



## Hand-targeting

Hand-targeting or “Touch!” is one of the most useful behaviors you can teach your dog. You can use it anytime that you need to guide your dog through space – onto the scale at the vet’s office, through a door, off the couch, in from the back yard, etc. It is also a great tool for shy or nervous dogs, as it helps them associate hands coming toward them with good things. It serves a great redirect for reactive and easily-distracted dogs as well. And if you’re so inclined, it’s the basis for a whole slew of tricks.

Follow the steps below to teach this fun behavior to your dog. You can also see a video demo here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-gEtcDSkpY>

1. Load one hand up with treats and a clicker and put it behind your back.
2. Present your empty hand to your dog, holding it about 2 or 3 inches from his nose. Don’t say a word just yet! When he touches it with his nose, click and treat. Repeat this until he targets your hand ten times in a row, clicking and treating each time he does.
3. If he doesn’t target your hand, try making it more enticing by moving your fingers or getting the smell of some yummy food on your hand.
4. As a last resort, you can hide a small piece of food under your thumb to prompt the dog to target your hand. If you go this route, be sure to fade the food lure quickly. After a few repetitions, present an empty hand.
5. Resist the urge to move your hand into your dog’s nose! He should move towards your stationary hand, not the other way around!
6. If he is doing well, you can now add the verbal cue. Before you present your hand, say “Touch!”
7. To make it more challenging, see if your dog will target a moving hand. Say “Touch!”, present your hand, then take a few steps back. Move him through space as he follows your hand to target it.



8. Next, take it to a low-distraction environment outside. Gradually increase the amount of distractions until your dog is reliably targeting regardless of the distractions.