Game Day 1 - The Collar Grab Game

We aim for our dogs to feel comfortable when we reach for their collar, as this skill is not only valuable for clipping the leash on but can also be lifesaving. The Collar Grab Game will help your dog become comfortable being handled by their collar and you will soon have a dog loving this game!

Always start your training session with an engaging game to shift the focus onto you!

What you'll need:

1. Your dog on a flat collar
2. Yummy treats in your pocket or a treat pouch
3. A tug toy – if this is valuable to your dog
4. Your dog's leash
5. Your mobile phone on a tripod to video your session
6. A timer – make sure to keep sessions short, no longer than 30 – 45 seconds for tentative dogs, or 1 – 2 minutes for more confident dogs. Take breaks between sessions.

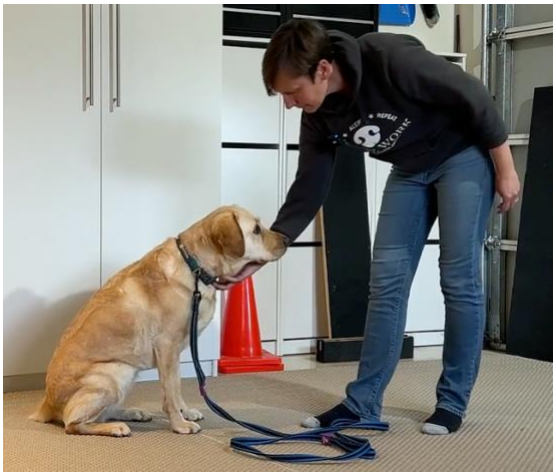
Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Reaching for the leash

a. With your dog on a leash, gently take the leash about 50cm away from your dog's face. Pay close attention to their body language.
b. If they pull back or seem hesitant, pause, and let go of the leash.
c. In the next repetition, reach for the leash a bit further away from their face. Pause, reach for a treat with your other hand and feed your dog while you're still holding the leash.
d. Let go of the leash and repeat the above steps, working your way up the leash closer to your dog's face.
e. Watch their body language and only proceed when they are comfortable.
f. Repeat the above steps until your dog is happy for you to reach and take the leash close to their face.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

2. Grabbing the collar



When your dog is comfortable with you picking up the leash close to their face, you can progress to this step.

a. Reach beneath your dog's chin for their collar, paying close attention to their body language.
b. If they pull back or seem hesitant, pause, and produce a treat from your other hand.
c. Continue to reach for their collar, offering treats each time until your dog becomes comfortable with the gesture.

3. Introduce Touch and Location Specific Marker

Once your dog is comfortable with the gesture of reaching for their collar, you can progress to the next step.

a. Gently grasp their collar under their chin, say the word "cook" (or any other cue you want to use), reach into your pocket or treat pouch and give your dog a treat. Maintain your hand on their collar until they have eaten the treat.
b. Repeat the previous step until your dog is relaxed with your hand near their collar, possibly even offering it willingly to you.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

c. Increase the pressure of your grip gradually while continuing to say your marker ("cook") before giving the treat, reinforcing positive associations. Keep your hand on the collar while delivering the treat.

4. Leash on and off

When your dog is comfortable with a firmer grip, start attaching their leash to the collar. Reach for their collar, say your marker word, give a cookie (remember, hand remains on collar for the delivery of the treat), clip their leash on, let go of the collar. Repeat the above with taking the leash off too.

5. Variety is key

Alternate between simply holding the collar, attaching the leash, and removing it, ensuring each action is associated with positive experiences, such as a treat!

6. Angles and Awareness

Begin reaching for their collar from different angles, closely monitoring your dog's reactions and rewarding them accordingly.

7. Incorporate Movement

Once your dog is confident with collar handling, introduce some movement to the exercise. Grab their collar, walk a few steps, say "cook" and delivery the treat. Incorporate clipping their leash on and off while in movement.

