

# Dog: Look Command



## Benefit

You can use an eye-contact command to get and keep your dog's attention in situations that may be fear or anxiety provoking. It also inadvertently teaches your dog to look to you for leadership in situations where he feels confused.

## What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese, or a favorite toy.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say "yes!" to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.
- 5 minutes 2–3 times daily.

## Prerequisites

None – this is an easy command that any dog should learn.

## How to Train It

**Step 1.** Begin to teach the eye-contact command by baiting your dog to look at your eyes by holding a treat at eye level, and making an interesting sound (e.g. kissy noises, squeak from a squeaky toy held at eye level). As soon as your dog makes eye contact, click and give him the treat by moving it in a straight line from your eyes to his mouth.

**Step 2.** After several repetitions, when your dog begins to look into your eyes for treats, give the behavior (looking at you) a name or command, like "Look" or "Watch me." Say the command at the moment you bait your dog, right before he looks and gets the treat.

**Step 3.** After several repetitions of the sequence (bait; command; reward), begin to phase out the baiting. Give the command without holding the treat at eye level. Have a treat ready. The instant your dog makes eye contact, click and reward him.

**Step 4.** As your dog gets better with the command, begin to practice it outside in the yard, when your dog is sitting, standing, or lying still, and when he is walking by your side (on a Gentle Leader in the yard). At this point, you can begin to use the eye-contact command to get your dog's attention on walks, both for practice and in real situations where it counts.

**Step 5.** Begin to practice with minimal distractions and gradually add distractions as your dog gets more reliable at looking at you on command.

## Tips and Pitfalls

- It's important that your dog isn't already looking at you when you begin. If your dog is staring at you, walk away or toss a toy away from you to reset the session.
- Gradually switch from baiting (putting the food to your eyes) before you say the command, to saying the command before you give the treat.
- If, after the baiting phase, your dog doesn't look into your eyes when you give the command and looks to your hand instead, your timing is off and you are rewarding your dog for looking at your hand, not your eyes. Start over and reward for direct eye contact.