

Leash on and off

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3rH5qv8ZA8&index=15&list=PL3iB_cmFKZ17yhTFprm3Y1dcp9TAbjNz

Objective: Condition the dog to enjoy leash/collar handling and focus on the handler when the leash is removed.

Why:

In every level of obedience in every organization, the dog must enter the ring on leash (and under control), and the leash comes off at some point. The leash must then be reattached at the end of the performance so that the dog exits the ring on leash (and under control).

For many dogs, having the collar handled is kind of a weird thing, and a little invasive. This is especially true when we are putting on or taking off a leash, because we end up leaning over the dog and fumbling around, often kind of pulling on the collar. Since our ring environment is somewhat uncontrollable and stressful, it's to our benefit to deliberately condition those elements of stress that we CAN control... and this is an easy one.

It is also common for dogs to build an association of leash off = reinforcement from the environment, and no reinforcement from the handler. This is because we frequently walk dogs on leash until we get to where we are going, a fenced in yard, the woods, the lake, etc, and then remove the leash and let the dog loose while we go about our business. That's not a bad thing, and I do the same. But it does mean that we need to make a special effort to also condition the leash removal to predict reinforcement and focus on the handler in a training context (like a dog show).

How to teach it:

1. Decide in advance how you will remove the leash. You might want to have your dog do 'paws up' on you for this, particularly if it's a small dog. There is no rule that your dog must be in heel position or even sitting when you remove the leash. You will also want to decide which hand will unsnap the leash. I use my right hand to work the snap, because I am right handed. That means I'll be delivering my treats with my left hand.
2. The important part here is the order and predictability. We want touching the snap to PREDICT food (or toy). So it must be snap -> food. **Basic classical conditioning**...order is important.
3. Start by touching the snap with your snap hand, then deliver a treat with your other hand. Make sure these are two discrete events.
4. If your dog shows no avoidance, has a happy face on, and is even eagerly anticipating the treat when you touch the snap, move on to snapping the snap without actually unhooking it. Pull back the little metal piece, and then release it so it makes that metallic spring sound. Follow every snap with a treat.
5. Now remove the leash. Once the leash is off follow with a treat from your treat hand.
6. Now that the leash is off, we need to do the same process with putting the leash on. So touch the snap to the collar, then feed.
7. Then snap the snap, feed.
8. Then actually hook the leash up and feed. Rinse and repeat!