8. Walking Together

Practice reaching for the collar while calling your dog towards you or when they are walking beside you, reinforcing the connection between collar handling and positive interactions.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

Daily use:

Having a dog that is comfortable with you reaching for and holding their collar has many benefits. Imaging a situation where you need to quickly restrain your dog but don't have a leash on hand, or when you're recalling them and clip on the leash. By consistently reinforcing the Collar Grab Game, you're earning their trust and cooperation for those moments when collar handling becomes necessary and appropriate.

Once your dog is comfortable with the initial phases using treats, you can incorporate tug-of-war into the game, if they enjoy it.

Consider this real-life scenario: You need to have a conversation with someone while holding onto your dog's collar. Afterward, re-engage with your pup by initiating a fun game of tug or enticing them to chase you. This not only reinforces the positive

association with collar handling but also adds an element of enjoyment and bonding between you and your dog.

Play this game often and you will find that your dog willingly offers their collar when you reach out with your hand.

Checklist:

1. Have you videoed and reviewed your session?
2. Have you kept sessions short and fun?
3. Is your dog confident and happy for you to reach for their collar?
4. Look at your dog's T.E.M.P (Tails, Ears/Eyes, Mouth, Posture)
5. Have you integrated a nice game of tug?

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

Game Day 2 - It's Yer Choice (IYC)

"It's Yer Choice" is the core value that Susan Garrett introduced me to when educating my dog. The concept revolves around using treats initially to convey to your dog that they can earn rewards through making good choices. However, this approach can evolve to encompass any form of distraction or reinforcement that your dog finds enticing. The essence is collaboration: work with me first, and then you can indulge in your reward.

Implementing this philosophy has been transformative for my dog. Previously a notorious scavenger, she would eagerly seek out any food scraps on the ground. Now, thanks to IYC, I can confidently walk with her, assured she won't veer off course to hunt for snacks. The days of anxiously scanning the horizon for potential temptations and issuing the "leave it" cue (which was white noise to her) are behind us – it's been over two years since I have used this cue.

More than just a training method, IYC has become a way of life for us. It instils invaluable self-regulation, empowering our dogs to consistently make the choices that align with ours, while still fulfilling their own needs and desires. The result? A true win-win situation for everyone involved.

As usual, start your training session with an engaging game.

What you'll need:

1. Your dog
2. Treats – chose treats based on your dog's motivation level. For highly food-motivated dogs, opt for lower value treats or kibble. For those needing more motivation, select higher value treats.
3. A distraction-free room
4. Your mobile phone on a tripod to video your session
5. A timer – make sure to keep sessions short

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

Step-by-step guide:

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your elbow anchored on your knee.
2. Position yourself low enough so that your hand is below your dog's head when they are standing or sitting.
3. Take some treats and enclose them in your hand, then extend your hand towards your dog.
4. Allow your dog to sniff, nibble, or lick your closed fist, ensuring they cannot access the treats.
5. Maintain silence and exercise patience, especially with highly-food driven dogs; this may take some time.
6. When your dog backs away from your hand, open your hand, and see what their choice is:
    a. Do they attempt to steal a treat? Close your hand again.
    b. Play this game of your dog backing away, and your hand opening until they refrain from reaching forward to steal reinforcement.
    c. When your dog remains in position when you open your hand and say "cook" (this is a location specific marker that tells your dog "I like what you're doing, keep doing it the reward is coming to you"), watch for their choice. Since this is the first time you have spoken to them, they will likely reach forward again as they expect a reward. Close your hand again. We want them to show great self-control.
    d. Once your dog remains in their position when you say "cook", you can pick up a treat. However, if they are reaching forward while you pick up that treat, put it back and close your fist. The reward is coming to your dog, not the dog coming towards the reward. Opening your hand is already reinforcing for your dog.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

e. They should only get a treat once they can remain in position when you say "cook", pick up the treat and deliver it to their mouth. Reinforcement is a process, and this process already starts when you open your hand.
f. Now that they understand the game's concept, you can ask for different positions (remember not to cue your dog, let them make that choice). We worked with a back away to start with. Wait a little longer and see if they can offer a sit? Repeat the same steps in the sit as above.
g. Can they offer a down? Repeat as above.
h. Mix the positions up to make your dog understand that reinforcement is not limited to one position.

