

Teaching Your Dog the Basics

Training your dog should always be a positive experience for both of you. To do this, follow these few simple rules:

1. Keep training sessions short and fun. No longer than 5 minutes at a time.
2. Choose a reward that your dog finds reinforcing. Food is the best for most dogs, but some will work just as hard for toys, play, or your attention (simple praise is usually not enough).
3. Reward the behaviors you like and ignore the behaviors you don't. Behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated, those that are not will go away.

SIT

1. Get yourself some yummy treats and cut them into tiny pieces.
2. Stand in front of your dog and place your fist full of treats to his nose.
3. When he starts sniffing for the treats, move your hand slowly towards the back of his head.
4. This will cause him to lift his head towards the treats and his butt will automatically go down.
5. As soon as he sits, say "yes" and give him a treat.
6. Repeat this several times with the treats as a lure, but as quickly as possible, put the treats in your pocket and just use your hand motion to direct him into the sit. We don't want to bribe the dog to sit; we want to teach him that sitting brings~ rewards.
7. After several times of luring your dog into a sit with your empty hand, stand in front of him and wait. If he has learned that sitting gets reinforced he will sit without any luring. When he does, say "yes" and give him a treat and huge praise. Your dog has learned that his own action brings on the reward.
8. Now its time to add the command "sit". When you first start adding the verbal command you must do it AS the dog is engaging in the behavior. This way he learns to associate the word with the action.
9. Stand in front of your dog and wait for him to sit. When you see that he is about to sit, say the word "sit" as he moves into the position. Say "yes" when his butt hits the floor and give him the treat. Do this several times to make a good solid association. Once this is done you can use the word "sit" to command the behavior.
10. When you get to this point you should put the rewards on a variable schedule, which means that he doesn't get a treat for every sit. Maybe he has to do 2 sits, or 4 sits, or a sit and a down, before getting his reward. Keeping him guessing will improve his motivation to do as you ask.

DOWN

1. When your dog is sitting in front of you, hold your fist full of treats to his nose and slowly lower it straight to the ground between his legs. Some dogs will fold down if you just hold your fist there; for others you may need to either pull your fist slightly out in front of the dog or push it back between his legs. Do whatever it takes to get him to lie down without pushing on his back. If he stands up, tell him to sit and try again — do not reprimand him.
2. When your dog lies down, say “yes” and give him a treat.
3. Some dogs will not go all the way down the first time. For these guys, at first reward any lowering of the body towards the floor. Then require him to go lower and lower each time before you give the treat. This is called “shaping the behavior”.
4. Once your dog is going down for the lure, follow the same procedure you used to teach sit. Fade the lure and use only your hand motion to get him to go down, and then wait for him to offer the behavior, and then add the cue word “down”, at first AS he is going down, later as a command.
5. Don't forget to put the behavior on a variable schedule of reward once it is learned.

STAY

1. To teach a dog to stay, ask him to sit and then wait a few seconds before you say “yes” and offer the treat. Your dog is not really doing a separate behavior, he is simply sitting until you tell him that he has done what you wanted — sitting for 2 seconds.
2. It is very important when teaching “stay” that you go slowly. Add time in second increments. This is how you build a strong stay. Don't expect too much too soon, especially with puppies. If your dog can sit-stay for 20 seconds, do not then expect him to sit-stay for 2 minutes.
3. Use this same procedure to teach a down-stay.

COME

1. Teaching a dog to come when called is very important. Make it a fun game — doggie in the middle.
2. Starting in the house where there are few distractions, two people should stand about 6 feet apart and take turns saying, “Come”, and having the dog run back and forth between you.
3. When he gets to you say, “Yes” and give him the treat.
4. Slowly add distance until you are at opposite ends of the house and your dog is running back and forth to the command “come”.
5. Once you have a strong recall in the house, go outside and teach your dog that “come,” means the same thing in the yard. Start over, about six feet

- apart, because there are now a lot of distractions vying for his attention.
6. Once he will come to you from opposite ends of the yard, move on to the park. Again, start 6 feet apart — the park has even more distractions than the yard.
 7. Reinforce the recall by calling your dog to you at all different times. Reward him for coming to the word “come” with a special treat.
 8. Never ever ask your dog to come and then do something bad like cut his nails or yell at him. If you need to do these things —go get him. Coming to the word “come” should ALWAYS be positive.
 9. Be patient — this is one of the most important things you will teach your dog. It can save his life in an emergency.

