

NAME ATTENTION/WATCH ME

Name Attention

Sure enough, name attention training teaches your dog that when you use their name as a command, it means for them to stop what they're doing and look at you. This exercise is useful when teaching a puppy or newly adopted dog a new name. For dogs who already know their names, name attention is the starting point and foundation of all training. If you don't have your dog's attention, you can't teach them or tell them what you want.

Steps to Name Attention

Do five to 10 repetitions for each step described below. Once your dog is successfully responding four out of five tries, then move on to the next step.

- **Say it.** Say your dog's name: "Rita!" "Jeff!" "Cheryl!"
- **Reward it.** The moment your dog turns to look at you, praise them and quickly give them a small food reward.
- **Show it.** If your dog doesn't look at you, don't repeat their name. Instead, get their attention some other way: try whistling, clapping or making kiss noises.
- **Repeat it.** As soon as your dog looks away, repeat the above steps.

Make it easy for your dog to succeed! Train in a quiet area inside your house and within a short distance of your dog. Once your dog is successful in quiet areas, start practicing in at least five different locations around your house. When moving to different rooms, be patient they might not understand what you're asking them to do. When they are consistently looking at you when you call their name inside, try training outdoors in your backyard, or somewhere away from heavy distractions. (It's also useful to try calling them back to you while you are out on leash walks.)

Tips for Name Attention

- Prepare tiny treats in advance and preload your hand with several of them so can reward your dog as soon as they respond to your command.
- Don't try to get your dog's attention by using a stern voice, or by poking or jerking on their leash. These things are unpleasant. You want your dog to form a positive association with their name.
- For the "show it" step described above, try tapping your temple, snapping your fingers right next to your eyes, or squeaking a small toy held at your forehead. These prompts work well for dogs who look in your general direction but don't actually look at you.

- The reason you want to work hard at name attention training is so your dog knows the importance of this step. You want them to understand that another command will follow after you say their name.
- Do not repeat your dog's name — otherwise we teach dogs they don't have to respond the first time, that tuning us out is an option. Say your dog's name only once, wait for them to respond, then reward them with a treat.

Watch Me

The "watch me" command will build on name attention training to teach your dog to make and hold eye contact until you give them permission to look away. "Watch me" is helpful to keep your dog's focus on you rather than on something distracting, be it trash in the street or a stray cat or another dog on your morning walk. Attentive dogs are more easily trained, and they make great companions to boot.

Steps to Teaching the "Watch Me" Command

Start by teaching your dog that when they make eye contact with you, they earn a treat. Do five to 10 repetitions for each step, and don't move on to the next step until your dog is successfully responding to your cue four out of five times.

- Show your dog you have a high-value treat but don't let them have it just yet. Place your hand with the treat near the dogs' nose, then move your hand up near your eyes. When your dog looks at you (okay, they're really looking at the treat), praise them and quickly reward them with a treat.
- Raise your hand to your eyes without using a treat as a lure. When your dog follows your hand and looks at you, praise them and reward them with a treat. If they are staring at your hand, wait it out until he meets your eye before you reward them.

Once your dog has mastered the "watch me" command by responding to your hand signal (your index finger placed near your eyes or on your temple), begin to train a longer watch. See how long your dog will hold her gaze at your eyes.

- Cue your dog by placing your index finger on your temple, pointing to your eye. When they look at you, praise them, but wait one second before giving them the treat. Once they are successful with a one-second delay, wait two seconds before rewarding, then three seconds, and so on.

Once your dog has mastered the "watch me" command using a hand signal, start teaching them the verbal "watch me" command.

- Say "Watch Me". If your dog makes eye contact quickly, praise them and give them a treat. If they do not make eye contact within one second after your verbal command, use your hand signal (your thumb and index finger right at your temple). Immediately praise them and give them a reward after they make eye contact.

Repeat using the verbal command, waiting a second or two before offering your hand signal, until your dog begins to respond to the verbal “watch me” cue. Phase out the hand signal once your dog is responding to the verbal cue four out of five times or better.

Tips for “Watch Me”

- Use “watch me” to gain and keep your dog's attention on you, and off other stimuli such as other dogs, the veterinarian, a skateboarder going by, or any sight or activity that distracts or elicits anxiety in your dog. (This is one way of helping them cope with unexpected triggers.)
- As your dog gains duration watching you for many seconds or minutes, keep treating as they watch you. You want your dog to know that when their attention is on you, good things keep happening.