

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:

Keep training sessions short and fun. No longer than 5 minutes at a time.

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).

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

Get yourself some yummy treats and cut them into tiny pieces.
Stand in front of your dog and place your fist full of treats to his nose.

When he starts sniffing for the treats, move your hand slowly towards the back of his head.

This will cause him to lift his head towards the treats and his butt will automatically go down.

As soon as he sits, say "yes" and give him a treat.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

When your dog lies down, say “yes” and give him a treat.

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”.

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, 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.

Don't forget to put the behavior on a variable schedule of reward once it is learned.

Stay

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.

It's 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.

Use this same procedure to teach a down-stay.

Come

Teaching a dog to come when called is very important. Make it a fun game doggie in the middle. Starting in the house where there are few distractions, two people should stand about 6 feet apart and take turns saying, “come”, having the dog run back and forth between you. When he gets to you say “yes” and give him the treat. Slowly add distance until you are at opposite ends of the house and your dog is running back and forth to the command “come”. 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. 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. Be patient this is one of the most important things you will teach your dog.

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. 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.