

THE PETS DECODER

8 Simple Tricks to Teach Your Pet

Step-by-step training for dogs — with cat adaptations.
No experience needed. Just treats, 10 minutes a day, and this guide.

PLUS 4 BONUS TRICKS FREE INSIDE

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Introduction: Why Tricks Matter

Teaching your pet tricks is not about showing off at the dog park — though that's a nice bonus. The Pets Decoder wants you to understand what's actually happening when you train: **you're building a communication system.**

Every trick teaches your pet the same three lessons:

1. **Watch me.** Your pet learns that paying attention to you leads to good things.
2. **Listening pays.** Following your cues earns rewards — so listening becomes a habit.
3. **We're a team.** Training sessions become the highlight of your pet's day, and the bond deepens fast.

There's a practical side too. A dog who knows "touch" can be redirected away from trouble. A dog who knows "quiet" saves your relationship with your neighbors. A cat who knows "spin" gets mental exercise that prevents 3 AM furniture parkour.

The Golden Rules

Before the first trick, these rules govern everything in this guide:

1. **Short sessions.** Five to ten minutes, once or twice a day. End while your pet still wants more — never drill until they're checked out.
2. **End on a win.** If the last three tries failed, ask for something easy your pet already knows, reward big, and stop. Always quit on success.
3. **Never punish.** No yelling, no pushing into position, no "corrections." If it isn't working, the method needs adjusting — not the pet.
4. **Reward the try.** In the early stages, reward approximations. A paw that lifts an inch toward "shake" earns a treat. You'll shape it into the real thing.
5. **One new thing at a time.** Don't teach spin and roll over in the same week. Master one, then add the next.

> **Reality check:** Most tricks take 3–14 days of short daily sessions. Some pets learn faster, some slower. The timelines in this guide are honest averages — your pet is not broken if they need longer.

Part 1: Your Training Toolkit

You don't need a professional trainer's equipment closet. But the right tools make everything faster and easier. Here's every tool mentioned in this guide — what it is, how to use it, and why it works.

1. High-Value Treats

What: Small, soft, smelly treats your pet goes crazy for — not their everyday kibble. Think pea-sized pieces of cooked chicken, cheese, freeze-dried liver, or commercial soft training treats.

How to use: Keep pieces tiny (pea-sized for dogs, half-pea for cats). You may deliver 30–50 treats in a session — small pieces prevent a full stomach from ending the lesson early. Deliver the treat within 1–2 seconds of the correct behavior.

Why it works: Food is a primary reinforcer — it doesn't need to be learned. Smellier, softer treats create stronger motivation because they're consumed fast (no crunching break) and carry high scent value. The speed of delivery matters more than the size.

2. Treat Pouch

What: A small belt-clip or waist pouch that holds treats and stays open for fast access.

How to use: Load it before the session. Wear it on your hip on your treat-delivery side. Reach, deliver, repeat — no fumbling in pockets.

Why it works: Timing is everything in training. A 3-second delay between the behavior and the reward weakens the association. A pouch cuts your delivery time to under a second.

3. Clicker

What: A small plastic device that makes a sharp, consistent "click" sound when pressed.

How to use: First, "charge" the clicker: click, then treat, 15–20 times, with no behavior required. Your pet learns click = treat is coming. Then during training: the instant your pet does the right thing, click, then treat. The click marks the exact moment — the treat that follows is the payment.

Why it works: The click is faster and more precise than any word. It bridges the gap between the behavior and the treat delivery. A clicker also sounds identical every time, unlike your voice (which changes with mood, volume, and excitement).

> **No clicker?** Use a marker word instead — a short, sharp word like "YES!" said in a bright tone. It works the same way: mark the moment, then treat. The guide works either way.

4. Target Stick (or Wooden Spoon)

What: A stick about 12–18 inches long with a distinct tip — a commercial target stick, a wooden spoon with tape on the end, or even a chopstick.

How to use: Present the tip near your pet's nose. The instant they sniff or touch it, click/mark and treat. Gradually use the stick to guide them into positions (luring a spin, guiding a "touch").

