

Helping Your Dog Feel Safe During Handling

Teaching a simple chin rest

Many dogs feel worried during handling because they have little control over what is happening. Teaching your dog a simple chin rest gives them a way to communicate that they are happy for the interaction to continue.

Rather than holding your dog still or asking them to simply tolerate handling, this exercise allows your dog to choose to take part. Over time, this builds trust, confidence and a much more positive experience for both of you.

WHEN CAN I USE A CHIN REST?

 Veterinary examinations	 Tooth brushing
 Grooming	 Giving medication
 Ear cleaning	 Checking paws
 Nail clipping	 Everyday health checks

1. TEACH THE CHIN REST

- Using a cushion on your lap (or the palm of your hand), encourage your dog to gently rest their chin on the chosen surface.
 - The moment they place their chin down, calmly reward them with a tasty treat.
 - Gradually increase the amount of time their chin remains in place before rewarding. Begin with just 1-2 seconds, then slowly build this up over many short sessions.
- ♥ **Keep sessions short and finish while your dog is still enjoying the exercise.**

2. START GENTLE HANDLING

- Once your dog is happily resting their chin for several seconds, begin introducing gentle touch.
 - Start with areas that most dogs are comfortable having handled, such as the shoulder, chest or side of the neck.
 - Touch for just one or two seconds, then reward.
 - Gradually increase the duration of touch before progressing to gently lifting a paw, looking inside an ear or briefly holding a collar.
- ♥ **Only introduce one small change at a time.**

3. INTRODUCE EQUIPMENT

- When your dog is comfortable being gently handled, begin introducing the equipment you may need in everyday life.
- At first, simply allow your dog to see the item whilst resting their chin before rewarding.
- Gradually progress to touching the item to your dog's body before eventually using it exactly as you would during normal care.
- Build this process up very gradually over multiple sessions.

4. OTHER PEOPLE

- Dogs often learn that one particular person is "safe", but may not immediately feel the same way about somebody else.
- Once your dog is confident with you, begin introducing another familiar person.
- Every new person should start again at Step 1, progressing gradually through the same stages.
- Although your dog will usually learn more quickly the second time, taking things slowly helps maintain confidence and trust.

YOUR DOG HAS A VOICE

The chin rest gives your dog a simple way to communicate that they are happy for the interaction to continue.



CHIN STAYS IN PLACE
My dog is choosing to continue.

→ Continue calmly.



CHIN LIFTS AWAY
My dog needs a break.

→ Pause immediately.
Allow your dog to move away if they wish.

When they choose to return and place their chin back on your hand or cushion, you can begin again.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Use high-value treats.
- ✓ Keep sessions short and enjoyable.
- ✓ Progress in tiny steps.
- ✓ Practise little and often.

Always remember to finish every session on a positive note.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Moving too quickly through the stages.
- ✗ Holding your dog's head in place.
- ✗ Continuing after your dog lifts their chin away.
- ✗ Trying to complete treatment rather than practising the exercise.
- ✗ Waiting until your dog already needs treatment before introducing the chin rest.

WATCH IT IN ACTION

Scan the QR codes to watch examples...



Karen Pryor Academy
chin rest tutorial



Kikopup
chin rest tutorial



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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