

Blocking – Language of Hands

All young animals (including humans) need boundaries and management. Blocking is a technique that teaches your dog about boundaries in a positive way.



Dogs understand boundaries

From birth, wolves, wild dogs and your pet dog will have experienced boundaries. Their first boundary is around mother and her milk, a pup that strays too far from this boundary risks starvation and death. As wolves and dogs mature their boundaries slowly increase, from the whelping area out into the world beyond. Young pups rarely move far from their den area, until adolescence. The hormones associated with adolescence are designed to help push youngsters over the boundary just as human adolescents also push at their boundaries. Boundaries create safety and mistakes made outside of these could be fatal.

It is your job as the owner of a pet dog to continue applying appropriate boundaries, primarily for safety, but also for age specific learning. Remember, your dog is always learning, be careful about what behaviours they are practicing and perfecting!

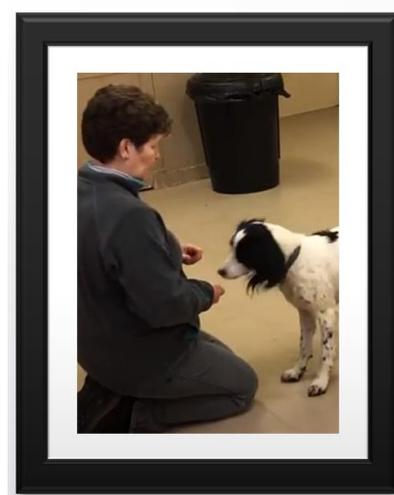
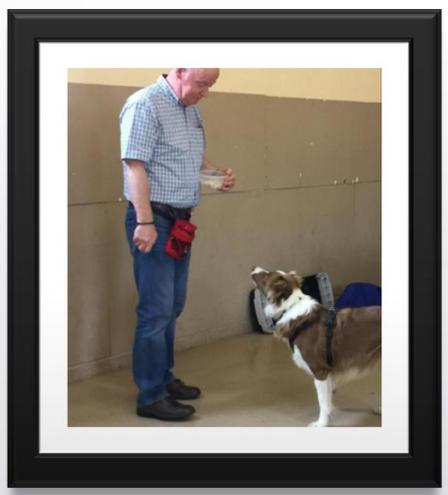
Begin with a question

What do you want your dog to learn?

Specifically, what do you want them to learn about:

- Food. - Food in your hands, pockets, treat bag or on your plate!
- Your body – Can you be used as a springboard? Is it ok to bite, scratch, paw?
- Toys – When are you available to play? When are you busy doing something else?

These three areas can cause the most conflict between dogs and their families



Our Objectives

We have two key objectives:

1. Dog moves away when resources are present
2. Dog learns when resources are available and unavailable

These create safety for us and clarity for our dogs

Teaching

In classes we teach blocking, this is a hand signal that means 'not just now', we follow this with a known behaviour 'do this instead'.

Step One – Find the safe height of food for your dog

In this video the trainer is teaching blocking with the food on her knee, but this is not safe for all dogs. Some dogs may be more successful if the food is up high e.g. kitchen worktop. Some dogs need the food to be even higher or placed at the very back of the worktop. Work with your dog's needs.



<https://youtu.be/WPF2RLg4iHU>

Step Two – With the dog in front of you, begin to deliver the food to the floor

<https://youtu.be/Nlw70rXT-X0>

Step Three – Add in a hand signal

<https://youtu.be/qujemHYKD1I>

Step Four – Add a verbal cue

When your dog looks towards the floor, or steps back as you lift your hand, begin to add a verbal cue

Blocking in action

<https://youtu.be/-7HdnMQLHG0>

What next?

If you are struggling with teaching blocking or any other aspects of your dog's behaviour, then we are here to help. Please check out our website or social media for details of how to get in touch with us. Video consultations available so distance is no longer a barrier to learning.