



## Touch Game – Building Confidence in Dogs

1. Touch the palm of your hand to your dog's nose and say "yes" at the exact time your palm touches your dog's nose. Then immediately praise your dog and give him a treat from your other hand. Repeat this many times - at least 10 or more times. You want your dog to find this predictable - you are going to touch his nose, say "yes" and then praise and give him a treat from your other hand.
2. When your dog finds this predictable and shows no reluctance to you touching his nose, hold your palm out as if you are going to touch his nose but stop about an inch to a half-inch in front of his nose and wait to see if he will touch your palm with his nose. If he does, say "yes" and then praise and give him a treat from your other hand. If he does not, go back to step 1 for several more repetitions until your dog will touch your palm with his nose when you stop an inch to a half-inch in front of his nose.
3. When he is regularly touching his nose to the palm of your hand and you say "yes" then praise and give him a treat with your opposite hand you are ready to add the command "Touch" to the sequence. Say the command FIRST then put your hand out. Do not say the command at the same time you put your hand out or the two blend together and the command will be ignored. The sequence is: say "Touch", put your palm out, the dog touches your palm, you say "yes" then praise and give a treat from your other hand.
4. Once you have the command, then start doing the exercise with an object. Pick one object first. (Not a toy that your dog can put his mouth on. Usually something of yours that he cannot put his mouth on. E.g., a remote, cell phone, coaster, book, brush, anything, etc.) You may need to go back to touching the object on his nose because it will be a little confusing. Say the command first and then touch the object to his nose. Work through the game as listed above. Once he gets the game with one object and is touching his nose to the object when you say the command "touch", then change objects, etc. Keep doing this until he knows the game with any object you hold and ask him to touch.

5. Same game but now you will point to an object that you are NOT holding. It is easiest to start with a post-it note that you hold in your hand as in the previous step then stick it to a wall, cabinet, etc. so your dog is already used to touching it. Then it is an easy transition to touching the same post-it that you no longer hold. Once your dog is touching the post-it note on the fridge or on the wall when you point directly to it, take a step away from it and point to it from that short distance away and say "touch". (You will no longer be touching the post-it note.) He should go to it and touch it since there has been a whole history and build up for touching it. Then just slowly add a tiny more distance each time. Your dog should always return to you to get the treat so that means that you may need to call your dog to you after touching the object so he knows to come back to you to get the treat.
6. Pick a different object and start with an up-close point (i.e., you physically touch the object with your finger to designate the object clearly to the dog), then add a little distance, etc. At this point, your dog should be able to go up to anything that he has a clear understanding you are pointing to and touch something you ask him to touch and then return to you for a treat.
7. If you are going to ask him to touch things that are "scary" to him, you should have high value treats and start with an up-close point. Once he touches the object, you must immediately walk him away with you at least 4 or 5 steps (or more) in a jolly manner before giving him the treat. He needs to walk away from the "scary" thing in order to experience the relief associated with facing his fear along with the reinforcement value of the game itself. This small "dosing" of exposure training is extremely effective but it must be done correctly.
8. If you have any questions or if the "game" doesn't seem to be going exactly as it is written, please STOP and contact me for guidance. Do not try to improvise.