



The Name Game

One of the most important things you can teach your dog is to have an immediate response to their name. It is easy to fall into the habit of saying their name without it actually meaning that we want their attention. So then when we do want their attention, we say their name and it goes ignored. Technically, their name is a cue just like any other verbal cue we give them. Their name should be the cue to turn their attention in our direction. Even more than that, it should be for them to turn their attention to us *right away*.

1. Start with your dog on a regular 6 foot leash in a low-distraction environment. Always begin on leash just like with recall. We want to make sure we are practicing success, not practicing saying our dog's name and having them decide that something across the room is more interesting and having them wander over there instead.
2. Wait until your dog is not looking directly at you, but also not fixated on something else. Walk around for a little bit if you need to and wait for the right moment. As soon as your dog is looking elsewhere (but not fixating), call your dog's name and at the same time, back up. The movement backwards helps your dog succeed - don't wait for your dog to turn before backing up, say the name and back up at the same time.

Note: if your dog does not turn towards you or puts on the breaks, STOP. We don't want to be dragging or forcing our dog to come towards us. See the troubleshooting section on the following page before continuing to the next step if your dog is hesitating.

3. As soon as your dog turn's their head, click.
4. Reward when your dog gets to you (you can also pet and praise in addition to the treat).

Note: because we are clicking so early (as soon as their head turns) it can seem like we are using the clicker to call our dog to us. This is not the case. We are clicking to mark the hardest part: turning away from what they are doing/focusing on and starting the journey to us. Because we have clicked, they are more likely to succeed in making it all the way to us because they know they are getting a treat. This creates a habit of success.

5. Practice everywhere! Once your dog has mastered an immediate response to their name in a low-distraction environment, add some low-level distractions. Try calling them away from sniffing something or looking at something. Eventually you can try it with higher value distractions, but don't go too fast - remember to always set your dog up to practice success.

Troubleshooting

If you are not seeing a response when your dog hears their name, modify the steps slightly:

1. Start walking with your dog on leash in a low distraction environment.
2. Put a treat on your dog's nose, say your dog's name, and take a couple steps backwards, luring your dog to follow suit. As soon as your dog begins turning to follow the treat, click, and feed the treat once you have taken two steps back.
3. Repeat step 2 a couple times. Return to walking forward with your dog in between repetitions.
4. Say your dog's name and back up, while holding the treat out in front of you. As soon as your dog begins to turn, click, and again treat once you have taken two steps back with your dog facing you.
5. Repeat several times, returning to walking forward in between repetitions.
6. Say your dog's name and back up, this time without holding out a treat. If your dog turns to face you as you back up, click and get a treat out of your pocket for your dog.