

Training Tip Tuesday: Challenge yourself (and others!)

We've all seen those videos that get passed around; there's a new challenge on social media every week! Next time you see one (or are tagged in one!) use it as training motivation. Just because the dog in the video is younger, smaller, smarter, or more well trained doesn't mean your dog can't do it too! Maybe you'll need to modify it a bit, or tone it down a notch – but give it a try! See what you can accomplish, you might just surprise yourself.

I like these random challenges, because they make me think outside the box. I look at the result and have to figure out 'how can I get *my* dog to do that? Your first step with any challenge is to figure out a plan. Break the objective into baby steps and think it through.

The next step is to figure out how to communicate your plan to your dog. How do you get his mind and body on the same page as you? If you're going to use food; is it a high value or a lower value? Do you want excitement or focus? (or both?)

The third step is to start working through your plan. Go slow! Work on one step at a time; mark and reward. Make sure you get each step solid before moving on to the next; and keep it positive. This is not the time for corrections; you should be encouraging and motivating your dog to try something new.

Once you have worked through your steps, and you can get to the end result; start proofing it and making it pretty. Put it on cue, get a little distance – that kind of thing.

We were challenged to the paint can challenge (who comes up with these things?) The challenger is the owner of a petite little border collie. I am the owner of a 90 lb shepherd. Hardly seems fair! Kod has never been on a paint can before so we started with just paws up. (If Kod didn't already have a good paws up foundation – we would start there, on a much larger object and slowly reduce the size.) First one paw, then two. Then just stepping across it. Finally balancing all four on it for just a split second. Then building up to a few seconds and on cue. You'll hear me mark (yes!) each paw as he tries, and you'll notice him trying to figure out where to put his back feet. I left all three tries in the video so you could see the progression. (you'll also see me holding the paint can with my feet – its not a full can, so its not very heavy and I didn't want him to knock it over!)

https://youtu.be/THV2_9H2nS4