

Train Your Dog to Track by Scent

Learn simple ways to teach your dog to scent track.

Liz Palika

You will need another person to help find a spot with room to run and places for a person to hide, such as a field with trees. Hold your dog while the other person shows him a treat or toy.

The person should playfully tease the dog to get him excited and then run away from the dog for a short distance. The person should then hide behind bushes or tall grass. Wait a few seconds, letting your dog watch and think, and then let him go as you tell your dog, "Find him!" When your dog finds the person, he or she should give your dog the treat or toy and praise him enthusiastically.

When your dog begins to understand the game, you can make him more difficult. Have the other person run into the wind once and then with the wind so your dog has to use his nose and think through the problem. The person can run a zigzag pattern away from the dog or change hiding places once out of the dog's sight. Increase the difficulty of the challenges gradually so your dog doesn't get discouraged.

When your dog becomes good at finding the other person, turn him away or cover his eyes so he can't watch the person run away. Then your dog really has to use his nose.

Identifying scented objects can be taught much like tracking. Use a piece of hot dog to scent a particular object, such as a glove. Place the object on the floor or ground and send your dog to it. Praise your dog when he sniffs the object. Easy game, huh?

When your dog consistently goes to the object, scent it with a piece of hot dog and place it on the floor with several other different objects. But use tongs when placing the other objects so your scent is not on them. Send your dog, telling him "Find mine!" Don't say anything if he sniffs the wrong objects, but praise him when he finds the right one.

Make training fun for your dog. Remember, you are trying to control a skill your dog has naturally. Use lots of praise, be enthusiastic and vary the training. If your dog has a good time, he will try harder and concentrate more.

- Get More Tips -