



Why Isn't My Dog Listening?

1. They Might Be Too Distracted

- Dogs should be taught new skills in a distraction-free environment, or a low-distraction environment. Starting somewhere like a quiet living room for example is wonderful.
- Once your dog has the behavior down you can then start moving to more distracted environments. But remember every time you change the environment you have to reteach the skill from an easier level.
- The reason for this is that dogs don't generalize well. Meaning, just because they know how to sit in your living room doesn't mean they know how to sit in the park. This is why it's important to teach them skills in many different environments.
- Once they have practiced in a variety of settings we can then increase the level of distractions. For example, we can practice sitting in a park with dogs at a far distance and then practice sitting in a park with dogs within 10 feet.
- These exercises must be done in steps to achieve the best progress. If you go from asking for a sit in your living room to asking for a sit in a crowded dog park, your dog will likely not respond.

2. They Might Not Be Motivated

- When you're asking for a behavior from your dog who may be distracted by their environment you should always offer them something to engage their attention and make it worth their while.
- In the later stages of training your dog should be able to follow instructions with ease but in the beginning stages you want to entice them to listen to you over any and all other distractions. We do this by using high value rewards.



- High value rewards are the things your dog finds more valuable than anything else. These can be treats like real chicken, cheese, or hotdogs. These can also be your dog's favorite toys like a tennis ball or tug toy.
- Find the things your dog loves most in the world and use these as their rewards.

3. You Might Not Be Giving Clear Signals

- If your dog looks like they are giving you their full attention but they are not responding to your request, they might not understand your signal.
- Go back to practicing your signal for the behavior in a distraction-free environment to make sure your dog understands the behavior you are asking for.
- Whether you are using a hand signal or a verbal cue, make sure you are being consistent with your delivery of the signal.
- Dogs are very intune with our body language so even slight adjustments in our movements while giving the signal can cause confusion.

How to Set Your Dog Up for Success

- If your dog is struggling with the behavior, go back to where they were previously successful and build up difficulty from that point.
- After asking for the behavior, give your dog a few moments to process your request.
- If they are not responding adjust the circumstances before asking for the behavior again. For example, if you call your dog to come from play with another dog and they don't, move closer to them before asking again.
- Reward them for small steps in the right direction. For example, if they look up at you when you call them, praise them and then call again.