

Collar Cues

Goal Behavior The puppy responds to light pressure on the leash/collar to cue the puppy to step forward, backward, sideways and to pivot.

Purpose: Collar cues can be used to teach down, sit, stand and heel. It lays the groundwork to teach loose leash walking and teaches the puppy to be responsive to the collar

Prerequisite: Ground tethering and ground tethering with distractions. Collar cues should be taught before teaching the puppy to sit.

Objectives: The handler stands still and the puppy yields to light pressure on the collar. Start with getting the puppy to move forward and backward. After this is successful, then move onto sideways and pivoting (into the heel position)

Training Session Setups: Low distraction environment

Equipment needs: Flat collar, leash, suitable food rewards (if the puppy is overly distracted by the food rewards then keep them in a bowl on a countertop close by)

Procedure: Fixed pressure is applied gradually and gently in a specific direction. The moment you feel the puppy yield (his/her feet may or may not move but less resistance on the collar is a starting point) mark and reward (reward is given next to your leg, all pressure on the collar is released)

When first starting this, the position of the puppy doesn't matter (he/she can be in front, off to the side, ect). After the puppy is consistently moving forward and backward then focus on getting the puppy on your left side.

Always reward the puppy in the heel position

When introducing a new direction, lower your criteria and mark/reward for small movements

After the puppy understands collar yielding you can start moving your feet and having the puppy move with you as he yields to the collar pressure towards heel position. Take small steps at first to make it simple for the puppy.

Once in the advanced stage you can start to play the "Around the Clock" game. Imagine a clock face with your feet facing 12 o'clock and the puppy by your side. You are going to turn counter-clockwise so that your feet are now facing 10 o'clock. Collar cue the puppy into heel position, mark and reward. While the puppy is eating the food reward, turn in place again so that you are facing 8 o'clock; cue the puppy into heel position with the leash, mark and reward. While the puppy is enjoying his reward, pivot to face 6 o'clock then gently cue him into heel position

again. You don't necessarily have to go the whole way around the clock; with a young puppy only do a few pivots before breaking off and giving your puppy verbal praise and petting.

Key Handling Points

Your hand may need to hold the leash very close to the collar to control the direction of the cue.

The pressure is applied backwards and inwards at the same time, the way we want the dog's rear end to go.