

ELEMENT DOG TRAINING

Troubleshooting Training Issues

- There are a variety of places to get stuck during training and each dog will provide its own unique challenges.
- It could be that you are stuck getting started with a behavior, struggling to increase the difficulty of a behavior, or having difficulties maintaining your dog's attention.
- Having trouble getting started with a behavior:
 - Is your dog motivated?
 - Transition to a training area with less distractions
 - Try to find a higher value item to get your dog's focus
 - Provide your dog some physical exercise to help it reach a calmer state of mind before training
 - Is your communication clear and consistent?
 - Assess your body position. Can the dog clearly see what you are communicating? Ideally, you'll be positioned in front of your dog and utilizing a consistent movement.
 - Assess your delivery method. Are you consistently using 1 word/phrase or signal for each behavior?
 - Cues should ideally be given once (or twice) and in the following order: Verbal, Hand Signal, Lure.
- Having trouble increasing the difficulty:
 - Determine if the behavior needs to be broken down into smaller steps.
 - For some dogs rolling over isn't a natural or comfortable movement so we can't jump straight to training the full behavior. We first train down, then train them to lie on their side, then to shift towards their back, then to lie on their back, then to roll over, and finally back into a down or seated position.
 - Transitioning to a 10 second stay if your dog was successful at 5 seconds but failed at 15 seconds
 - Determine if too many variables have changed - Distractions, Duration, Distance
 - Ideally, we only change one of these variables at a time when we are teaching a new behavior
 - It's easy to increase the difficulty to fast by changing multiple variables
- Having trouble maintaining your dog's attention:
 - Take stock of your environment and find ways to limit distractions or increase the value of the reward.
 - Common distractions can include toys, people, dogs, ambient noises (TV, birds, appliances) or smells
 - Has the training session gone to long?
 - Dog's learn best by repeating short training sessions throughout the day
 - Does the dog's energy level match the behavior?
 - Active exercises should be done first with static exercises performed later in the session.