog back and repeat another round.

Step Five: The True Treasure Hunt

Now you can hide the treats with your dog unable to see where you are putting them. For the first few rounds, make the treats visible or in places that you know your dog will look. While you are placing the treats, your dog should be in another room, in a covered crate or somewhere he can't see you.

When you have placed all the treats, give your cue and release your dog.

Once this becomes easy, start to hide the treats in harder areas to find. If your dog cannot find them all, that's ok, they can find them in another round. The key is not to lead the dog to the treats and to allow him to find them on his own.

Step Six: Taking it on the Road

When your dog can quickly find the treasures inside, time to take it outside to different environments. When you do this, start from Step One and move through to Step Five. Your dog will remember and you will be able to move through the steps quickly.

Crate Game

(adapted from Patricia McConnell's book "I'll Be Home Soon")

It is best to play this game at a time when your dog is usually quiet or sleeps – after a good walk or run or before bed. If your dog is not mentally ready to relax, this will make training more difficult.

Objectives:

Some dogs need time getting used to being in a smaller space such as a crate or being kept in a smaller part of the home. This activity will help your dog to feel good in these areas where you need to leave them. It is a good idea to train your dog to like being in a confined area even if you don't plan on using it often.

If you have a special treat for your dog such as a bone or a new treat, give it to them in their space even if you aren't practicing the game. You can even feed their meals in this space. This way they associate good things with that space.

If you want to add the cue "crate!" you can do so by pointing to the crate, then say "crate!" and then throwing the treat or putting their meals into the crate. Once they are comfortable going inside the crate, try waiting a couple of seconds so your dog learns to go in on cue without seeing the treat first.

Materials Needed (yes you will need treats for this one):

Confined area – crate or area that will be gated

Some treats for step two

Kong stuffed with good stuff or other toys such as a snuffle mat that your dog can enjoy in their area

Procedure:

Step 1: Getting used to the space

Have your dog go in and out of the space three to five times without confining them in anyway. You can lure your dog in with a treat and also have a couple of treats already in the crate. Move to step two once your dog is looking forward to going to the area and has no hesitations.

You should also be giving your dog special treats and meals in the crate with the door open at this point so that your dog gets used to wonderful things happening in the crate without any confinement.

Step 2: Getting used to confinement

Once your dog is happily going in and out of the area, close the door or gate and then open it right away. Repeat this until your dog isn't bothered by the door closing. Best to do this two or three times in one day and move to step three when your dog consistently shows that she doesn't mind the door being closed.

Step 3: Staying in there a little longer

Once your dog is confident going into the area, start leaving your dog in the area with a stuffed Kong or something he/she enjoys chewing. Walk away for a short amount of time and return before the treat can be finished – open the door or the gate and quietly take away the treat.

** Some dogs may stop eating as soon as you move away. If this is the case you will have to take one step at a time to help them feel comfortable:

- Have your dog go in the crate
- Give the special treat / food game
- Close the door
- Take one step back and return
- If your dog doesn't even notice you moving, try taking two steps back and return
- If this stage is an issue (your dog starts to whine, cry or try to get out of the crate, best to wait for this step)
- If your dog is whining or barking, do not open the door but give treats and wait for him to calm down. See troubleshooting below.

Your dog is learning that good things happen when you go and since you are coming back before the treat has finished, they will not be waiting and anticipating your return.

Step 4: It's OK to be alone

Let your dog finish their treat in the crate and then leave the room for 10 seconds before letting your pup out. (If you are using a kong, don't fill it right up with good stuff, just put half a teaspoon so you aren't waiting 30 minutes before they are finished!). Repeat this but extend the amount of time that you wait to let them out 10 seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, etc.