



Step Three Training Plans

Engage/Disengage

This easy game is brilliant at quickly making a new association with a “trigger” such as a husky or a german shepherd, squirrel and skateboards. Really, this can be applied to anything that gets your dog into the yellow or orange zone (see attachment entitled “Stay on the Beach”). The Engage/Disengage visual also gives a nice summary of Level 1 and Level 2 that you can keep on the fridge.

First, you need to have some really tasty food for this one; cheese, steak, chicken – whatever your dog really enjoys.

Secondly, you now need to have this food with you whenever you go for a walk (don’t worry, we will discuss fading food later – you won’t be smelling like a butcher forever).

Next step is to write down your **dog’s body language** when he sees or senses a trigger BEFORE he starts to get “in the zone”, lunging or barking. Basically, from the chart, when he is in the yellow. Here are some common examples of body language to look out for:

- Sudden head raise
- Stop walking
- Body goes stiff
- Ears go forward
- Chest puffs out
- Back legs are splayed behind the dog’s body
- Looking around for something
- Not sniffing the ground
- Tail up

Not all dogs will display all these signs, but it’s good to have an idea of the subtle signs your dog gives BEFORE he reacts. The most common body language is when the head goes up and the ears perk as if your dog is saying “What’s That?”. **This is the point when you get your dog’s attention.**

Next you need your **attention-getting noise**: a clicker, a click of the tongue, a whistle, a kissy noise or even just the word “yes!” are all good choices. Avoid saying your dog’s name as much as possible.

And now it’s time to teach your dog to associate that noise with good things. At the beginning of your walk, make the noise for no reason. When your dog looks at you, throw treats on the ground. Repeat a few times so your dog loves this new sound.

Why on the ground? Moving food is fun and so much more interesting. In addition, it’s a great way to get your dog to move in another direction before getting stuck on the “trigger”. Also, when a dog dips his head to sniff in the presence of another dog, it is a sign of peaceful intentions.



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THE ENGAGE-DISENGAGE GAME

A training game for dogs who are FEARFUL, ANXIOUS, or FRUSTRATED around a specific trigger such as another dog, person, or sound. The goal is to first decrease the dog's fear/anxiety/frustration and then to teach the dog a new safe and appropriate behavior to do instead.

PREP:

- ☐ High value treats
- ☐ Clicker (or verbal marker)
- ☐ Humane harness or collar
- ☐ Practice fast u-turns by luring your dog with a treat on his nose, or tossing "find-it" treats on the ground as you both walk away quickly in the opposite direction.

- ☐ Take a break if you see subtle stress signals (displacement behaviors) such as excessive lip licking, yawning, or scratching.



PLAY FOR 1-5 MINUTES. TAKE A BREAK. REPEAT.

LEVEL 1: ENGAGE

- 1**  Start at a safe distance away from the trigger, where your dog is not reacting. Be quiet and still so your dog notices the trigger on his own.
- 2**  **CLICK!**
At the precise moment your dog ENGAGES by looking at the trigger, CLICK!
- 3**  When your dog turns his head towards you after the click, feed a treat.
If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.

LEVEL 1 GOAL:

To do at least 3-5 repetitions in a row at the same distance before moving on to LEVEL 2. A successful repetition is when your dog immediately turns back to you after the click.

If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, keep playing LEVEL 1 until your dog has calmly looked at (or engaged with) the trigger from every direction. Then move on to LEVEL 2.

LEVEL 2: DISENGAGE

- 1**  Let your dog notice the trigger again, but now wait 1-5 seconds to see if he will offer to LOOK AWAY from the trigger on his own.
If your dog is fixating on the trigger for longer than 5 seconds, GO BACK to LEVEL 1.
- 2**  **CLICK!**
At the precise moment your dog DISENGAGES by looking away from the trigger, CLICK!
- 3**  After the click, feed a treat.
If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.

LEVEL 2 GOAL:

To do at least 3-5 repetitions in a row before moving 1-5 steps closer to the trigger. A successful repetition is when your dog comfortably disengages with the trigger on his own.

As you move closer, keep playing LEVEL 2 if the trigger is not moving or changing in intensity. If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, go back to LEVEL 1 at the new distance.





