



POKE

Level 2

Goal: To the word “Poke” the dog will give vigorous nose bumps to your leg, your shoulder or arm, depending on which position you are in. The nose bumps should be strong enough to get your attention and sustained until you acknowledge the dog. This behavior will be the alert to specific smells (diabetes, seizures, anxiety, etc.). It will also be used when the dog is sent to “Find Help”.

Material: clicker, treats, spatula or small ruler with tap at the end.

TRAINING PLAN		
1.	Establishing “Touch”	This behavior should have been previously known by the dog. To refresh it, present your hand as well as other familiar objects for the dog to “Touch”. To the word “Touch”, the dog should readily “Touch” any object that you present. Repeat 3-4 times.
2.	Shaping/ Targeting	Present a spatula or ruler with tape on its end in front of the dog (or similar object). Hold it in such a way, that the dog will be most likely to touch the area with the tape. At this point, the dog should “Touch” the spatula without hesitation. If not, shape the dog and click and treat for simply looking at the spatula. Gradually increase your criteria until the dog touches the spatula.
3.	Moving the paddle	Once the dog readily touches the spatula presented in front of them, start moving the spatula to the side, then to the other, encouraging the dog to take a few steps to make contact. As the dog gains confidence with this, gradually bring the spatula against your leg. Some dogs are uncomfortable with touching a person this way, so go back and forth between the spatula on your leg and away from you. After a few repetitions, present the spatula on your leg only. Note: For best results, take the spatula away between trials, don’t leave it on your leg or in front of the dog, but take it away after you click, then present it again.
4.	From paddle to leg	Place a piece of tape on your leg. Use the same tape on the spatula and on your leg. Place the spatula on your leg, right over the tape. Just as in the previous step, click and treat the dog when touching the spatula. After a few repetitions, remove the spatula. The dog should touch the tape on your leg. Click and treat for any contact of the nose to your leg (even if it’s not on the tape). Note: if the dog hesitates in touching the tape, make sure to keep your position the same as with the spatula. You can also place your hand right above the piece of tape, just as if you were holding the handle of the spatula.
5.	Building strength	Until now the dog was simply touching your leg. Click and treat selectively for the strongest nose bumps. As the dog no longer gets rewarded for every “Touch”, their frustration will lead them to insist and gradually press into your leg with more strength. Gradually increase your criteria until the dog gives vigorous nose bumps that you will feel even if your attention is on something else.



6.	Adding the cue	Say the word “Poke” as the dog bumps your leg with his/her nose. Repeat 50-100 times.
7.	Removing the tape	Gradually reduce the size of the tape until you can remove it completely. If the dog already seems to ignore the tape and “Pokes” at different places on your leg, you can simply tear it off.
8.	Building duration	The “Poke” needs to be sustained until you acknowledge the dog. If this behavior will be used as the alert for diabetes or seizures, the dog must insist long enough to get a person’s attention and maybe even wake the person up. Just as with any other behavior, withhold the Click and gradually wait for more and more “Pokes”. Keep the reinforcement random and click and treat after 1 “Poke”, 4 “Pokes”, 3 “Pokes”, 1 “Poke”, etc, until the dog will “Poke” for at least 6 seconds.
9.	Changing your position	Repeat the steps above while varying your position. Sit on a chair or on the floor. Lie down on the floor, on a couch. Cover yourself up with a blanket, etc. To prepare the dog for poking in the car while behind the driver, teach the dog to “Poke” on the back of your shoulder. Anytime you change your position, be prepared to go back to the spatula and/or tape.
10.	Building distractions	Gradually increase the level of distractions. Slowly build up the level of distractions until you can include another person or dog in the training room.
11.	Generalization	Repeat the steps in different areas. Make it easy at first and make sure the level of distractions is very low. You may do this in different rooms then move it outside, at the mall, in the stores, etc.
12.	Fluency	Gradually build up the level of difficulty until you can successfully get your dog to “Poke” in different places and with different levels of distractions.

CONGRATULATIONS! If you’ve come this far, you have taught the dog a solid response to the word “Poke”. It’s now time to pair it with a specific scent.