

Teaching “Watch”

1. You may begin this exercise with your dog standing, sitting, or lying down in front of you. You may be standing or sitting.
2. Start with food in both hands. One hand (your dominant hand) should have one piece of food in it. The other hand should have multiple pieces. Your dominant hand should be at your side and your other hand behind your back. Say “Watch” as you bring the hand with the food up to your eyes. Your dog will most likely follow the food and look up at you. When it does, praise and hand a treat from your nondominant hand.
3. Repeat this exercise many times over several sessions. When your dog follows your hand each time, you are ready for the next step.
4. Practice the same way, except take the food out of your luring hand (the one which is moving). Continue to lure with your empty hand and reward from your other hand. In other words, you are practicing in the same way that you did in step 2, except your luring hand is empty. When this happens, praise and give the food reward. Some dogs will begin to look back and forth from the hand with the food to your face. Be silent and still. When your dog commits to looking at your face, praise enthusiastically and give the food reward. When your dog is successful at this step, you are ready for the next step.
5. Begin by luring your dog with your empty hand as you have been for 4 or 5 times, while saying “Watch.” On the sixth try, say “Watch” without moving your hand. If your dog looks at you, praise, reward, and end your session. If your dog doesn’t look at you, follow the instructions for dealing with this type of behavior in step 3.
6. Lure your dog once or twice and then say “Watch” without moving your hand. When your dog looks at you, praise and reward. Continue with the training session by saying “Watch” without moving your hands.
7. Begin by asking your dog to “Watch” without any hand movement. Remember to reward all successful attempts.
8. Continue as described above, slowly increasing the amount of time your dog has to look at you before receiving the reward during each training session until your dog can maintain eye contact with you for 10 seconds.
9. Say your dog’s name and “Watch” when your dog is turned away from you, but still within 50–100 cm (2 or 3 feet). When your dog looks at you, praise enthusiastically and reward generously. If your dog doesn’t look at you, get closer and use the food lure to get the dog to look at you. Repeat this step until you don’t have to lure the dog any more.
10. Begin to practice in different places in your home, outside, and in new places.