

# TREAT-HUNT - indoors

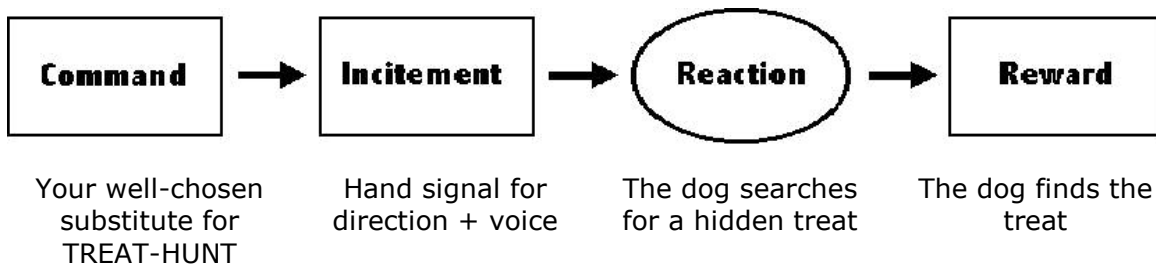
## Introduction

Your dog is a natural hunter, controlled by its instincts. Fortunately the instincts are many, and each one of them accounts for only a very small fraction of what will constitute effective hunting behavior for a carnivore.

The really good news is that these instincts work independently of each other, so you do not need to satisfy them all at the same time - and you do not need to do it in any predetermined sequence either.

This indoor hunting exercise takes no live prey, only a piece of food you would have added to the dog's dinner anyway. It takes no special hunting grounds, as you can do it in your kitchen or living room. It takes no kill, as the "prey" is already dead when found.

## The Four Boxes



## Special features

There are no dogs that cannot learn this.

And there are no dogs that should not learn to do this.

Once taught, this exercise takes no more than a few seconds to prepare - and it can provide 20-60 minutes intensive brainwork for your dog, even on a rainy day...

**Overview:**

<b>Description:</b>	<b>The dog will search a room for treats you have hidden there.</b>			
<b>Ratings:</b>	<b>Dog:</b> Moderately challenging to learn.	<b>Owner:</b> Easy, but it takes some careful preparation.	<b>Development:</b> Very large potential when combined with other exercises.	<b>Limitations:</b> None - all dogs can learn this.
<b>Training method:</b>	<b>Command:</b> <i>Your choice:</i>	<b>Incitement:</b> Your hand signals and vocal encouragement.	<b>Reaction:</b> The dog uses its nose to locate the treat, performing a random search.	<b>Reward:</b> The found treat. You should add some serious praise.
<b>Obstacles and Challenges:</b>	<p>When the dog has learned to find simple treats, you can start to hide those treats by covering them with objects. You can simply combine this exercise with DESTROY, hiding the treat underneath a cup, for instance.</p> <p>If the dog has learned to unwrap a treat you put inside a box, you can substitute the treat in this exercise with a treat in a box and hide the box for the dog to find.</p> <p>Next, if the dog has learned to pull a string you can let it find the string as an access key to its treat - and you can have the treat inside a box.</p>			
<b>Equipment:</b>	None for start. Later, you might want to use cardboard boxes, obstacles, household articles etc. to increase the challenge for the dog.			
<b>Location and Facilities:</b>	Your home.			
<b>Special Features:</b>	<p>This is a great indoor nosework exercise I think all dog owners should do with their dogs!</p> <p>One caution: do not just throw treats around you don't remember where went. If the dog does not find them all, such strewn treats will just lie there till someone cleans them up. This could be the dog, several days later - but it could also be another critter you do not want as a guest, so please don't leave such open invitations...</p>			

**Part 3D: Simple Nosework Exercises**  
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## **Step-by-step procedure**

### **1. Connect the reward with the performance**

For start, there will always be a treat right where you point. You need to build trust in your directions. To be specific: For start, you do *not* attempt to teach the dog to *search*. For start, you teach the dog to **find** *what you want it to find*. Please make a careful note of that difference.

You cannot teach the dog to look for something it does not know what is - and the dog will not understand your English word for that. You have to *show* it.

### **2. Identify your incitement**

The movement of your hand right in front of the dog's nose so it can see it is a natural key stimulus for one of the dog's hunting instincts. All dogs have it. You can make it stronger by having some smell of treat on your fingers and let the dog smell your hand first.

If your dog does not respond to this it will always be because of one of the following reasons you then have to deal with:

- ◆ The dog was distracted by something else and did not pay attention to you;
- ◆ The dog is so full that it has no interest at all in any food;
- ◆ The dog is sick and it needs to see a veterinarian;
- ◆ The dog's hunting instinct has been bred out of the genes, and this dog and its possible future puppies will never chase anything - a responsible owner, you should exclude it from any possible breeding, as far as I am concerned....

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The movement of your arm will often be enough to get the dog moving - it want to check what your arm threw, and you move your arm as if you were throwing your hand toward the object you want the do to move towards.. Some encouraging voice will support the dog's understanding that you are in a happy mood and do not want to restrict the dog from moving.

