



Sussex North & Brighton Branch

Registered Charity No.206630

HANDTARGET

Hand target, also known as "Touch". This is a great tool to have in your dog training tool box. If trained effectively it can be used for many things, such as to get your dog's attention back onto you, instead of fixating on something scary, and as a fun focus exercise. It can be used as an alternative recall. Make sure you have some treats and your clicker ready, or your marker word agreed if you are not using a clicker.

STEP 1: Put a small treat under your thumb whilst your hand is flat. As seen in the picture below



STEP 2: Then present your flat hand in front of your dog's face. When they move their face towards your hand to take the treat, release the treat once their face touches your hand and use your marker word or clicker. Repeat this 5 times. Each time put a treat under your thumb and your hand behind your back so you can re-present it to your dog.

STEP 3: Now do the same thing but without a treat under your thumb. Present a flat hand to your dog. Once they move their face towards your hand and touch it, use your marker word or clicker to mark the behaviour and then give them a treat. Repeat this 5 times. Be patient, if you show them your hand and they don't move towards it immediately, wait

them out, they are trying to figure out what you want and this is where the learning is happening! Give them a while to work it out before you try again. If your dog doesn't understand what is being asked of them. Repeat step 2 with a treat under your thumb a couple more times to help them understand before moving on and trying step 3 again.

STEP 4: Once your dog has touched their nose to your flat hand, after it has been presented 5 times, we can now name the behaviour, as they understand what is being asked of them. Do exactly what you did in step 3, but when you present your hand to your dog say the cue word "Touch". If you get 5 successful touches in a row, with the flat hand and the cue word, you can safely say you have taught your dog a hand target!

TOP TIPS

- When attempting this exercise in a new location, you may have to start at step 1 again and work through. Dogs are very literal learners. If an exercise is taught in one room, they can sometimes think that it only applies to that room and not everywhere they are asked to perform the behaviour. Practice in many different locations around the house and outside (when your dog is ready). This applies for anything that we teach our dog. Also be aware that this can be the case when a new person is doing the exercise. They may have to start from step 1 and go through the steps.
- Make it easy for your dog at first. Put your hand close to their face to give them a clue as to what you are asking. Once you feel your dog understands the exercise you can increase the distance.
- Make sure to get food out of your hand as soon as possible. We only want to be luring our dogs a handful of times to give them the idea of what we want. Keeping food in our hand too long means our dog isn't necessarily learning what is being asked, but just following the food.

If you need further help, you can find a dog trainer by copying and pasting the link below into your web browser:

https://abtc.org.uk/practitioners/?_abtc_role=animal-training-instructor