

## *Fading the Food Lure*



As soon as your dog appears to understand a given cue, such as “sit” or “down,” you will want to start “fading out the food lure” as soon as possible. This will lead to a dog who will work whether or not the sight of food is present.

We will use the example of the “sit” cue to discuss fading the lure, but you can use the same steps for all cues. Remember, start fading the lure when you are sure the dog understands the cue. Don’t start too soon or too fast or the dog will become confused and frustrated. A good rate to go by is if the dog gives you the behavior on cue 75-80% of the time, then you may be ready to start fading the lure.

1. When training a dog how to sit, you will use the food treat to lure over the dog’s head so that he will sit back. Reward him immediately with the food. Do not use the verbal “sit” cue yet.
2. Repeat until the dog is sitting quickly and understands the behavior that is being requested by moving the food over his head. Start to add in the verbal cue “sit” and say it *as the dog is sitting down*.
3. Start bringing your food luring hand up and higher above the dog. Eventually, this movement of your hand over his head becomes the hand signal for “sit.”
4. Begin to ask the dog for several repetitions of a sit before you give him the food treat. For the times that he gives you a sit but you do not treat, use happy, excited praise and the “yes!” verbal marker when he sits. You will still have food in your luring hand, but you aren’t always going to give it to him. In the beginning, ask for two repetitions before treating, then move to three, then four, and so on. Remember, start small and slowly work up to make it harder for the dog.
5. Take the treats and put them in your other hand, holding it behind your back. Pretend you are still holding a treat in your luring hand and move it over his head. Ask for repetitions, but treat from the hand behind your back when you reward the sit. You have just moved the food out of your luring hand, leaving only a hand signal.
6. Continue to do as above, but keep the food in a pocket, on a table or counter, etc. (someplace the dog cannot see it.) The dog will now build up an expectation that sometimes he will get a food reward and sometimes he won’t, but he will continue to work harder and harder to achieve an instance when he does get it. Always remember to give him lots of happy, excited feedback at all times.