One serious warning here: if you try to use such direction giving hand signals just for your own purposes, with nothing in it for the dog, you will quickly teach the dog that you are not worth paying any attention to... You should *only* use this hand signal for direction what you seriously are helping the dog find what you know it wants to find or would like to find. Don't cheat on this!

### **3. Choose your command**

You can use a simple verbal command that just means "You are allowed to search for your treat here" or you can combine a word and a hand signal for direction for the dog to start.

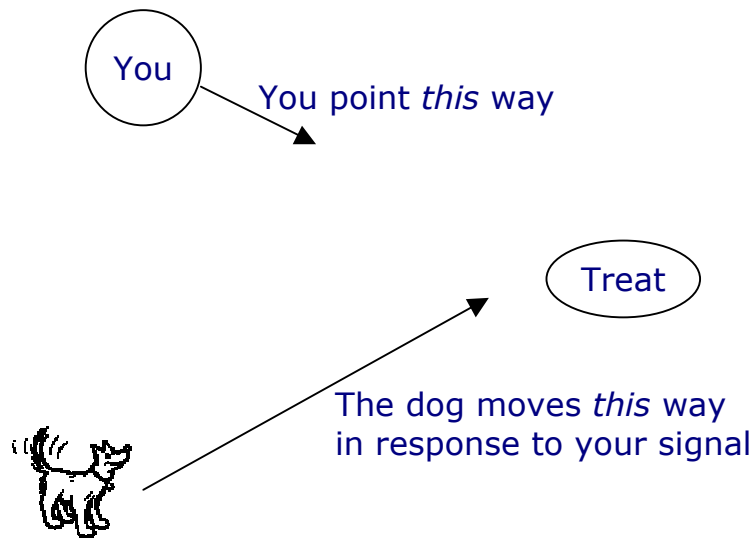
The value of the hand signal is (in principle) insignificant for this particular exercise, if you are exclusively concerned about creating brainwork for the dog in this particular exercise. However, you can later use it as an incitement to get the dog to continue a search it is about to give up without having found all treats - which certainly can be useful. The main reason for me suggesting that you do use a hand signal is that this can become a major tool for you in all kinds of other situations where you want to control the direction the dog moves in. Instigating a special swing of your hand to become a signal of direction for the dog is a very practical control tool you should not ignore. Besides, it gives you a lot of extra leadership credibility that you show the dog with your hand signal that you actually know where the treat is....

Your hand signal should be a body-arm-hand-finger signal, as I strongly suggest you use everything from your toes to your fingertips to assist you in transferring a perception of direction to the dog. Pointing with a single finger is not going to do it for a dog - it won't notice. Another dog would use its entire body to show a direction, such as the famous English Pointer shows the hunter where the bird is. The dog will notice *movement* more than a stationary picture, so make a complete ballet with a great swing of your arm, ending with a stand that uses your arm, hand and fingers as a substitute for the Pointer's neck, head and nose.

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When you point, you should always point directly towards the objective, as seen from *your* position. Dogs understand this better than they understand any attempt to show which specific direction they are supposed to move their body - dogs will naturally figure that out when they understand where the objective is.

Here is an illustration of the principle for hand signal direction:



The main purpose of the command is to specify for the dog what it is supposed to search for. You have to *tell* it - otherwise you have no control over what is on its mind.

Dogs can easily handle combined signals. They use them all the time in communication with you and other dogs. So combining a verbal command that specifies the search object with a hand signal that indicates starting a search in the specified direction makes a whole bunch of sense to a dog that has learned the meaning of the verbal command in advance.

Having said this, I should also mention that it does not make very much sense to a dog to get two consecutive signals. For the dog's mind to combine the meaning of two signals into a higher meaning, those signals must be given at the exact same time. If you give them in sequence, the last one will simply replace the first one.

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So, if you first give a verbal command word like "Search" that is supposed to mean "start a search" and then another verbal command word like "Treat" that means "you are looking for a treat", this is an attempt to make the dog understand English by combining words in a semantic way. Dogs cannot do that with any reliability. The maximum you can achieve here is that the dog will understand the combination of the two command words correctly, which you could have achieved faster and more reliably with a single command word...

Besides, using two commands has no value to you at all when you want to change the search object. For that, you are back to square one with your training. Actually, you are worse off, because the dog will "jump the gun" and go for the first command word it can understand. This means that your "Treat" command will be ignored, and your "Search" command will be interpreted by the dog as "Start a search for a treat"! So if you want the dog to look for something different, you are seriously confusing the dog and may have some major setback in your training! Good leaders don't do those kinds of things to their loyal pack members...

Here are some possible choices for your inspiration:

WOOF-SHOP, DOG-MICE, YUM-F'-YOU, MUFFA, RECCE, PATROL, NOSE-VAC.

#### **4. Put the exercise together**

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#### **5. Make it more challenging**

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