Step Three Training Plans

Level One – Getting your dog’s attention when he notices a trigger

1. When you see your dog displaying the above body language – even if you don’t know why – make your noise and as soon as he looks to you, throw treats on the ground.
2. When he looks back at the trigger or in a direction away from you, repeat the sound and when your dog looks, throw the food.
 - a. If you know where the trigger is, throw the food in a direction away from the trigger to give your dog more space. This is adding the reward that your dog is seeking – space from the trigger
3. Continue to make the noise and treat your dog for his attention until the trigger is gone.
4. Once the trigger is gone, the food stops.
 - a. This teaches the dog that the trigger is “bringer of good things” and is how we are changing the dog’s emotional response.

Troubleshooting:

Make the noise ONCE and wait for your dog’s attention. If he is stuck, move CLOSER to your dog and try the noise again.

If your dog has started lunging and barking, try to move away if you can. Don’t pull on the leash, as this makes the reaction stronger. Don’t give your dog any attention until he is calm – he can’t hear you when he is in that state anyway.

Level Two – Your dog gives you attention when he sees a trigger

After your dog has had some practice and you know your dog is enjoying the game, we can now teach your dog to automatically look to you without trying to get his attention. Sometimes dogs will move to level 2 on their own by looking at you BEFORE you make the noise. Then you know they are ready!

1. While out on a walk, when your dog becomes focused on something count to three. Your dog should look at you before or when you get to the count of three.
2. If so, JACKPOT treats! Throw many pieces of treats on the ground and even give a few more for good measure. Lots of happy praise as well.
3. If your dog did not look at you after the count of three, make your noise to get their attention.
4. Each time your dog looks at you on a walk, you should reward. Chances are your dog has smelled the trigger before you even realized.



Step Three Training Plans

Stop barking Cue

Cue: "Thank you!" or "That's ok!" or "Quiet!"

Barking is a natural behavior for a dog, and we don't want them to feel they cannot bark. Imagine if you were told you weren't allowed to speak again! However, especially city dogs, need to have an "off switch" due to noise complaints. This outline will help you to teach your dog to stop barking when someone knocks at the door, rings the doorbell, walks outside your dwelling, etc.

Level One:

1. Stand close to the door
2. Knock and/or ring doorbell
3. Your dog barks
4. Immediately throw food on the floor (preferable food that makes noise to get your dog's attention).
5. Repeat two times
 - a. If your dog stops barking easily, move on to the next level
 - b. If your dog is ignoring the food, you may have a different issue on your hands and best to call in a trainer.

Level Two:

1. Knock and/or ring doorbell (you are still close to the door)
2. Your dog barks
3. Say your cue and immediately throw the food on the floor
4. Knock and/or ring doorbell
5. Dog barks
6. Say your cue, wait two seconds and throw the food
7. Repeat two to three times
 - a. If your dog looks to you when you say your cue, move forward
 - b. If your dog continues to bark go back to level one and keep practicing until he can focus

Level Three:

1. Move a few feet away from the door
2. Knock and/or ring doorbell
3. Your dog barks
4. Say your cue and immediately throw the food on the floor
5. Knock and/or ring doorbell
6. Dog barks
7. Say your cue, wait two seconds and throw the food
8. Next repeat, wait three seconds after saying your cue and throw the food
9. Next repeat wait four seconds and throw the food



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Level Four:

1. Be away from the door doing normal, everyday things
2. Have someone knock and/or ring doorbell
3. Dog barks
4. Say your cue
5. Your dog should come to you expecting the food
6. Throw the food for him
 - a. When your dog is consistently moving away from the door towards you, move to level five
 - b. If your dog remains at the door, go back to level three increase your distance from the door slowly

Level Five:

1. Knock and/or ring doorbell – maybe this is an unplanned event
2. Dog barks
3. Say your cue
4. Dog comes to you
5. Sometimes you give praise and sometimes you give food

Troubleshooting: some dogs may start to bark to get the treat and when there is no knock or no noise at the door. If this is the case, add in another skill such as “go to your mat” or a sit and stay before giving your reward.

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