

# Touch

## What does the behavior look like?

The dog places his nose on an indicated object.

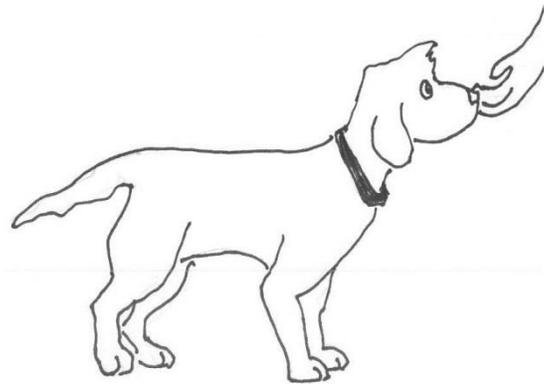
## Why should we learn it?

Touch is a foundation targeting behavior for a myriad of advanced uses in Tricks, Agility, Obedience, Flyball, and Service Dog training and behavior modification work. It is also a fun, easy beginning behavior to redirect your dog from barking, jumping up and to teach recall work.

**Training:** There are several methods for teaching your dog “Touch.”

**Curiosity & Capture:** This method utilizes your dog’s natural curiosity about moving objects to investigate your hand.

1. **Preparation:** Put your dog on a leash, and stand on the leash. Have your treats hidden in your treat bag or left hand behind your back. Do not have any treats or pouches visible to your dog. Make sure your dog isn’t in any particular behavior, like a sit. If he is in a sit, move him out of that behavior.
2. **Present your hand:** Put your right (no treats) hand vertically about 6 – 8 inches in front of your dog’s nose, palm facing the dog. The distance from your dog should be exactly right to be intriguing. Don’t invade his space or be so far away that your hand isn’t of interest.
3. **Orient to hand:**
  - a. Your dog should poke his nose in the direction of or touch your hand. After all, hands usually hold interesting edibles. Any interest in your hand is acceptable at first.
  - b. Mark the behavior and take a treat from your left hand and put it into your right (“Touch”) hand for reward delivery. The treat is coming from the place the dog just touched. (Please review our **Marker & Release Cues** handout.)
  - c. If your dog doesn’t immediately orient towards your hand, try moving backwards (away from your dog). Or, take your hand away, get your dog up and moving for a few seconds and try again.
  - d. Once successful, repeat the process about 5 times. At this point, your goal should be that he actually touches your hand with his nose.
  - e. Take a short break (just a few minutes), and then do another set of 5 - 7 repetitions.
    - i. At this stage, if your dog is performing the behavior smoothly, say the “Touch” cue as your dog touches your hand.
    - ii. After the second set, end the training session. If the dog isn’t touching your hand at this point, try the Lure Method.



**Lure Method:** This method utilizes luring with treats.

1. Put your dog on a leash, and stand on the leash. Have your treats hidden in your treat bag behind your back. Make sure your dog isn't in any particular behavior, like a sit. If he is in a sit, move him out of that behavior.
2. **Set up Treat & Present your Hand:**
  - a. Put a treat in your left hand and place it behind the back of your right hand. Stick them both vertically in front of his nose showing him your right palm.
  - b. If he does not show interest, allow the treat to peek through the fingers of your right hand.
3. **Mark the behavior & repeat:**
  - a. When he touches your right palm, mark the behavior and give him the treat with your RIGHT hand.
  - b. Do that 10 times. The 11th time put your treat hand behind your back. When and only when he touches your target hand, mark the behavior and reward him at your target hand.
  - c. Take a short break (just a few minutes), and then do another set of 5 - 7 repetitions.
  - d. When your dog is performing the behavior smoothly, say the "Touch" cue as your dog touches your hand. After the second set, end the training session.

**Training Tips:**

- **Make it Fun!** Make this a fun game with a lot of energy. Once your dog is enthusiastic about this quick and easy behavior, add movement. Ask your dog to "Touch" a high hand, a low hand or a moving hand on either side of your body. Don't forget to always mark the behavior and reward.
- **Generalizing the behavior:** Once "Touch" is successful and fun, start to generalize the behavior by switching hands. When you switch hands, start back at the beginning of this training exercise.

**Advanced Training and Application:**

**Target to lid: [Agility Use]**

In Agility training, your dog may need the "Touch" cue to learn proper technique for the contact equipment (such as the Teeter, Dog Walk and the A-Frame). For this application, your dog learns to target ("Touch") a light colored plastic target on the ground.

