

TEACHING A CHIN TARGET

Preparing your dog for cooperative care

Your dog learns to rest their chin voluntarily on your hand, a cloth or a stable support. When taught consistently, lifting their chin gives them a way to pause handling. Each touch and procedure needs gradual practice.



Before you begin

Choose a quiet place with non-slip footing. Prepare small treats your dog enjoys, a familiar marker and a soft folded cloth. Practise for 30 to 60 seconds, then take a break.

How to teach it

1. Present the target

Hold your open hand and cloth at your dog's natural chin height. Keep it still and let them choose to investigate.

2. Mark small steps

Mark and reward investigating the target, then brief chin contact. Feed away from the target to reset.

3. Build duration

When contact is easy, wait a fraction longer before marking. Add time in tiny increments, with easier repetitions between.

4. Adapt the target

Gradually introduce your bare hand if needed. For an object rest, move the cloth onto a stable support in small steps.

5. Add the cue

Once your dog offers the rest readily, say "Chin", then present the target. Allow them to choose whether to participate.

6. Introduce handling

Start with a small hand movement, then a brief touch to an area they are comfortable having touched. Pause if they lift their chin.

A chin lift means pause

If your dog lifts their chin, turns away, freezes, becomes tense or moves off, stop handling. Give them space. Never restrain their head or follow them with the target.

When to progress

Progress when your dog repeatedly offers the behaviour comfortably. Change one small detail at a time. If they hesitate or show unease, pause and make the next step easier.

Before using this at the vets, agree how handling will pause. Some procedures cannot safely stop immediately. Seek veterinary advice for painful handling or changes in tolerance, and professional support for fear or bite risk.
