



We Interrupt this Program

Sometimes your dog will be committed to doing something that you'd rather s/he not do. Training a "Positive Interrupt" creates a great tool for changing the behavior. It can also be a good foundation for a stronger recall. This protocol owes much to Leslie McDevitt's "Whiplash Turn" as described in her terrific book, Control Unleashed.

Play the game initially for only a few minutes at a time, so that your dog will continue to be really excited about it.

Working with one person:

1. Prepare by having low-value treats to toss, and higher-value treats for rewards.
2. In a low-distraction environment, toss a low-value treat a short distance to move your dog away from you. Just as s/he is finishing the treat, say your interrupt word (mine is "Here!") in a happy voice, and as s/he begins to turn her head to you, click and treat (C/T) from your hand with the higher-value treat.
3. As s/he finishes up her reward, toss another low-value treat to move her away, say your interrupt cue, and C/T from your hand with the higher-value treat as before.
4. Repeat, increasing the distance that you toss the low-value treat very gradually as long as s/he is excited by the game.
5. Increase the difficulty of the environment gradually, such as moving to an outside patio or deck, decreasing the distance of the tossed treat when you start training in the new location. Build up distance again gradually.
6. As your dog turns more quickly and races toward you, you can begin to gradually adjust the timing of your click for when s/he is in rapid motion, and eventually for when s/he comes to a stunning stop at your feet.

You can train this as a game with two or more people:

1. Each person has the same kind of treats, preferably something pretty yummy!
2. Person #1 engages the dog while Person #2 stands a few steps away.
3. Person #2 says the interrupt cue (such as "Here!") in a happy voice, clicking and treating the *moment* the dog begins to turn toward him/her.
4. As the dog is finishing up the treat, Person #1 says the interrupt cue, clicking and treating the *moment* the dog begins to turn toward him/her.
5. Repeat, gradually increasing distance, as long as your dog is really excited by the game.