Why it works: It gives you a precise pointer. Instead of waving your whole hand (confusing), the stick tip is a clear, small target. It's the secret behind teaching "spin," "weave," and "touch" cleanly.

5. Mat or "Place" Bed

What: A small mat, towel, or dog bed designated as the "go to your spot" location.

How to use: Reward your pet for going to the mat and settling on it. This becomes the foundation for calm behavior — and a useful management tool (mat = chill out during dinner).

Why it works: Dogs are contextual learners. A specific mat becomes a cue for a specific behavior (settle). It's portable calm — bring the mat, bring the behavior.

6. Long Line (15–30 ft leash)

What: A lightweight long leash — not retractable, just a long flat line.

How to use: For outdoor recall and distance work. Lets your pet roam while you maintain safety control. Never tie it off or let it drag unsupervised.

Why it works: It gives freedom without risk. Your pet learns that coming back to you is rewarding — not that running away ends the fun — because the line prevents the "chase me!" game.

7. Puzzle Toys & Enrichment Feeders

What: Kongs, snuffle mats, lick mats, treat-dispensing balls.

How to use: Stuff a Kong with peanut butter and freeze it. Scatter kibble in a snuffle mat. Spread wet food on a lick mat. Use these before training sessions to take the edge off excess energy, or after as a cool-down reward.

Why it works: Mental exercise tires pets out as effectively as physical exercise. A pet who's had 10 minutes of sniffing and problem-solving is dramatically easier to train than one bouncing off the walls. For cats, puzzle feeders engage the hunting sequence and reduce boredom behaviors.

The starter kit: If you buy nothing else, get high-value treats and a treat pouch. Everything else is a nice-to-have. The guide works with treats and your hands alone.

Part 2: The 8 Core Tricks

★ EASY

Trick 1: Shake / High-Five

What it looks like: Your dog lifts a paw into your outstretched hand — a handshake. High-five is the same trick with your palm vertical.

What you need: Treats. That's it. This is the ideal first trick.

Step-by-step

1. Ask your dog to sit. Hold a treat in your closed fist, just above their nose.
2. Wait. Most dogs will paw at your fist trying to get the treat. The instant a paw lifts off the ground — even an inch — mark ("YES!") and treat.
3. Repeat. After 5–10 reps, your dog will start offering the paw deliberately.
4. Now present your open palm at paw height instead of the closed fist. When the paw touches your palm, mark and treat.
5. Add the word. Say "shake" just before presenting your hand. After 10–15 paired reps, try saying "shake" first — most dogs will offer the paw on the word alone.
6. For high-five: turn your palm vertical and raise it slightly. Same mechanics.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 2–5 days of short sessions. This is one of the fastest tricks to teach.

When it clicks

You'll see the moment: the paw comes up confidently instead of tentatively. The dog starts offering it before you even present your hand.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog won't paw at the fist? Gently tap the back of their paw with your finger — the tickle usually triggers a lift. Mark and treat the instant it happens. Dog uses mouth instead? Keep the fist closed and still; reward only paw movement, never mouthing. Dog offers the paw constantly now? Congratulations — put it on cue only (reward only when you ask), and it'll settle.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** Same method, but hold the treat slightly to one side so the cat reaches with a paw. Cats typically learn this in 1–2 weeks. Keep sessions to 2–3 minutes — cats check out faster than dogs.

★ EASY

Trick 2: Spin

What it looks like: Your pet turns in a full circle on cue. Crowd-pleaser, and one of the easiest tricks that looks impressive.

What you need: Treats. A target stick helps but isn't required.

Step-by-step

1. Stand facing your dog with a treat at their nose level.
2. Slowly move the treat in a wide circle around their head, like drawing a halo. Their nose follows the treat; their body follows their nose.
3. The instant they complete the circle, mark and treat.
4. Repeat 5–8 times, then try with an empty hand making the same circular motion — treat from your other hand when they complete the spin.
5. Add the cue: say "spin" just before the hand motion. After 10–15 reps, try the word alone.
6. Fade the hand signal gradually — make the circle smaller each session until it's just a finger twirl, then just the word.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 3–7 days. Many get the motion in the first session; the cue takes longer.

