

Hand Targeting

This exercise is wonderful for dogs that are mouthy or shy with you or others. It can also be used as a low-key come when called and to teach tricks. Dogs are curious and seem to naturally come to you to explore what your hand is offering.

Getting Started

- Hold out your hand out, palm facing your dog.
- Right before your dog's nose touches your hand say "Touch," then say "Good!" and immediately give a treat from the other hand.
- If dog does not engage with you, put your hand behind your back and introduce it again. Eventually, present your hand in different locations, saying "Touch" and give a treat the moment your dog touches your hand.
- Practice six to nine times a day.
- Next, have your dog a few feet away, then say "Touch," and see if she will come over on her own and touch the palm of your hand with her nose.
- Be sure to place your hand in different places and positions, saying "Touch," then "Good!" when contact happens. Give a treat quickly.

Next Steps

By now, you have started to engage your dog in what you're doing. If she is a mouthy dog, she will now touch with her nose instead of using her teeth. If she is a shy dog, she will see approaching your hand as something positive.

Have your dog further away from you—working up to 20 feet—then say "Touch." Add a few feet at a time as you work on this exercise, being sure to go to at least 20 locations for every few feet you move away.

Be sure to place your hand in different places and positions, saying "Touch," then "Good!" when contact happens, then give a treat from the other hand.

As a trick, you can start to put your hand in the air, palm down, and when you say the cue, your dog will jump up to touch your hand, giving you a high-five!

You can also use hand targeting to teach your dog to walk next to you in a heel position by asking for a hand target every few steps right next to you. Another trick is to teach your dog to jump, dance, or spin using a hand target – your dog's nose becomes a magnet to your hand!