

2 Steps

Objective: Dog eats a treat off the floor, then moves 2 steps to find heel position (approximate).

Why:

This is another good game to move a dog through space, and it also acts as a nice intermediate step between environmental confidence building games and formal heeling. We are taking the basic skill of finding heel position or at least refocusing on the handler, and making it into a rhythm game.

Dog starts beside the handler, eats a treat off the ground while the handler moves exactly two steps away, and then looks up and finds the handler again. When done correctly, a nice 2-step rhythm develops click/treat-1,2-click/treat-1,2-click/treat-1,2-click/treat... The rhythm adds predictability and gives comfort in situations where the environment isn't entirely predictable (basically, the real world). Since the handler's physical task and the dog's are both easily automated, it leaves maximum brain cells available for processing. In our case, we can focus on processing the environment AND the dog's responses as we move around the space. The dog is free to assess and assimilate new stimuli present.

This game is great for reinforcing approximate heel position

To train this behavior:

1. Start by reinforcing the dog with 10 "rapid fire" treats for offered attention beside you. Deliver the treats at your hip, just as you would for heel position, but the dog's position is not required.
2. Drop a treat right by your left heel (I find it easier to 'place' it), and take two steps forward. Pause and turn your head to connect with your dog, but keep your shoulders square and posture upright.
3. When the dog steps up beside you, click and deliver 1 treat in position, and drop a second treat by your heel. Take 2 steps forward again.
4. Repeat, delivering 1 treat in position and 1 at your foot, taking 2 steps forward each time.
5. Many dogs will start offering heel position automatically if that is already in their skill set. That's great! Once your dog is offering to step into heel, you can start holding your hands in formal heel posture while still maintaining the rhythm of the game.

Once your dog is proficient at this game, you can use it to measure where he is mentally in a given situation. If at home he's able to find heel quickly and accurate, and today he's slow or crooked... that's a good sign that there's something going on for him that day.

<https://youtu.be/xwrK5XuTeNQ> NOTE....I was still not able to bend at this point, that is why my right leg keeps going back....it doesn't need to!!!!