Daily Use: Playing IYC is the first step to a dog that understands they can make choices that lead to great consequences. What starts as a party trick – imagine having friends over and your dog is showing great impulse control while a cookie is lying on the floor or even on their paw without you saying anything – will lead into a life of IYC. All I do with my dog is based on this philosophy and I know I can trust her not stealing reinforcement.

You are preparing food in the kitchen and accidently drop something – your dog will know that this is off limits unless you tell them to "get it". Preparing the environment for our dog so they can learn what is expected and make great choices is really empowering for them and much more fun for both of you – micromanaging a dog about their poor choices can become cumbersome.

Checklist:

1. Have you recorded and reviewed your session?
2. Is your dog engaged?
3. How is your dog's T.E.M.P throughout all the stages?
4. Does your dog understand the Location Specific Marker?

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

Game Day 3 - IYC Progression

You and your dog have successfully mastered the foundations of IYC. Now it is time to advance this game to the next level. In this progression, we will transition the treats to the floor. This shift in the learning environment challenges your dog but achieving success in this setting will aid in generalising their newfound self-control to various environments.

As usual, start your training session with an engaging game.

What you'll need:

6. Your dog
7. Treats – low and high value
8. A distraction-free room
9. Your mobile phone on a tripod to video your session
10. A timer – make sure to keep sessions short

Step-by-Step guide:

1. Begin the session with a refresher of the foundational IYC game to reiterate the criteria for your dog.
2. Progress by placing treats on the floor and covering them with your hand in a "spider-hand" position.
3. Initially, your dog may attempt to snatch the treat. Maintain silence and allow them to make their choice.
4. Wait until they move away from your hand. Lift your hand and see their choice.
    a. If they move towards the treat – cover them up again.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

   b. If they remain in position – say "cook", retrieve a treat, and delivery it to your dog's mouth ONLY if they remain in position. If they reach forward, put the treat back and cover the cookies again.
5. Once your dog confidently offers different positions in this game, and you can mark ("cook") the behaviour before delivering the treat, test them further by using higher value treats. This increases the distraction level, making it more challenging for your dog to offer their great self-control.
6. Take it a step further and play this game while you're watching TV, just lounging together on the floor. You can progress by placing the cookie on their paw, on both paws, or even on top of their head. Ignore the cookie to get the cookie.
7. When they are showing great self-control, tap your finger in front of the cookie and say "get it" in a playful tone. This cue signals to your dog that they can now eat the treat.

Advancing Further and introducing "Get it" cue

Incorporate this game into formal training sessions to progress a "build-in-stay" concept (more on this in our Hot Zone game later in the course), where your dog learns to maintain a stationary position despite the presence of a tempting reward. Have your dog in a sit, praise them and walk towards them to feed the treat. Do they break position to "speed up" that reinforcement process? If yes, reposition them and try again.
The reward is either coming to them, or you give them permission to get their reward.

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

Advancing this game further, you will have the food on the floor, and your dog is moving. Up until now, your dog was in a stationary position, which is much easier for them to control.

Step-by-step guide:

1. Walk around with your dog and let them watch you dropping a treat on the floor.
2. If they dive for it to steal the treat, be quick (try not to startle your dog though) to cover the treat with your foot to control their access to it. Pick up the treat and try again.
3. When they show great self-control, say "get it" for them to eat the food.
4. Have your dog on their bed, walk away a few steps and place a low value treat close to you. Call your dog to you. Can they ignore the treat on the ground and drive to you?
    a. If yes, praise them lavishly and reward with a high value treat then send them with "get it" to the treat on the ground.
    b. If they attempt to drive towards the food on the ground, be quick to step onto the treat and pick it up. Gently take your dog by the collar and lead them back to their bed to try again. This time place the treat a little further away from you but close enough so that you can cover it if needed.

Checklist:

5. Have you recorded and reviewed your session?
6. Is your dog engaged?
7. How is your dog's T.E.M.P throughout all the stages?
8. Does your dog understand the Location Specific Marker?

©Not to be re-printed without the written permission of Anke's Dog Training. Copyright 2024