

It is common for many dogs to be startled, uncomfortable and even afraid when someone reaches for their collar. There are a variety of different reasons for this, but they can be summarized in this way; grabbing the dog's collar rarely results in something good happening to the dog! We grab a dog's collar when we are angry at it or just as a prelude to removing it from a situation. We grab a dogs collar when we want to force them to do something that they usually don't want to do. After all, if they were eager to go where we wanted or do what we wanted, we would not be grabbing them in the first place!

Nevertheless, reaching for the collar is the first step in applying a leash so it is something that all dogs should learn to be comfortable with. If you are working with a fearful dog that has not yet learned to walk on a leash, you will need to be sure they are good at the hand target before you begin working on touching their collar. If the dog retreats when you get within 2-3 feet, they are not ready for the Collar Grab. Go back to the [Hand Targeting](#) exercise.

The goal of this exercise is to get the dog comfortable with its collar being touched. Sessions should take no more than about 5 minutes. Practice several times a day if possible.

Let's get started!

Level 1

Part 1: While sitting or standing sideways two feet away from the dog, present your palm flat, facing the animal with fingers pointing towards the ground. Make sure to keep your hand still and treat the dog with your opposite hand for looking at your hand. Do this until you see a positive response - the dog is looking towards the other hand anticipating a treat.

Part 2: Raise criteria and now treat the dog for approaching your hand. Treat them for approaching at the following distances in order:

2 feet; 1.5 feet; 1 foot; 6 inches; 3 inches; Hand contact

Level 2

When the dog is approaching your hand and making contact, lightly touch the outside of the collar while feeding the dog treats at the same time with the opposite hand. When your hand comes off the collar, the treats stop. Do this with your hand on the outside of the collar until the dog has a positive emotional response (they look eager to approach with ears and tail up. Their face should be relaxed. They don't grab the treat and immediately move away).

Repeat with **one finger wrapped loosely under the collar** for the following amounts of time in order. Do not move onto a longer duration until they have a positive response to the one prior.

1 second; 2 seconds; 3 seconds; 4 seconds

Repeat with **2 fingers wrapped loosely under the collar** at each duration before moving onto the next.

1 second; 2 seconds; 3 seconds; 4 seconds

Wrap all of your fingers under the collar lightly (do not pull on the collar) at each duration.

1 second; 2 seconds; 3 seconds; 4 seconds