**Training:** Drive to lid

Get a cottage cheese or margarine tub lid.

1. Place the lid on the ground (ideally a lawn type grassy area) and add a few delicious treats to the lid. Release the dog to eat the treats. Repeat this behavior sequence twice.
2. Next, add some treats to the lid, and move your dog several feet away from the lid. Restrain your dog by the collar, and then release him to run to the lid and eat the treats.
3. Repeat and add some excitement and run *with* your dog to the lid. Perhaps he thinks he needs to beat you to the lid so you don't eat those treats! You want the dog to drive to the lid.
4. Repeat the behavior, but don't have any treats on the lid. Either have a second person add the treats to the lid when the dog arrives or if you are running with the dog, you can add the treats to the lid when you arrive.
5. Take a short break (just a few minutes), and then do another set of 5 - 7 repetitions rapidly building to a longer distance.



6. At this stage, if your dog is performing the behavior smoothly, say the “Touch” cue as your dog drives to the lid. After the second set, end the training session. You can also use a different word for the behavior that is specific to your agility training.

**Target to Touch Stick: [Flyball Use]**

In Flyball training, your dog uses the “Touch” cue to learn proper technique for a flyball box turn. For this application, your dog learns to target the end of a custom target stick. To see a touch stick in advanced action, look at this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypWmTbs0eXg&feature=playerflembded>

**Make a Touch Stick:**

Make a target stick with a piece of dowel or narrow tubing. Cut it to about 30 – 33 inches long, tape a handle end for comfort, then tape a clicker to a position on the stick where you can comfortably hold the touch stick and activate the clicker. The clicker marks the correct behavior. Tape the opposite end - that's the ‘target’ part of the stick - with a bright color tape or paint so that you can easily identify the area your dog should touch.

**Training:**

1. Put your dog on a leash, and let the leash drag. Have your treats hidden in your treat bag behind your back. Have the target stick hidden by your leg.
2. Gripping the target stick midway, introduce it into your dog’s environment about 6 – 8 inches away from his muzzle. Position the stick so that the end farthest from your hand is the most likely place for him to investigate.
3. Mark (with the clicker) any interest or orientation/sniffing towards the target stick.
  - a. If your dog won't investigate the target stick, try putting the target end of the stick in the palm of your hand and asking for a hand touch. The dog will "incidentally" touch the stick while touching your palm.
  - b. Repeat until the dog will confidently touch the target end in your hand. Then, gradually move the target end of the stick towards the tips of your fingers and continue lengthening it as the dog gains confidence in touching it
4. Reward the dog with either a treat or a fun tug session. (Please review our **Play: Tug and Retrieving Games** handout).
5. Repeat 3 – 4 times if tugging, 6 – 8 times if using food rewards.
6. Stop the exercise when your dog is having a really good time. This will increase his motivation for the game.
7. As your dog becomes more proficient over time, selectively mark and reinforce those touches that are at the target end of the stick (furthest from your hand).
8. Start giving the “Touch” cue as the dog touches the stick.
9. As your dog becomes more advanced with the behavior, introduce movement and height to the “Touch” requirement.

**Target to Go Out: [Obedience Use]**

In obedience training, your dog uses the “Touch” cue to learn proper technique for a go out. For this application, your dog learns to target (“Touch”) an item on a vertical surface directly in front of him at a distance.

**Training:** Touch to sticky note (painter's tape).

1. Follow the directions to teach the basic "Touch" to hand.
2. Using either a sticky note or painter's tape folded over (one side sticky, one side not), teach your dog to touch the item when placed vertically on your hand.
3. Choose a vertical surface, like a wall or a fence post or the side of a crate. Place your sticky note hand against the surface and give your dog the "Touch" cue. Mark and reward the dog at the sticky note.
4. Once he is fluid with the above behavior, remove your hand from the picture. Give the "Touch" cue. He should touch the sticky note with his nose. Mark the behavior and reward at the sticky note. For this exercise, stand in the same location as in the prior exercise.
5. Once he is touching the sticky comfortably, move a few inches away and repeat the process.
6. Gradually add more distance.

**Training Resources:**

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training** conducts obedience, flyball, and agility 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](mailto: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 micro chipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, micro chipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at [MarinHumane.org](http://MarinHumane.org) or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

