

GREETINGS: SOCIAL CONTROL

OVERVIEW

You have already worked on Name Response with the pup around a variety of distractions, and on Look at That. Now you'll combine the two to use them in a greeting situation, to help the dog gain social control during greetings. We want a careful balance between the pup taking cues from an approaching person and checking in with their handler. The helper should not pet the pup if it is not behaving appropriately; in this regard, the pup will take cues from the helper. The helper comes closer when the pup is appropriate, and then moves away/ignores the pup if it begins jumping/misbehaving. However, we want the pup to frequently check in with its handler, almost in a "is this okay? Is this what is supposed to happen?" Inevitably, someone will approach you and the pup and NOT pet the puppy. This is why we want the pup focusing on you, and taking less cues from the approaching person.

EXERCISE

GOAL: The dog remains calm and appropriate when someone approaches to pet them.

For this exercise, you will need your leash and a trustworthy helper. To begin, anchor your leash (see Leash Handling article).

1. You are the post. Hold your leash at one length and stand in one spot, as if the leash was tied to a fence post.
2. Helper approaches pup:
 - A. If pup moves, helper backs off
 - B. As helper is approaching, say "yes" and reward pup for noticing the person
 - a. You can use their name response to break their attention from the helper, if the dog is not breaking their focus on them.
 - b. If the dog looks at the person, then looks at you, say "yes" and reward.
 - C. If pup remains calm, helper can approach and pet
 - a. If/when pup gets excited, helper backs off

Your helper is going to shape the behavior that you want by simply approaching the pup when it is acting more and more appropriately. The behavior begins in the following sequence, increasing expectations as you practice this exercise.

1. Four feet on the floor, quiet
2. Standing, quiet, not pulling
3. Standing, quiet, not pulling, closer to handler than time before
4. Standing or sitting by handler's side throughout the approach and interaction.

Move through this sequence at your own pace as your practice. When you begin, the pup may offer a variety of behaviors (excitement, jumping, barking, etc.). Once you begin to observe that the pup is quiet and standing about 80% of the time, move on to number 2. Only move forward when they are not pulling and continue to move forward in the listed order.

TROUBLESHOOTING

1. Some pups have a stronger need for exposure than socialization. If the handler must physically restrain the pup to be pet, socialization will only encourage the excited behavior. This pup needs controlled exposure with encouragement of self-control.
2. If you ask the dog to sit and it does not comply, you will need more repetitions or practice in exciting and distracting environments. If the dog does not know a command, do not use it. For this situation, any stationary behavior is sufficient. Helper moves forward only if the dog chooses to sit, stand, or down without exposing their belly.
3. Complete many repetitions with multiple trusted helpers to help the pup generalize the greeting ritual.
4. If pup does not settle down when helper stops their approach, have the helper take one step backward. Once the pup calms down, begin the approach. Some dogs will calm down by halting the movement, while others need more space.
5. Remind your helper to stop petting while the pup is still doing well. Don't wait to end the exercise until they become overexcited or make a mistake. End on a high note with success for both you and the pup. If you are having difficulty finding success, go back to the last level you had success and rebuild from there.