

Walking (Heeling) Backwards

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EawU8lfsIM&list=PL3iB_cmFKZ17yhTFprm3Y1dcp9TAbbjNz&index=13

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2H3onJC8k0&list=PL3iB_cmFKZ17yhTFprm3Y1dcp9TAbbjNz&index=11

Objective: The dog follows the handler backwards with his head up.

Why: This is the other part of our heeling behavior, where the dog will be walking beside us with his head up. We'll start with the dog in front of us, while we move backward, because it is both easier for us to see the dog and for the dog to focus on us. **So here we are building the concept of moving with the handler while maintaining focus and keeping the head up.**

To teach this behavior:

1. Hold your clicker in your right hand and treats in your left hand. You'll be delivering the treats by your left hip. If you have a very small dog, deliver this treat at an appropriate height... knee, thigh, whatever. (this is to start building reinforcement history that we'll cash in for heeling later on.)
2. Click and treat several times for your dog **holding his head above his topline**. You can choose to make eye contact part of this exercise or not. It's totally up to you. With large dogs, there is no drawback. With small and medium dogs, it may make refining precision later a little harder. But honestly, we can work with either way. However, **our bare minimum criteria is that the head stays above the topline.**
3. Take **one** step backward. Click the dog for holding his head up (assuming he does) and **deliver the treat by your left hip**. Stop walking once you click. Even if the dog doesn't move with you, go ahead and present the treat at your left hip, he'll come up and take it.
4. Continue to back up one step at a time, clicking the dog's head for being up and delivering the treat at your side, until he follows with you and his head stays up.
5. Go to 2 steps at a time.
6. Gradually increase the number of steps backward that you take, and the speed of your backwards walking, until you get a good 10 steps in a row with the dog's head staying up as he moves with you
7. From here, it's up to you. As I said before, we can move forward with the minimum of the dog moving with you while keeping his head above his topline. However, if your personal vision of heeling is a bit fancier than that, this is the place to work on it. Experiment with changing your speed, using high value rewards, toys, and marking moments of prancing or trotting... whatever fits your perfect picture.

Dog also gains quad strength keeping head above topline which leads to the same movement in heeling.