

# Training Plan: Eye Contact



- End Behavior: Dog looks at handler when handler give verbal cue "Look"

**Step 1:** Start with no distractions (indoors), in a place very familiar to the dog.

Give your verbal cue "Look" and get the dog to look at you by making kissy noises, whistles, etc. When the dog gives eye contact, mark ("yes") and reward. Repeat at random time intervals.

- For this and all following steps, **always get the behavior** (eye contact) **the first time, every time you give the cue**. This is why it's important to start with low distractions. **Don't repeat the cue**; say it once and if necessary, get the dog to look at you with prompts (kissy noises, whistles etc.) If you repeat the "look" cue, the dog may learn to ignore you.
- You can say the dog's name before the look cue, if you want (e.g. "Dumpling, Look!")
- For this and all following steps, after the cue, do your best to get the behavior. If dog does not give eye contact for verbal cue or any audible prompts, immediately put a piece of food in front of the dog's nose and lure him to look at you.
- For this and all following steps:
  - When dog gives eye contact immediately for the verbal cue, stop using prompts and lures unless you need it to get the behavior.
  - When dog gives immediate eye contact with low distractions for ten consecutive trials, go to next step.

**Step 2:** Start to use the "Look" cue when dog shows mild interest in low-intensity distractions. This will vary by individual; for some dogs it may be a person walking, for others it may be a sound or another dog. Go back to using prompts (kissy noises, whistles, etc.) or food lure as necessary after verbal cue to be sure to **get the behavior**.

- For this and all subsequent steps, continue to practice the "Look" cue with no distractions to maintain the behavior.

**Step 3:** Start to use the "Look" when the dog shows interest in higher-intensity distractions. This could be another dog, a bicycle, etc. If your dog doesn't give you eye contact the first time you give the cue, make the distractions less intense (increasing distance is often a good way to do this), practice at that level, then increase intensity of distractions again.

If you get stuck between steps, create an intermediate step where you and your dog can succeed. Don't rush! Take it at the dog's speed.