Leave It & Drop It

You need to practice these two very useful exercises often so that they are in place when you really need them.

1. Leave It: Use the “leave it” command when you want your dog to move away from something. To train the command - have a helper tempt your dog with a low value item (dry food, boring toy) - when she shows interest in the item move towards her, place a higher value item to her nose (yummy food treat), and lure her away, cheerfully telling her to “leave it” as she is moving towards you. Give her the treat when you have moved her several feet away. do this several times so that you associate the command “leave it” with the act of moving away from something. Once you think she has the association, you can start using “leave it” as the command. When she is interested in something say, “Leave it” without showing her the treat. If she has learned that those words mean move away from one thing and get something better she will do it. The next step will be to increase the value of the items she must move away from.
2. Drop It: Use the “drop it” command to teach your dog to give up things that she has in her mouth. When she has a ‘treasure’ approach her with a high value treat, show it to her, and when she spits out the item to get the treat say “drop it” in a cheerful voice as she does. When she moves away from the item and toward you, praise her and give her the treat. Then pick up the item she dropped and give it back to her. Repeat this several times in a row and then leave her with the original item to play with. This way she learns that dropping an item is rewarding (because she gets a treat) and she will often get the item back in the end. Practice this exercise with as many items as you can so she understands what to do when you say “drop it”. When you think you have associated the words “drop it” with the behavior of spitting something out of her mouth, you can start to use it as a command for the behavior. If she is ever reluctant to drop her treasure, drop a quantity of a high value treat far enough away so that she has to get up to reach it.

The Pulling Dog

Does your dog practically pull your arm off when you take him for a walk? Has it become so unpleasant that you no longer want to walk him? Well, you're not alone. Many dogs that have never been taught to walk on a loose leash pull their owners down the street. There are ways to change this annoying behavior, however, and we have a few suggestions.

Dogs have what we call "opposition reflex", which means they pull against pressure. When a dog feels pressure on the front of his throat from his collar, he actually pulls against it. This is why choke collars only make the problem worse. The tighter the collar gets, the more he will pull. It's a vicious cycle. In addition, choke chain collars and prong or pinch collars are painful and can actually damage your dog's trachea. There is no need to hurt your dog because he is doing what comes naturally.

If you want a dog who walks politely on a loose leash you must teach him that this is what you want. Get out some really yummy treats. Put the dog on the leash (starting in the house), hold your hand containing a treat at your waist, and begin to walk. He will be interested in the treat so he will stick by you. Walk around and every once in a while praise him and give him a treat. Then move your practice sessions outside. Practice having him walk by your side in non-distracting environments before going to the park. Start in the backyard and then move to the sidewalk in front of the house. Build the behavior through praise and treats. He will want to stay by your side if you are the most interesting thing in the picture.

Another method is to "become a tree" when your dog pulls you. Start walking, and whenever the leash becomes tight, you simply stop, plant yourself like a tree, and don't say a word. Your dog will eventually look back at you to say, "hey, why aren't we moving?". When he does this he will most likely move slightly toward you, loosening the leash. When there is slack in the leash, start walking again. He will eventually learn that when he feels tension on the leash, he doesn't go anywhere, but when the leash is slack he is allowed to walk.

The Gentle Leader head halter is a wonderful training tool for pulling dogs. The Gentle Leader was designed to work like a horse halter. Head halters work because if you control the head of an animal, you control its entire body. When a dog is wearing a Gentle Leader head halter he is prevented from pulling because as he does, his head is brought around towards you, making it impossible for him to pull you down the street.