

Rubber Band Pivots

Objective: The dog offers heel position from any angle (without prompting).

Why: Now that our dogs are comfortable pivoting on the platform, pivoting into heel and pivoting into front, we are going to build on those skills to improve their understanding of heel position (which also gives us our “finish”).

We call this “rubber band” pivots because the goal is for the dog to have an imaginary rubber band attaching his collar to your leg that snaps him back into position when we pull him out.

We will start by working around the clock, working on all angles before adding distance. We are teaching the dog how to adjust the angle of his body to line up straight in position, no matter how he approaches. And that he can do it without help or prompting from you.

** I specifically want the dog to stand for this exercise, not sit in heel position. Once the rump goes down, the dog can't adjust his angle any more... because he is sitting on it! So I want him to be concentrating on pivoting into position, not rushing to sit. We are going to be doing a similar game with the sit platform, but I want the dogs all to be proficient with the pivot platform and NOT sitting first. It's much easier to learn in this order.

1. Place the platform beside your ankle. The center of the platform should line up with your ankle bone, NOT your toes.
2. Pre-load the position by delivering 5-6 treats in position using hand delivery/room service technique. Make sure the dog is standing on the platform to eat these treats.
3. Use one treat to lure the dog slightly off the platform behind you. When his front feet come off, let him eat the treat while you return to neutral body position. Wait for the dog make the decision to return to the platform.
4. As soon as he swallows the treat, reinforce any attempt to get back into the starting position by clicking and delivering in position. It doesn't have to be perfect at first, but we will be raising criteria quickly. Make sure to keep your body still and neutral, avoid the urge to prompt or fiddle.
5. Use another treat to lure the dog off the platform. Click and reinforce in position when he returns to the position. So there are two treats involved for each rep. One in position, and a second to reset for the next rep.
6. Work first by pulling the dog backward off the platform, so that he has only to step up forward to be in heel position again.

7. Then switch to pulling him to the left off the platform. Now, he'll have to step sideways and pivot to get into position.

8. Finally, use the treat to pull him forward off the platform. Now he'll have to step up and pivot all the way into heel position. You can (and should) use more than 3 chunks here, so break this up by delivering first at 6 o'clock, then 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

9. When the dog is easily finding the platform again and adjusts his body to be straight, we can start adding a little bit of distance by tossing the treats. At first, just toss a few inches away. The farther the treat goes, the more momentum the dog will have when approaching you, and the harder it will be for him to control his movement. We want to increase that momentum gradually, not all at once.

10. Work your way all the way around at each distance before throwing the treat farther. Dropping a treat in front of you, replicates the correct movement for a left finish. Dropping a treat behind you, will begin to teach the dog how to line up correctly after a right finish. So take your time and work through all the possible angles thoroughly. It's worth it!

11. Concentrate on keeping your body still, shoulders square, and feet quiet, so that the dog can begin to look for the landmarks he will use to find this position after we remove the platform.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGD9lzzlyhM&index=24&list=PL3iB_cmFKZ17yhTFprm3Y1dcp9TAbbjNz