When it clicks

The dog starts spinning before your hand completes the circle — they're anticipating. That's your signal to add the word.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog follows halfway then stops? You're moving too fast. Slow the lure way down and reward half-turns at first. Dog sits instead of spinning? Lure slightly forward as well as around — a tiny bit of forward momentum prevents the sit. Dog spins the wrong way? Doesn't matter. Pick one direction and be consistent.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** Excellent cat trick. Use a high-value treat (lickable treats work great). Most cats learn spin faster than dogs — 3–5 days. Keep the circle wide; cats don't like things close to their face.

★★ MEDIUM

Trick 3: Speak & Quiet

What it looks like: Your dog barks on cue ("speak") — and, more importantly, stops on cue ("quiet"). The Pets Decoder insists you teach both together. A dog who only knows "speak" is a noise complaint waiting to happen.

What you need: Treats, patience, and a trigger that reliably makes your dog bark (doorbell, a favorite toy, an exciting sound).

Step-by-step — SPEAK

1. Set up the bark trigger. When your dog barks, mark ("YES!") and treat immediately.
2. Repeat 8–10 times. Your dog will start connecting barking with rewards.
3. Add the cue: say "speak" right before triggering the bark. After 10–15 reps, try "speak" alone.

Step-by-step — QUIET (teach in the same week)

1. Ask for "speak." Let the dog bark 2–3 times, then hold a treat to their nose and say "quiet."
2. The dog will stop barking to sniff the treat. The instant there's silence — even one second — mark and treat.
3. Gradually extend the quiet time: 2 seconds, 5 seconds, 10 seconds before marking.
4. Practice "quiet" without "speak" first — during natural barking moments (someone at the door). Say "quiet," wait for the pause, mark and treat.

How long it takes

Speak: 3–5 days. Quiet: 1–3 weeks (it's harder — you're asking for impulse control).

When it clicks

For speak: the dog barks once, sharply, on the word — not a frenzy. For quiet: you see the dog choose to close their mouth. That visible decision is the breakthrough.

Troubleshooting: Dog won't bark on command? Some breeds are naturally quiet. Try more exciting triggers. If your dog truly won't bark on cue, skip this trick — it's not for every dog. "Quiet" isn't working? You're asking for too much silence too soon. Reward a single second of quiet first, then build. Dog barks MORE now? You're accidentally rewarding the barking frenzy. Only mark single, controlled barks.

🐱 **Cat version:** Most cats won't "speak" on cue reliably, but many will meow for treats. You can shape a "meow" by marking and treating vocalizations. "Quiet" for cats means redirecting — when the cat yowls, wait for a pause, then mark and treat. Don't expect dog-level reliability.

★★ MEDIUM

Trick 4: Roll Over

What it looks like: The classic. Dog goes from a down position, rolls onto their side and all the way over, then pops back up.

What you need: Treats, a soft surface (carpet or grass — not slippery floors), and a dog who already knows "down."

Step-by-step

1. Ask for "down." Hold a treat at your dog's nose.
2. Slowly move the treat from their nose toward their shoulder, then around toward their back — like drawing a curve over their shoulder. Their head follows, and their body tips onto its side.
3. The instant they're on their side, mark and treat. **Stop here for the first 2–3 days.** Reward the side-lying position heavily.
4. Next, continue the lure from the side position all the way around so they roll onto their back and over. Mark and treat the full roll.
5. Break it into the full sequence: down → side → roll → up. Mark only the complete roll now.
6. Add the cue: say "roll over" before starting the lure. Fade the lure over 5–7 days.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 1–2 weeks. The side-lying step is where most people rush — don't skip it.

When it clicks

The dog flops onto their side eagerly when they hear the setup. The roll itself becomes fluid instead of hesitant.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog won't go past "down"? They're not comfortable on their side yet. Spend more days just rewarding the side flop. Dog gets up instead of rolling? Your lure is too high — keep the treat close to the ground, almost touching

it. Dog only rolls one way? Totally normal. Teach one direction solidly; the other direction is a separate trick if you want it.

