



Snuffle Box

A snuffle box is a training tool used at Summit® to help your dog learn how to regulate their emotions and expectations in various situations that they may encounter in the classroom or real life through sniffing.

How It Works

Relaxed sniffing for 15 or more consecutive seconds is one of the ways that dogs can naturally calm themselves down anytime they have “big feelings,” such as seeing a reactivity trigger or after an exciting, scary, or frustrating event. The snuffle box creates a visual “relaxation station” that helps us prompt this behavior in spaces where we want or need the dog to be calmer. Keeping dogs in a more relaxed state results in better use of the decision-making part of their brain that is needed for learning new skills and processing their surroundings!

Getting Started

You Will Need:

1. A box that your dog can comfortably dip their head into. Ideally, we want the side to be just above eye level when their head is dipped inside the box. Cardboard or plastic bins work well for this (if your dog is a cardboard box shredder, we suggest a plastic box).
2. A snuffle mat or towel to put inside your box. It should cover the bottom entirely or as much as possible.
 - When using a towel, make sure it is bunched up, not lying flat. The goal is to add texture to the bottom that will encourage your dog to slow down and use their nose to locate the food.
3. Your dog's kibble or crumbly, higher-value treats.

Teaching Your Dog to Use the Snuffle Box:

1. Start in a familiar space with your snuffle box in hand and food ready to go. Scatter a small handful (8-10 small pieces) of food into the box.
2. Set the box down on the floor between you and your dog. Your dog should stick their head into the box to search for the food.
 - If they don't come to it right away, use a calm verbal marker like “Good” and add another treat to the box as soon as they look at, sniff, or acknowledge the box in any way.
3. Once your dog has their head dipped inside the box, continue to drop one piece of food into the box every 1 second for about 15 seconds total or until your dog's body language shows they have started to

calm down in some way ([learn more about dog body language here](#)). For some dogs this might take much longer than 15 seconds.

4. Allow your dog to finish any remaining food in the box. When they move away, toss a single treat away from you and pick up the box.
5. Repeat up to 3 times, and then end your session.

Teaching Your Dog to Initiate Unprompted Sniffing in the Snuffle Box:

1. Set your snuffle box down on the ground between you and your dog as you did previously. Encourage 15+ seconds of continuous sniffing by dropping treats past your dog's ears as they sniff.
2. After your dog finishes this first repetition of 15+ seconds, pause adding treats to let them move away from the box when they're ready, leaving the box on the ground.
3. Wait for your dog to return to the box and lower their head. As soon as they do, begin adding food to the box (initial food scatter, then 1 treat every second for 15 seconds).
 - If your dog looks up at you at any point (perhaps waiting for a treat to be placed in the box), look away from them and down at the box. Watch & wait - if they turn to put their nose back into the box unprompted, resume adding treats.

Options for Increased Difficulty & Practical Applications

You may do one or multiple of these depending on your behavior goals!

1. When your dog is easily re-engaging with the snuffle box on their own, increase the challenge by putting your dog into a separate area before placing the box at the beginning of your training session. Place the snuffle box somewhere in your dog's path so they can easily find it.
2. When your dog easily stays committed to snuffling in the box for 15 seconds, you can begin to space out the duration between adding treats to the box. For example, adding 1 treat every 2-3 seconds instead of every second.
3. Bring the snuffle box outside to work in your yard, front porch, or take to new areas. (Wherever your dog may need additional cues and opportunities to regulate their emotions.) Some of our favorite places to add a snuffle box to a training plan:
 - Door greetings
 - Back yard when seeing dogs outside the fence
 - Lobby or exam room at the vet's office
 - Getting out of the car in an exciting location
4. Fade to a more shallow box, or just use the towel/snuffle mat on its own.
5. Use smaller, more crumbly treats, which continues to create *sniffing* opportunities but stretches out the *eating* opportunities, so that sniffing becomes the main activity.

Videos

[Introducing the Snuffle Box](#)