

TEACHING “WATCH ME”

“Watch Me” is an important cue which many owners often overlook teaching to their dog.

This cue helps to get your dog’s attention when you’re out in other environments and especially if there are distractions which might make them nervous. Having a reliable “Watch Me” is also one of the building blocks needed to deal with more significant behaviour modification protocols, so be sure to take the time to teach this valuable cue to your dog as early in life as possible. This cue can also be helpful if you have a worried or reactive dog that needs reassurance when out with you.

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

- Place the treat in front of your dog’s nose.
- Take the treat up to your eye, holding it between your thumb and index finger – this becomes a hand signal.
- Most dogs will look you in the eye if a tasty treat is beside it!
- When you have a few seconds of eye contact, reward with the food.
- As with the other cues, repeat the cue until your dog can also respond to the cue without the treat.
- Experiment with different foods if your dog is not engaging.
- If your dog is not food motivated, try using a toy instead.

What Not to Do:

Do not stare at your dog for too long, as your dog could consider this threatening.

Troubleshooting:

Problem: My dog will not look me in the eye for more than a second.

Solution: This is fine to begin with. The watch me cue is designed to get your dog’s attention to go onto something else so you don’t have to hold his gaze for too long. Just delay giving him the reward until you want to reward him.

Problem: My dog will not watch me when we are outside.

Solution: Sometimes it’s hard for dogs to watch you if they are uncomfortable, overly excited or in an environment where there are too many distractions. Be aware of where you are and if the situation is too much, remove your dog to a quieter area until he calms down enough to focus on you. Teach this cue in an environment free from distraction to begin with and build up to busier environments when your dog is responding reliably.