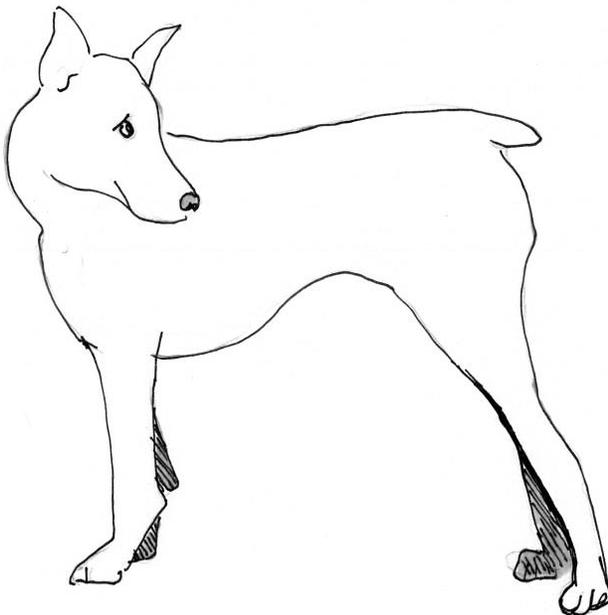


Attention

What does the behavior look like?

Attention is when the dog, upon hearing his name, immediately turns his head and looks at you to find out what he should do next.



Why should we learn it?

You cannot train your dog if he is not paying any attention to you. If he is looking at another dog, person, car, kids running by, birds flying around, or that suspicious leaf just lying on the grass, then he is unlikely to do what you ask because his attention is elsewhere.

Once your dog has an attention cue you can use it in a variety of situations when you want your dog looking at you rather than the environment. Situations such as calling your dog out of play at a dog park, preventing your dog from reacting to another dog, and recalling your off-leash dog all require that your dog look at you as the first step.

Training:

Teaching your dog to give you his attention is a multi-step process. Begin with “easy” situations with very low distractions in the house, and gradually build up your dog’s ability to focus on you in more challenging situations with more distractions like calling him away from play. The process should not be rushed. Your dog needs to become very good at looking at you with low-level distractions before you challenge him with higher-level distractions

Step One: The Head Snap

The dog should turn his head to look at you the moment you call his name. This is the **head snap** and it is essential to have a reliable head snap in order to successfully train your dog.

1. Practice in a quiet, low distraction space and have treats with you.
2. Call his name.
3. When he looks at you, say “Yes” and give him a treat. “Yes” marks the behavior so the dog knows it is the correct action. (Please review our **Marker & Release Cues** handout.)
4. Do 5-6 of these at a time, 3-4 times a day with the same routine. Practice until your dog reliably gives you his attention when you call his name (9 out of 10 times).

Step Two: Adding Distractions (Location Changes)

Every time you practice any exercise (head snap, sit, down...) in a different place your dog will be distracted by the novel experience. There will be different environmental distractions such as new smells, visuals and surfaces making it more challenging to get his attention.

1. **Start Close:** In a new location in your house or yard, start by showing him that you have treats. Practice a few attention/head snap exercises with him very close. Don't go on to the next step until he is reliably giving you attention when you ask for it.
2. **Add Behavior:** After the head snap, ask for a behavior (sit, down...). You may have to lure your dog into position because of the distractions. This is normal. Lure your dog 2 or 3 times, and then try without the lure.
3. **Repeat & Move:** Practice these just like you practiced in the house—5-6 practices in one spot (patio), then move to a new spot (lawn) and try 5-6 more. Each time you move to a new spot, you may have to go back to the lure.
4. When your dog is reliable and does not need the lure in various areas in and out of your house then you are ready to increase distractions by taking your training on the road and into the real world.

Step Three: Adding Distractions (People & Dogs)

Dogs are very curious. One way to increase the distraction is to add humans. Even more distracting are other dogs or other animals.

1. Start with calm humans that are far away.
2. **Head Snaps:** As you walk by and you see that your dog has noticed the people, but is NOT focused on them, STOP walking and do several head snaps.
3. **Add Behavior:** While your dog is looking at you, ask for the behavior you are working on (sit, down...). Remember, you may have to lure him the first 2 or 3 times. Practice 5-6 in the spot until his attention is on you and you no longer need a lure.
4. **Reduce Distance:** As you move closer to the distractions, stop and do several attention/head snap exercises first, and then ask for the behavior (sit, down).
5. **Increase the Difficulty Level:** The activity level of the distraction such as kids playing, running, or shouting or getting closer to the distraction are ways to increase the difficulty level.
6. Remember you may have to lure each time you increase the difficulty level. If your dog does not respond to a cue, it means you are too close and you should back up.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training** conducts various training classes. Sign up on our [Behavior & Training](#) page for the next available class series.

We also provide **Dog Training Instructors** and **Consultants** available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6280 or OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org.

Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)! If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at MarinHumane.org or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

