



Watch

1. Put a treat between your thumb and pointer finger. Bring the treat from your dog's nose up to your eyes and say, "Good!" (or click) the instant his eyes meet yours. Then reward him with the treat. Marking the exact second that he looks up at you is important for a "watch" because it is a fleeting behavior at first. We want to let our dogs know the exact second that earned them a reward. Practice this until he gets 5-10 successful reps in a row. Make sure to use a release cue such as "okay" or "that's all." This will signal when he is no longer required to watch, and will come in handy for longer durations.
2. Load your non-signal hand with treats. Signal your dog to make eye contact with you by bringing your empty hand (same movement as before, but there is no treat in your hand) from your dog's nose up to your eyes and say, "Good!" the instant his eyes meet yours. Then reward him with the treat. Practice this until he gets 5-10 successful reps in a row. We want a really reliable behavior BEFORE we name it so that we don't "waste" the word by repeating it too many times without rewarding.
3. Time to name the behavior. Say "watch", wait a beat, use your empty hand signal, and then reward. Reward after 1 second to start, and gradually work up to 3, then 5, then 10 seconds. Waiting between the verbal and hand signal is important for 2 reasons. 1.) If you pair them together, then that will become the signal for "watch" for your dog (verbal + hand signal, never each on its own). 2.) By waiting for a second between verbal and hand signal, you can gauge when your dog is learning the verbal cue. If you say "watch, and he looks before you deliver the hand signal, he is starting to catch on. And remember, repetition builds behavior.
4. Load your non-signal hand with treats, and hold it out to your side, perpendicular to your body. Repeat step 3. He will likely stare at your food hand! Wait for his eyes to meet yours, and then reward him with a treat. Increase the duration that he's required to hold the eye contact as he is successful.
5. Load both hands with treats, and hold them out to your side, perpendicular to your body. Ask your dog to "Watch!" He will likely stare at your food hand (or even look back and forth between hands)! Wait for his eyes to meet yours, and then reward him with a treat. You can prompt him to look at you with kissy sounds if needed. Increase the duration that he's required to hold the eye contact as he is successful. Switch randomly between your left and right hand for rewards.
6. Practice the steps above in several different environments to help your dog learn to generalize. Dogs are fantastic discriminators, but need repetition in several different places to generalize a behavior. This is normal! When your dog will look to you on cue for 10 seconds in several different environments, move on to the next steps.



7. We are going to work on distraction and duration separately and then combine them together at the end. Duration is our rate-killer (less rewards over a certain amount of time), so we are going to proof distractions first and add duration at the end. Enlist friends and family to help you practice “watch” with distractions. Have them toss toys, make silly sounds and movements, walk other dogs by, etc. The “watches” should be short (rewards every 3-10 seconds). This is the step where you can begin to practice looking away. Start with short amounts of time at this step. Keep practicing until no matter what, your dog will not look away at a distraction. Practices in different environments with different distractions.
8. Now time for duration. This should be done outside of heavy distractions. Start with rewarding every 20 seconds for a watch, then an average of 30 seconds, 60 seconds, 90 seconds, etc. When moving to longer time frames (30 seconds +), you want to keep the timeframes variable. That means rewarding on average of 30 seconds, and not every 30 seconds. This is because dogs are temporal learners, and we want them to learn that they are being rewarding for holding a “watch” and not just getting a treat every x seconds. Sometimes a reward comes at 5 seconds, sometimes at 17, sometimes at 30, etc. Keep is random for a solid watch.
9. Now it’s time to add distraction and duration together! Practice holding longer watches around greater distractions. Remember to practice looking away for longer periods of time, and don’t forget your release cue! This will keep your dog from “guessing” that the “watch” is over.