

Teaching your dog to pay attention is something all dog owners need to do

DOGS trained to pay attention are impressive to watch and are a joy to interact with. Whatever your chosen discipline is, whether it be obedience trials, showing your dog, or simply enjoying the company of a loved family member, everyone benefits from having an attention-trained dog.

Here are the basic steps you need to get you on your way:

GET STARTED AT HOME

Begin your training in a distraction-free environment. The goal of this exercise is for your dog's eyes to connect with yours. Have your dog sitting in front of you and use fresh, moist food treats (in preference to dry treats) in both hands held close to your body and not your face. Reinforce voluntary eye contact by firstly acknowledging with an upbeat "Yes" and an immediate food reward. Return your hands back to the start position and repeat the process a few

more times. You're looking for anticipation and excitement so pay full attention to your dog during this exercise.

IF YOUR DOG DOESN'T LOOK

If your dog doesn't check in, calmly prompt their attention by saying their name to encourage eye contact. Quite often, this is sufficient to engage your dog's attention. Should your dog still be off with the fairies, then step towards or away from your dog's peripheral vision. If you need to, get your dog's attention back to you with a specific command, a light touch on their head or a combination.

SHORT, FUN SESSIONS

It is important that your treats are only bite-size to keep this exercise flowing and to avoid your dog spending valuable training time chomping and swallowing. Decide on your amount of treats for any one session (e.g. anywhere from 6 to 20) and keep your session motivating to keep your dog engaged. Be exciting in your food delivery and avoid dawdling with your rate of reinforcement. Once the session has ended, use a release word

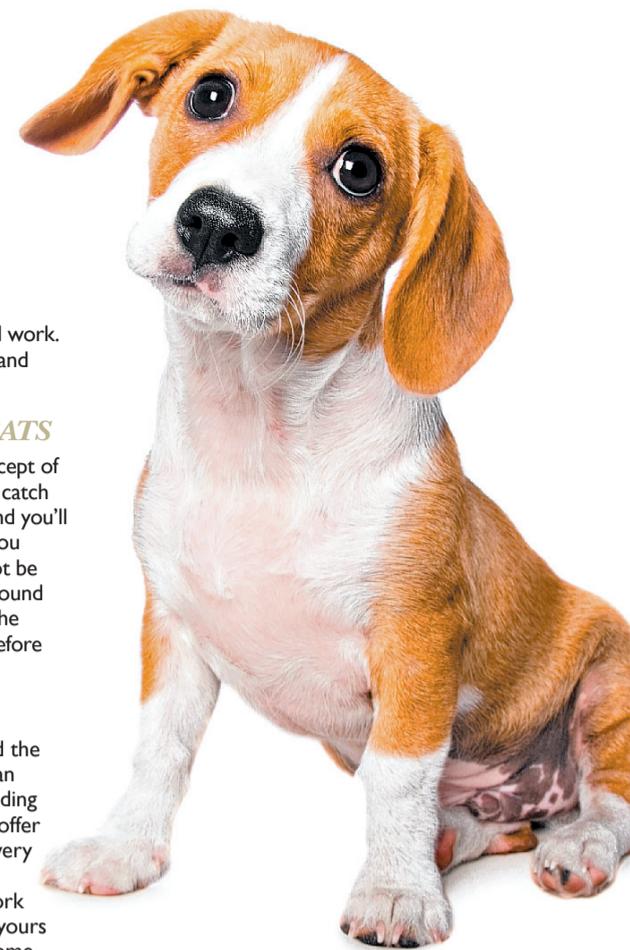
such as "OK" and praise your dog for good work. Always finish with your dog wanting more and leaving on a high.

INTRODUCE TOSSING TREATS

When your dog understands the basic concept of watching your face, begin to teach them to catch their treats. This delivery style is exciting and you'll begin to notice increased attention when you throw your treats. At first your aim may not be the best and your dog will forage on the ground for the treat. This is good as it gives them the opportunity to reconnect with your face before you throw the next treat.

UP THE ANTE

Now you can hold off on offering the food the moment your dog looks at you and you can begin to introduce duration. Instead of feeding immediately when your dog looks at you, offer a treat a little later and vary the food delivery times – intervals of three seconds, seven seconds, one second, five seconds, etc. Work with this until your dog keeps its eyes on yours for at least 10-20 seconds until they get some



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