

Teaching Your Dog to Say Please

What does it mean to say please? Saying please is when your dog offers a calm behavior like eye contact or a sit as a way of asking for something they want, like food or attention. The behavior offered is referred to as a *default behavior* because your dog defaults to it in a variety of situations.

Why teach your dog to say please? Teaching your dog a default behavior teaches them that offering behaviors we like gets them what they want. It also prevents your dogs from developing nuisance behaviors, like jumping, pawing, or vocalizing.



When should you expect your dog to use a say-please behavior in everyday life? Real life examples of “Say Please” behaviors include: your dog giving you eye contact in anticipation of their food bowl or offering a sit while their leash is clipped.

How to Teach Eye Contact to Say Please

Play the [Attention Game](#) with your dog to teach them that offering eye contact is rewarding!

Getting Started: Have your treat pouch filled with yummy treats and an established marker word such as “Yes” or your [clicker](#) at the ready!

Step 1. Mark your dog for looking in your general direction by saying your marker word or by clicking the clicker. Follow up your marker with a yummy treat.

Step 2. Next, mark and treat your dog for looking up at your body.

Step 3. Your dog will start to offer eye contact. Mark, then treat for this behavior.

Step 4. Pause to see if your dog will rock back into a sit position. Mark, then treat for this.

Step 5. In everyday situations, use life rewards like opening doors, giving them their food bowl, or playing with their favorite toy when they offer their say-please behavior.

Training Tips

Tip 1. Do not give your dog any cues during this exercise. The idea is to get them offering you eye contact or sitting with eye contact as a way of pushing the treat button.

Tip 2. Toss a treat behind your dog to reset them if they keep staring at you.

Tip 3. Keep your hands behind your back or calmly at your sides until your dog looks at you.

Tip 4. Remember that consistency is everything in dog training. Your dog will learn faster if everyone in the household participates in teaching your dog to Say Please.

For more resources, check out <https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/>