

## TEACHING “TOUCH” OR HAND TARGETING



**The touch cue is a FUN and SIMPLE behavior with many uses including:**

- As a guide for your dog through doorways, into and out of the car, onto and off of furniture, etc.
- Greeting new people in a calm manner.
- Assisting with loose leash walking.
- Teaching your dog to come to you (recall).
- Training new behaviors and tricks (such as ‘spin’ or ‘weave’).
- Building confidence when your dog is curious, but slightly cautious about a new object.
- Helps shy dogs to build confidence with strangers and being handled.
- Training service dogs to do things like turn light switches on and off by targeting objects.



**How to Teach Touch:**

- Hold your hand open or two fingers close to your dog’s nose, fingers pointed down.
- Keep your target hand still. The goal is for the dog to come to your hand, not the other way around!
- When your dog touches your hand with their nose, say “YES!” (Or click) and reward your dog with a treat from the opposite hand.
- Make sure you mark (say “YES!” or click) the touch the very MOMENT you feel the dog touches your hand. (Marker timing is key to success!)
- If your dog is shy about approaching your hand, start by rewarding a simple look at, lean toward, or sniff of the hand
- Video: [Teaching Your Dog Hand Targeting](#)

**Once your dog has repeated the touch exercise several times, and is doing so reliably, add the verbal cue “TOUCH.”**

- Present your hand target, say “Touch,” then mark and reward. Repeat.
- If your dog becomes “stuck,” do not repeat the cue over and over again. Take your target hand back and wait at least 10-15 seconds before trying again.
- Start slowly raising the criteria by varying your hand position (different sides of the dog’s head, above or below the head), body position (sitting, standing etc.), position of your dog (for example, while your dog is in a down), and from different distances.
- When you raise criteria, do so very gradually, and only work on one new criteria at a time.
- Practice switching target hands for touch to generalize the behavior.
- You can also teach your dog to target an object such as a plastic container top, a sticky note or a target stick

**TRAINING TIP:** If your dog is succeeding, make it a little harder each time by raising criteria. If your dog is having a difficult time, make it easier by going back to their last success point, or take a break.



**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TARGETING, PLEASE READ:**

[How \(and why\) to Teach Your Dog to Touch Your Hand](#)

[Helping Shy Dogs Blossom with Target Training](#)

[Six Ways I Messed Up My Dog's Hand Targeting!](#)

**VIDEO EXAMPLES OF TARGET TRAINING:**

[Target Training with Ken Ramirez](#)