🐱 **Cat version:** Most cats won't roll over on cue, but many will roll for belly rubs. You can capture the behavior: when your cat rolls naturally, mark and treat. Over time, add a cue word before they roll. Low success rate, but delightful when it works.

★ EASY

Trick 5: Touch / Target

What it looks like: Your dog touches their nose to your open palm on cue. Simple — and the single most useful trick in this guide, because it becomes the foundation for redirecting, recall, and advanced training.

What you need: Treats. Your hand.

Step-by-step

1. Hold your open palm flat, fingers together, about 6 inches from your dog's nose.
2. Most dogs will sniff your hand out of curiosity. The instant their nose touches your palm, mark and treat.
3. Repeat 10–15 times. Your dog will start bopping your hand deliberately.
4. Add the cue: say "touch" just before presenting your hand.
5. Start moving your hand: to the side, higher, lower, behind you. Your dog follows and touches. Reward every touch.
6. Increase distance gradually — present your hand from 3 feet away, then 6, then across the room.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 1–3 days. This is the fastest trick in the guide.

When it clicks

The dog's eyes light up when they see your palm — they run to touch it. That's when you know it's solid.

> **Why this trick matters beyond the trick:** "Touch" is a recall backup (dog running toward trouble? present your hand), a redirect tool (dog fixating on something? "touch" breaks the fixation), and the foundation for teaching "come," "heel," and service-dog tasks. Train this one well even if you skip others.

Troubleshooting: Dog won't touch the hand? Rub a tiny bit of treat scent on your palm for the first few reps. Dog mouths or licks instead? Present the hand flat and still; reward only nose touches. Withdraw the hand briefly if they mouth it. Dog only touches when the treat is visible? Start hiding the treat in your other hand — present the empty target hand, treat from the opposite hand.

🐱 **Cat version:** Great cat trick. Present a finger instead of a full palm (less intimidating). Most cats learn "touch" in under a week and it becomes useful for guiding them onto laps, into carriers, and off counters.

★★ MEDIUM

Trick 6: Fetch & Drop

What it looks like: Your dog chases a thrown toy, picks it up, brings it back, and — the part everyone skips — drops it in your hand on cue. A complete fetch, not a keep-away game.

What you need: A favorite toy (ball, bumper, or tug), treats (high-value — the trade has to be worth it).

Step-by-step — FETCH

1. Start indoors in a hallway (walls prevent the "run away with it" game). Show the toy, get your dog excited.
2. Toss the toy a short distance. When your dog picks it up, mark and treat.
3. Gradually require the dog to bring it closer before marking — first one step toward you, then three, then all the way back.

Step-by-step — DROP (the critical part)

1. When your dog returns with the toy, hold a high-value treat to their nose and say "drop it."
2. The dog will open their mouth to take the treat. The instant the toy falls, mark and treat.
3. Repeat 15–20 times. The dog learns: dropping the toy causes the treat — and then you throw the toy again, which is the real reward.
4. Fade the treat lure: say "drop it," wait for the drop, then mark and treat from your pocket. Eventually the next throw becomes the reward.

How long it takes

Fetch: 3–7 days (some breeds are naturals, some need convincing). Drop: 1–2 weeks of consistent practice.

When it clicks

The dog returns and offers the toy — pushing it toward your hand before you ask. That's a trained retrieve.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog won't bring it back? Use the hallway. Short throws. Reel them in with excitement, not chasing. Dog won't drop it? Your treat isn't high-value enough. The trade has to be obviously worth it — upgrade the treat. Dog drops it halfway back? You're marking too early. Wait until they're within arm's reach before marking.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** Many cats naturally fetch! If yours brings toys back, mark and treat the return. "Drop it" works the same way with a treat trade. Don't expect distance — cats fetch on their terms, usually 6–10 feet.

