



# TOUCH

## Level 1

**Goal:** This behavior is the foundation of many other behaviors such as pushing a button, a drawer, poking to alert you, etc. It also allows to move the dog into different positions without physical manipulation. To the word “Touch”, the dog will put his/her nose on anything presented in front of him/her, the palm of your hand, a button, a scent sample, etc.

**Material:** Push button (Easy button or game) clicker and treats, paddle

TRAINING PLAN		
1.	<b>Getting started: Capturing/ Shaping</b>	Hold your clicker in one hand. Hold your other hand open flat just an inch or two away from your dog’s nose (palm facing your dog). The dog is likely to naturally want to investigate your hand. As soon as the dog touches your hand click and treat. Take your hand away after each click, so you can present it again after rewarding the dog. Let the dog go towards the hand and refrain from moving your hand towards the dog’s nose. Some dogs can be intimidated by a hand moving towards their face and might start avoiding it. Click and treat whenever the dog’s nose makes contact with your hand. Repeat this process until the dog starts showing deliberate attempts to touch your hand.
2.	<b>Increasing criteria</b>	As the dog understands how to get you to click and touches your hand with their nose as soon as you present it, start moving it further from the dog. Present it below their head; present it to the left; to the right; slightly above the dog’s head. The dog now should make more effort and turn, lower or raise their head to make contact. Bring your hand slightly out of reach, encouraging the dog to take a step forward to make contact. Make sure you repeat this with both hands.
3.	<b>Adding the cue</b>	Once the dog automatically touches your hand with their nose, say the word “touch” as they initiates the movement. You’ll have to repeat this about 50-100 times for the dog to make the connection between the cue (the word) and the behavior (touching your hand).
4.	<b>Changing your position</b>	Repeat steps 1-3 while changing your position. Sit on a chair, on the floor, stand on one side of the dog, then on the other, stand on a chair, lie on the floor, on the couch, etc.
5.	<b>Building distance</b>	Gradually move your hand further away from the dog, encouraging the dog to take a step or more to make contact.
6.	<b>Variable rate of reinforcement</b>	Start asking for more than one touch before you click and treat. Make sure to keep it random as it’s easy to fall in a pattern. Occasionally click and treat for 1 touch, then 3, then 2, then 4, then 1, etc.
7.	<b>Presenting objects</b>	Repeat steps 1-6 while presenting different objects for the dog to touch like a lid, a book, etc.
8.	<b>Building pressure</b>	Present a push button in front of the dog. If the button makes a sound, you might need to press it yourself a few times and give the dog a treat to desensitize them to the sound. Once the dog is fully comfortable with the sound, hold the button in your hand and place it 2-3 inches in front of the dog. As soon as the dog



		touches it, click/Treat. If the dog touches it without making a sound, Click/Treat anyway. Gradually build up your criteria and ask the dog to touch the button 1-3 times for every Click/Treat. When the dog gains confidence, they should occasionally press hard enough to trigger a sound. Click/Treat. Gradually reward only for the touches that trigger the button.
9.	<b>Touching a target</b>	Place a paddle (with the tip wrapped in tape) in front of your dog. Ask your dog to “Touch”. Click/Treat when the dog’s nose makes contact with the paddle. Gradually increase your criteria until the dog readily moves towards the paddle and touches it.
10.	<b>Building distractions</b>	Repeat this process while gradually adding distractions. Distractions can be a sound at a distance, a person sitting nearby, all the way to dogs running close by. Gradually build up the levels of distractions so the dog can succeed at every step of the way.
11.	<b>Generalization</b>	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 your kitchen, then your living room, your bedroom and your backyard. You’ll want to gradually build up the level of difficulty until you can successfully get your dog to respond to the cue “touch” in all sorts of places with lots going on.
12.	<b>Fluency</b>	Your dog should now respond to the cue “touch” anytime you need. You’ll be able to use it to move your dog around, to get his focus back on you when distracted or confused and to develop other behaviors such as retrieving objects, alerting behaviors, scent detection tasks, closing doors and drawers, going under a table or under your legs, pressing buttons, etc.

CONGRATULATIONS! If you’ve come this far, you have taught the dog to reliably respond to the cue “Touch” in all situations no matter what is going on.