Dog Scouts of America

**Activity check-off sheet**

CopyCat Badge Information

Those of us who’ve lived with multiple dogs know how easy it is, for better or for worse, for our dogs to copy the behaviors of their dog siblings. When dog learning researcher, Claudia Fugazza, suggested that dogs can easily learn to imitate human behavior, her premise was suspect. Many in the scientific community did not believe that dog/human social learning could take place. The research of Dr. Claudia Fugazza has proven that dogs can easily learn to copy human behaviors. Dr. Fugazza has developed a simple systematic way to help pet parents learn to share this learning adventure with their dogs. The method opens a new learning frontier that stresses the human/dog bond, helping the dog and his person work in partnership.

This Dog Scout badge will help you to work through Claudia’s proven method of introducing this learning concept to your dog. Although the initial steps of the protocol make use of traditional clicker training, the end goal is to develop a new way of living in synchrony with your dog.

This will be a simple explanation, but for further fleshing out of the material, check out the many videos online and read Claudia’s book, *Do As I Do: Using Social Learning to Train Dogs.*

Prerequisite Training:

To start this protocol, your dog will need to be able to do three behaviors on verbal cue only. The behaviors need to be something that you could duplicate with your own body. Some suggestions might be:

* Touching a specific object
* Jumping over a jump
* Going to a target area
* Lying down
* Spinning
* Picking up and dropping an object

If you’ve done previous training with your dog, this sounds like a simple requirement. It’s not as easy as you might think. When we communicate with our dogs, we usually are giving multiple signals. We may be using our hands or eyes to direct our dog or subtly changing our body posture. So, it will be important to practice only giving a verbal cue and then “clicking” and rewarding our dog. Practice cuing your dog to do these three behaviors in random order until you are positively sure that your dog will accurately do each behavior on verbal cue only. Make sure that you are rewarding your dog’s success.

Once your dog can reliably do the three chosen behaviors you will move on to the next step.

Choose a cue that will tell the dog you are playing this new special game. An easy choice might be pointing at your eyes and saying, “Watch, wait”. You will then do one of your selected behaviors yourself. Upon completing the behavior, return to standing in front of your dog and say, “Do it!” or “Copy!” followed by your verbal cue for the behavior.

Your sequence should look like this:

“Watch” ---- You do the behavior ---- “Do It” (new cue) ---- “Spin”(old cue) ---- Dog does behavior ----Reward

After doing this sequence a number of times, your dog may start to anticipate your verbal cue and perform the behavior when you say, “Do it!” You can help to facilitate this by pausing briefly after saying, “Do It!” and before giving the verbal cue.

“Watch” ----You do the behavior ---- “Do It” (new cue) ---- (wait a bit) ----“Spin”(old cue) ---- Dog does behavior ---- Reward

Now change your sequence by dropping the verbal cue altogether

And the dog will progress to: “Watch” ---- You do the behavior ----“Do It” (new cue) ---- Dog does behavior ----Reward

Vary the order in which you present your behaviors and don’t do the same behavior twice in a row. Keep your training sessions short and be sure to continue friendly communication with your dog throughout this process.

To help your dog understand the rules of the game, now work with three more behaviors that your dog already knows.

The final step is to now introduce a behavior that is new to the dog. It might involve using some skills the dog already knows in a new way, or it might be a skill that is completely new to the dog. Once the dog understands the concept of social learning with you, experiment and see how smart your dog really is!

**Bibliography**

Fugazza, Claudia, *Do As I Do: Using Social Learning to Train Dogs*, Dogwise, 2014.

Fugazza, Claudia, *Do As I Do: A New Training Method Basd on Social Learning DVD*, Dogwise, 2013

Fugazza, C., Miklosa, A., *Social Learning in Dog training: The Effectiveness of the Do As I Do Method Compared to Shaping/Clicker Training,* Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 171, 146-151.doi;10.2016/j.appanim.2015.08.033

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