★★★ SHOWSTOPPER

Trick 7: Weave Through Legs

What it looks like: You walk forward and your dog weaves in and out between your legs with each step. It looks like a circus act. It's easier than it looks.

What you need: Treats, a target stick (very helpful here), and enough space to take several steps.

Step-by-step

1. Stand with your feet wide apart. Lure your dog through your legs from front to back with a treat. Mark and treat.
2. Repeat 8–10 times until the dog eagerly runs through.
3. Now step forward with one leg and lure the dog through the new gap. Mark and treat.
4. Take another step, lure through again. You're building the weave one step at a time.
5. After 3–4 successful weaves in a row, add the cue: "weave" before you start stepping.
6. Gradually reduce the lure — use the target stick, then just a hand gesture, then just the word and your walking motion.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 1–2 weeks. The coordination takes practice for both of you.

When it clicks

The dog starts weaving before you finish stepping — they're reading your leg movement. That's the magic moment.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog goes around instead of through? Narrow your stance at first. Reward only through-the-legs passes. Dog gets underfoot? Slow down. Short, deliberate steps. Speed comes later. Not working for a large dog? This trick is

genuinely harder for very large breeds — try it with wider steps or skip it. No shame.

🐱 **Cat version:** Possible but tricky — cats weave naturally around legs already. Shape it: when your cat weaves through your legs on their own, mark and treat. Add the cue over time. Don't expect the sustained multi-step weave dogs do.

★★★ SHOWSTOPPER

Trick 8: Play Dead

What it looks like: On the cue "bang!" (or "play dead"), your dog flops onto their side, legs stiff, tongue out — the full dramatic death scene. Guaranteed crowd reaction.

What you need: Treats. A dog who knows "down" and ideally "roll over" (Trick 4) — this builds on that foundation.

Step-by-step

1. Ask for "down." Lure your dog onto their side exactly like the first half of "roll over" — treat to the shoulder, body tips over.
2. Once on their side, **don't** continue the roll. Instead, mark and treat the side-lying position.
3. Add stillness: wait 2 seconds before marking. Then 5. Then 10. The dog learns that lying still on their side is the job.
4. Add the drama cue: make a finger gun, say "bang!" — then lure to the side. After 10–15 reps, try the cue without the lure.
5. Optional flourish: gently drape the dog's head to the ground if they'll allow it. Some dogs add the tongue-out naturally.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 1–2 weeks (faster if they already know roll over).

When it clicks

The dog hears "bang!" and throws themselves onto their side with enthusiasm. The drama is the point.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog rolls all the way over? You're luring too far — stop the treat at the side position. Mark earlier. Dog pops right back up? Build duration slowly. Two seconds of stillness earns the treat at first. Dog won't go on their side? Go back to Trick 4's side-lying step and spend more time there.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** Not a natural cat behavior on cue. Skip this one for cats — they'll think you've lost your mind, and honestly, they might be right.

Part 3: 4 Bonus Tricks FREE

You bought 8 tricks. The Pets Decoder is throwing in 4 more — free. Because once your pet is rolling, you'll want new material.

★★ MEDIUM BONUS

Bonus Trick 1: Take a Bow

What it looks like: Your dog lowers their front end to the ground while keeping their rear up — the classic play bow, on cue. Charming and photogenic.

What you need: Treats. A dog who knows "stand" (or can be lured into standing).

Step-by-step

1. With your dog standing, hold a treat at their nose and slowly lower it straight down between their front paws — then slightly back toward their chest.
2. The dog's front end drops as they follow the treat. Their rear should stay up. The instant the elbows touch the ground, mark and treat.
3. If the rear drops too (they go into a full down), you're luring too far back. Keep the treat closer to straight-down.
4. Repeat 10–15 times, then add the cue: "bow!" or "take a bow!"
5. Fade the lure over a week until the word and a slight hand dip are enough.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 5–10 days.

Troubleshooting: Dog lies all the way down? Lure less far back — almost straight down. Reward the moment elbows touch, before the rear drops. Dog backs up instead? Do it with the dog's rear near a wall to block the backward movement.

