



# Basic Foundations

## Everyday essentials: part 1

Part 1 is about building the foundations your puppy will use for the rest of their life: understanding the reward marker, learning how to follow your guidance, settling on a mat, and becoming confident with gentle handling. These early skills make everything else easier later on.

### **The mat**

The mat becomes your dog's "place" – something familiar they can settle on in any environment, whether that's a friend's house, a pub or a café. Drop a few pieces of food onto the mat and point them out. As you do this, your puppy is also learning to be relaxed with your hands near their mouth around food. Once they're standing comfortably on the mat, drop one or two tiny pieces while we introduce the reward marker.

### **The reward marker**

The reward marker tells your dog the exact moment they've done something right. It allows precise timing, even if you're still fishing around for treats. While your dog is on the mat, say "yes" and gently throw a treat to the floor about six inches in front of them. This teaches your dog to stay on the mat until the marker releases them.

The golden rule: if you say your marker by accident, your dog has still earned their reward.

### **Capturing behaviours**

Timing is everything. The marker captures the moment your dog offers the behaviour you want, even if it's only a small step towards the final goal.

### **The lure**

A lure helps your dog understand what you're asking, but we fade it quickly so they work for the marker, not the food in your hand. Keep the lure within two inches of your dog's nose and move slowly enough to keep their interest.

- Lure for three steps, mark, treat
- Lure a figure of eight around cones, mark, treat
- Lure behind you, mark, treat

### **Hand touch**

We use this instead of a lure whenever possible.

- Present your hand, your dog touches it, mark and treat
- Move your hand slightly so your dog steps forward to touch, mark and treat
- Use the hand touch to guide a figure of eight, mark and treat

### **Sit and stay sat**

- Lure to sit, mark and drop the treat on the mat
- Hand cue to sit, mark and drop the treat
- Hand cue to sit, then treat 1, treat 2, treat 3, mark and drop the treat (adding duration)

### **Emergency stop to whistle**

Lure to sit, mark and feed to the mouth. Practise this five times on every walk while your dog is on lead.



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### Loose-lead walking

Use the tango exercise to build connection and movement together (see Let's walk together guide). Add the rules gradually, using visual markers such as "door to gate" or "lamp post to lamp post" to measure progress in small blocks.

### Husbandry exercises

Inspect eyes, nose, ears and paws. If your dog is unsure, use "touch, mark, reward", gradually increasing duration and pressure. Build from calm, low-distraction environments to more stimulating ones. Only progress when your dog is relaxed and consistent.

### Practice progression

Work through these stages slowly:

- living room
- living room with someone dusting
- living room with someone plumping cushions
- living room with someone hoovering
- garden with someone tidying
- garden with someone walking around
- garden with someone running or making big movements
- friend visiting your home
- visiting a friend's home
- quiet bench away from footfall
- bench with one friend
- bench with two friends
- bench with friends walking around
- bench with friends moving more quickly or animatedly

Make notes of other places you can practise.

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