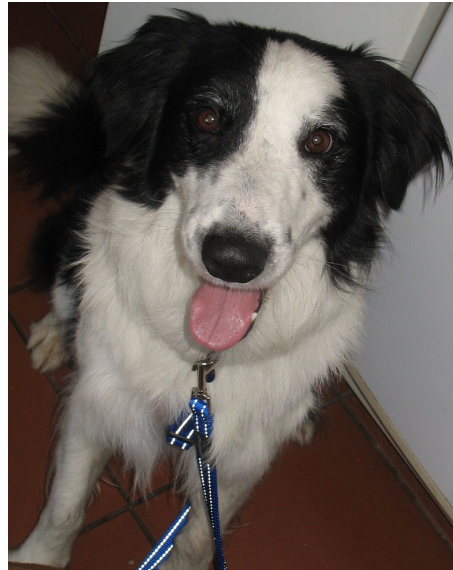


Targeting, what is it and why use it?

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In targeting the dog is taught to target something, such as your hand or a target stick with his nose. After the dog has learnt to touch the target with his nose, he then learns to follow the target for further and further distances so that you can use the target to move your dog around.

What is a target stick?

Usually it is a wooden dowel rod with a small ball attached to one end. The dog is taught to target the ball. Target sticks are useful to extend your reach.

Why teach your dog to target?

You can then 'lure' your dog into position, when teaching new behaviours, having your dog follow your hand or target stick instead of food. This gets the dog thinking about what she is doing right away, rather than mindlessly following her nose.

By using targeting in this manner you also automatically have a dog who does the behaviour without you having food in your hand.

Targeting is great for teaching tricks and makes training agility obstacles like the weave poles a cinch.

You can use targeting to keep your dog with you and get them to walk nicely at heel.

You can recall your dog to you quickly by calling for her to touch your hand, you can also turn your dogs head or move them away from situations that could be frightening or dangerous for them easily.

Hand targeting is useful for dogs who jump up, you can ask them to greet visitors by touching their hands with their noses, which usually keeps all four paws on the floor.

How do I get started with targeting?

To begin teaching your dog to target, start out in a quiet place like your back yard, where there are no distractions. If you have more than one dog begin by teaching each dog on their own. Get together several small treats that your dog really likes and a target stick if you are going to teach your dog to target this.

If you hold out your hand or the target stick just in front of your dog's nose, he should instinctively touch it with his nose. You can then click with your clicker or say 'good dog', reward with a food treat and try again. If your dog doesn't try to touch the target try wagging it a little bit to get your dog's attention and see if they will touch it then. You can also touch the target to your dog's nose once, and then reward, to get him started.

Once your dog is reliably touching the target with her nose every time you hold it out you can start adding in a command word e.g. 'touch'. When your dog will confidently touch the target stick each time you ask, and can repeat the behaviour correctly five times out of five, then you can move the target just a little further away from her, so that she has to take a step to touch the target. If she gets this right praise and reward her and repeat.

Once you have your dog taking a step or two toward the target you can start to get creative. Have your dog follow the target for more and more steps. Then try raising the target and see if your dog will jump up to touch it. Have your dog follow the target to weave between your legs, or to put his paws up against the wall and do 'paws up'. Have your dog walk nicely next to you by targeting the target held at your side as you move.

Once your dog understands the concept of nose targeting you can also teach them the 'touch' command for other items e.g. you could teach your dog to 'touch' the light switch, and then to switch the light on and off for you.

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