



The Choice Game

This game is all about building value in proximity to you as well as helping your dog make the choice to pay attention to you.

We begin by asking for a hand touch. This hand touch is the only thing we will actually be asking our dog for. Everything from that point on is your dog's choice.

Once your dog has touched your hand, you will click like normal. But, instead of feeding the treat to their mouth, show them the treat and then toss it a few feet away. Allow your dog to run after and eat the treat. Once your dog has finished the treat, the choosing begins. If your dog so much as turns his head slightly in your direction, you will again click and toss a treat in another direction. After your dog finishes the second treat, you will again click for any turning of his head or any orienting of his body in your direction. Again, you will toss the treat away from you. After the second or third time of clicking for turning his head in your direction, begin to raise your expectations slightly. If all you got the first two times was a slight head turn, wait for your dog's head to be fully turned towards you before you click. The following time, wait for your dog's whole body to be oriented towards you. The time after that, try waiting for your dog to take a step in your direction. Each time you have tossed the treat for your dog, increase your requirements slightly until you have gotten to the point that your dog is walking all the way up to you. Once your dog is repeatedly coming and standing in front of you, start to wait to see if your dog offers a sit in front of you.

The end goal is that everytime you toss the treat and your dog chases and eats it, they then make the choice (without any cues or prompting) to come back and sit in front of you to earn the click and the next thrown treat.

Remember, you don't want to call your dog over or give them any cues or commands beyond the initial hand touch. If your dog begins to show interest in something else and you feel you are losing their attention, try making some sort of a sound (not a known cue!) like a squeak to pique their interest and entice them towards you. If you completely lose their focus, you can start over with another hand touch and repeat the shaping process.

This game builds focus and engagement as well as places value in proximity to you. It is a great way to build foundations for loose leash walking and is excellent as a warm-up.