🐱 **Cat version:** Cats do the play bow naturally during play. Capture it: when you see the bow, mark and treat. Add a cue over a few weeks.

★★ MEDIUM BONUS

Bonus Trick 2: Crawl

What it looks like: From a down position, your dog crawls forward on their belly — like a soldier under barbed wire. Hilarious and impressive.

What you need: Treats. A smooth floor (not carpet — too much friction). A dog who knows "down."

Step-by-step

1. Ask for "down." Hold a treat at nose level, just out of reach, close to the ground.
2. Slowly drag the treat forward along the ground. The dog will inch forward to follow it. Mark and treat the first forward scoot — even an inch.
3. If the dog stands up, you're moving the treat too far or too fast. Keep it close and slow.
4. Build distance gradually: 6 inches, 1 foot, 3 feet, across the room.
5. Add the cue "crawl" once the dog is scooting reliably. Fade the lure.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 1–2 weeks.

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog keeps standing up? Lower the treat — almost touching the floor. Reward tiny scoots. Dog won't move at all? Try on a smoother surface. Some dogs need the low friction to get the idea.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** Cats army-crawl naturally when stalking. Capture it during play with a wand toy: when the cat drops low and creeps, mark and treat.

★ EASY BONUS

Bonus Trick 3: Back Up

What it looks like: Your dog walks backward on cue. Simple, useful (great for doorways and tight spaces), and oddly delightful to watch.

What you need: Treats. A narrow hallway is ideal.

Step-by-step

1. Stand facing your dog in a hallway. Step gently toward them while holding a treat at their chest level.
2. Most dogs will step backward to maintain space. The instant a back paw moves backward, mark and treat.
3. Repeat, requiring one more backward step each time before marking.
4. Add the cue: "back!" or "back up!" — say it as you step toward them.
5. Gradually reduce your forward movement until the word alone produces the backup.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 3–7 days. The hallway does half the work.

Troubleshooting: Dog sits instead? You're crowding too fast. Move slower and keep the treat at chest level, not above the head (above the head triggers sits). Dog turns around? The hallway prevents this — make sure it's narrow enough.

🐱 **Cat version:** Walk slowly toward your cat with a treat visible. Most cats back up naturally. Mark and treat the backward steps. Add the cue over a week.

★★ MEDIUM BONUS

Bonus Trick 4: Wave Goodbye

What it looks like: Your dog lifts a paw and waves it in the air — like waving hello or goodbye. The cutest trick in this guide.

What you need: Treats. A dog who knows "shake" (Trick 1) — this builds directly on it.

Step-by-step

1. Ask for "shake." When the paw is in your hand, don't treat yet — hold your hand just out of reach so the paw hovers.
2. The dog will wave the paw slightly trying to reach your hand. Mark and treat the wave motion.
3. Repeat, gradually holding your hand farther away so the wave gets bigger.
4. Add the new cue: "wave!" — said with an enthusiastic wave of your own hand.
5. Separate it from "shake" by only rewarding the wave (paw in the air) vs the shake (paw in your hand). Dogs learn the distinction fast.

How long it takes

Most dogs: 5–10 days (faster if "shake" is solid).

> **Troubleshooting:** Dog keeps putting paw in your hand? That's "shake" — good, it means that trick is solid. For "wave," pull your hand back just as the paw rises. Wave is tiny? Reward bigger motions more enthusiastically. Shape it gradually.

> 🐱 **Cat version:** If your cat learned "shake," the same method works. Hold your hand just out of paw-reach and reward the reaching motion. Cats often do an adorable little air-paw.

Troubleshooting Guide

Something not working? Find your problem below. Every trainer — professional or beginner — hits these walls.

"My pet won't pay attention"

- **Exercise first.** A wired pet can't focus. Ten minutes of fetch or play before training changes everything.
- **Check the environment.** Too many distractions? Move to a quieter room. New place? Let them sniff around first.
- **Upgrade the treats.** If kibble isn't cutting it, bring out the real stuff — chicken, cheese, liver.
- **Shorten the session.** Three focused minutes beats fifteen distracted ones.

