

How to Teach Your Dog to Shake Your Hand

A Step-by-Step Instruction Manual

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Notice: Important information/sections will be highlighted in red

Introduction

Teaching your dog new tricks can be a fun and rewarding experience for both you and your furry friend. One of the most popular tricks is “shake”, which involves your dog lifting its paw and placing it in your hand, mimicking a handshake. This manual will provide you with step-by-step instructions on how to teach your dog this trick.

Materials Needed

- A quiet, distraction-free environment
- Treats (pieces of your dog’s food is also acceptable)
- Your dog

Safety/Precautions

Ensure that your dog is able to perform this trick without any physical harm or discomfort

Avoid overfeeding your dog with treats, treats should be bite-sized

Do not use any food that is poisonous/harmful to dogs, such as chocolate and grapes

Take breaks if your dog starts to become tired or frustrated during the session

Do not use these instructions on a dog that you do not own, teaching tricks requires a level of trust so that the dog nor you gets injured

Avoid using negative reinforcement or physical punishment, this should be a safe and comfortable experience for both you and the dog

Instructions

Step 1: Getting the Dog's Attention

Start by getting the dog's attention with your choice of treat.

- Place the treat in your primary hand and close your hand around it, forming a fist.
- Kneel to your dog's level and hold your fist in front of the dog to let them notice the treat.

Step 2: Repetition

Once your dog realizes there is a treat, they will likely try to get it. Ignore any attempts of the dog sniffing or mouthing the hand with the treat.

- If the dog paws at your fist, immediately reward them with positive words such as "Yes!" and give them the treat.
- Continue putting a treat into your hand and waiting until they place their paw onto your fist, rewarding the dog every time they do so. This could take some time, so be patient and don't give the dog the treat if they aren't placing their paw on your hand.
- Continue this until the dog lifts their paw everytime you place your fist in front of them.

Step 3: Introducing Commands

Once your dog is able to reliably put their paw on your fist, you can start using a command.

- Wait until the dog paws at your fist again and say the command while giving it the treat.
- Commands can be any word, but should be short and not changed once used with the dog, as this could confuse it. Generally, the commands “Paw” or “Shake” are used for this trick, but any one word command will do.
- After saying the command once or twice while giving the treat, start saying it before the dog places its paw in your hand. This step helps the dog understand that the verbal command relates to the trick.

Step 4: Properly Rewarding

- Reward your dog with a treat only when it completes the command.
- If your dog is not following the command, don't give up and give them the treat. This will teach your dog that not doing the command and ignoring it will give them the reward. Keep trying until it follows the command.
- If your dog is not following the command after 15 minutes, put the treats away and try again later. It is important to not frustrate yourself or the dog.

Step 5: Polishing the Trick

Once your dog has been reacting and successfully completing the command, it's time to take away treats and add the final step, the shake.

- To ease your dog into this, start only giving treats every other time it performs the command.
- Start substituting treats with other forms of rewards, such as verbal praise or a walk.
- Once your dog is used to the command without treats, start gently moving your hand up and down when the trick is being done.



Figure: Example of a dog completing the trick

Congratulations!

If you followed the steps in this manual, then you and your dog should have successfully learned how to shake your hand. Every dog is unique, so patience and learning about your

dog's unique traits are good things to have when teaching them new tricks. Below are some extra tips and information if your dog is struggling with learning the shake command.

Additional Tips

Commons Issues	Potential Resolutions
The dog won't lift its paw/is having trouble lifting it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure the dog can reach your fist• Try having the dog sit before saying the command, some dogs have trouble lifting their paws while standing
The dog gets too excited/hyper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some dogs can get hyper when high reward items such as treats are used, try using lower reward items like play time or a piece of their regular food
The dog isn't interested in learning the trick	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Just like humans, dogs can get annoyed, bored, or tired. Try teaching them later when they're more visibly active• Try using higher reward items that your dog doesn't get often, such as a cube of chicken or a small amount of dog safe (xylitol-free) peanut butter

Conclusion

Teaching your dog to shake is a great way to bond with your pet and provide them with mental stimulation. Remember to be patient and use positive reinforcement techniques to get the best possible chance of your dog learning the trick. With practice and consistency, your dog will be shaking hands in no time.