



Look at Me!

Gaining your puppy's attention is key to training success. If the puppy is interested in you, he will pay attention to you and be able to learn. Puppies can be excited by things they like, such as food, toys, (especially wriggly ones that move) and excited owners who move fast and have exciting voices.

Just as important to your puppy as all these things is social approval – he will love it if he pleases you so don't be afraid to laugh and smile at him and reward his successes – he will learn quicker if he thinks you are having fun too!

The Look at Me! game and the Tail Wagging game are designed to help build this bond of mutual pleasure and excitement.

Tail Wagging Game

The aim of this game is to see how fast your pup can wag his tail! That's it! Try everything you can – really go for it and make him wag as hard as he can!

Some ideas:

- Get really giddy with a toy and make it wiggle all over the floor
- Speak to him in a really squeaky silly voice
- Move your hands on the floor so he tries to catch them
- Make small sudden movements – not to scare him but to get him excited

Stop the game when it's at its peak and give the dog a tasty treat and a cuddle. Don't let him get too wound up or too tired!

Try different things on different days – he will love it and it will definitely cheer up your day!

Look at Me!

This game is useful in so many ways – the aim is to get and hold your dog's attention by maintaining eye contact. Use it to gain focus before you give a cue to do something else or as part of a game of fetch to build the tension, or to distract him from barking or doing something else he shouldn't be!

Don't forget to proceed slowly though – maintaining eye contact with any dog can be a threatening expression in dog-speak, so if your dog is shy or fearful, or prone to snappiness, GO SLOWLY.

Step 1 – Hold a treat held under your chin to attract the puppy's eyes to your face. Wait until you get fleeting eye contact, praise ('good!') and reward with the treat.

Step 2 - Same again, but when you get eye contact, count to two before rewarding, then three, then four and so on. If the dog looks away you are going too fast too quickly so reduce the time and go slower.

Step 3 – add in a cue word such as 'look at me!' or "watch!" – say the word as the dog looks at you at first so he makes the association – do this at least 20 times over a few sessions. ONLY THEN practice giving the cue to ask him to look at you

Step 4 – test the power of the cue by holding the food to one side of you or the other – he must look at you and not the food! If he isn't – go back a stage. Eventually, an arm raised to one side should be a cue for him to look at you.

Step 5 – practice using this cue in all sorts of different situations, starting with easy, low distraction environments, right up to when you are at the park when he's interested in going off after another dog.

Always set him up to succeed – if you try it in a situation which is too hard, it won't work and the cue immediately loses its power. Go back a stage and build up again.