"They did it once and now won't"

- **You probably raised the bar too fast.** Go back to the last step that worked and rebuild from there.
- **Check your timing.** Are you marking within 1–2 seconds? Late marks confuse.
- **End on a win.** Ask for something easy, reward big, stop. Come back tomorrow fresh.

"My cat just stares at me"

- **That's actually engagement.** A staring cat is a thinking cat. Wait them out — then mark the smallest try.
- **Session too long?** Cats do 2–3 minute sessions. Set a timer if you have to.
- **Wrong reward?** Try lickable treats, a tiny piece of plain chicken, or even a favorite toy as the reward.
- **Wrong time of day?** Train before meals, not after. A full cat is a napping cat.

"Treats aren't working"

- **Try the treat hierarchy:** kibble < biscuit < soft commercial treat < cheese < cooked chicken < freeze-dried liver. Go up the ladder until you find what motivates.

- **For some dogs, play is the reward.** A 10-second tug game can motivate more than any treat.
- **For cats, try non-food rewards:** a chin scratch, 30 seconds with a wand toy, or access to a favorite perch.
- **Is your pet full?** Train before meals. And keep treat pieces tiny.

"Should I push through or take a break?"

- **Take a break if:** your pet is panting, yawning repeatedly, sniffing the ground obsessively, walking away, or you're getting frustrated. Frustration is contagious — your pet feels it.
- **Push through if:** it's just one bad rep in an otherwise good session. Ask for something easy, reward, and end on that win.
- **The 3-day rule:** If a trick stalls for 3 sessions in a row, go back two steps in the process and rebuild. Don't grind — reset.

What's Next: Building Routines

Once your pet knows 3–4 tricks, you can chain them into routines — and that's where the real fun starts.

How to chain tricks

1. Pick two tricks your pet knows solidly (e.g., "sit" → "shake").
2. Ask for the first. When they do it, immediately cue the second — then treat.
3. Repeat 5–10 times. Your pet learns the sequence.
4. Add a third trick. Then a fourth. Build your routine.
5. Name the routine ("do your tricks!") and use it as a party piece.

Sample routines

- **The Greeting:** Sit → Shake → Wave. Perfect when guests arrive.
- **The Show:** Spin → Bow → Play Dead. Guaranteed applause.
- **The Workout:** Touch (across the room) → Weave → Fetch. Burns energy fast.

Ready for more? The 12 tricks in this guide are the foundation. For structured programs that go deeper — agility foundations, advanced obedience, behavioral training — the Pets Decoder recommends **Brain Training for Dogs**, a force-free program by certified trainer Adrienne Farricelli. It's the natural next step when your pet is hungry for more.

Quick-Reference Card (print this page)

Trick	Difficulty	Key Step	Timeline
1. Shake / High-Five	★ Easy	Closed fist → paw lift → open palm	2–5 days
2. Spin	★ Easy	Lure in a circle, fade the hand	3–7 days
3. Speak & Quiet	★★ Medium	Teach BOTH together	1–3 weeks
4. Roll Over	★★ Medium	Master the side-flop first	1–2 weeks
5. Touch / Target	★ Easy	Nose to palm, then add distance	1–3 days
6. Fetch & Drop	★★ Medium	Hallway + high-value trade	1–2 weeks
7. Weave Through Legs	★★★ Show	One step at a time	1–2 weeks
8. Play Dead	★★★ Show	Side-lying + "bang!"	1–2 weeks
B1. Take a Bow	★★ Medium	Treat straight down, rear stays up	5–10 days
B2. Crawl	★★ Medium	Smooth floor, treat low and slow	1–2 weeks
B3. Back Up	★ Easy	Hallway + step toward	3–7 days
B4. Wave Goodbye	★★ Medium	Build on "shake," reward the hover	5–10 days

Golden rules reminder: Short sessions (5–10 min) • End on a win • Never punish • Reward the try • One new trick at a time

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Consult your veterinarian for health or behavioral concerns. We are not veterinarians.