

TRAINING YOUR DOG EVERY DAY

HOW TO REINFORCE SKILLS AND
COMMANDS AT HOME



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HOW DOGS LEARN

Dogs are constantly learning, whether we mean to be teaching them or not. Training is a daily practice throughout the dog's life, woven into every single interaction. Success requires consistency with your interactions and expectations of your dog. If you ask your dog to sit and don't reinforce it, your dog learns they don't always have to sit. If you leave your shoes out and they chew them without consequences, they learned that sometimes they can chew shoes.

The absolute most important thing in preventing unwanted behaviors like barking, pulling, jumping, destruction, or pottying in the wrong place is preventing those habits from being practiced without you there. Every time your dog is able to rehearse a bad behavior without a consequence, that behavior becomes stronger and the time and work required to solve the problem increases!

Reinforcing new rules is time-consuming and requires patience, but if you commit to a few weeks of consistency, you and your dog will enjoy life together like never before. A well-trained dog is a happy dog.

My Biggest Tips

- ★ When using food to reward, it must be given after the desired behavior occurs. It should not be visible just to get the behavior to occur - that's bribery! The exception is the initial teaching phase. Once the dog knows the command, leave those treats for after they have obeyed!
- ★ Do not repeat commands more than once - repeating teaches your dog that they don't really have to listen to you the first time.
- ★ If your pup is not listening to you the first time, it means they are too distracted, choosing to ignore you, or don't understand what you're asking of them! The solution is to guide them with the leash or a treat in front of their nose (luring).

IMPORTANT TRAINING WORDS

- “Yes!” marks the precise moment of the correct behavior. It also tells the dog they are about to receive a reward. The timing of the word is very important. It can also buy you time (1-2 seconds) to deliver the treat. Think of this word as a bridge between the behavior and the reward.
- “No” is just as important as “yes”. You must tell the dog what they have done wrong at the exact moment they do the wrong thing. That way they understand what is correct and what is incorrect.
- “Okay!” means the dog is released from the previous command and free to do whatever they want. Important: Every command must begin and end. Obedience sequence is 1. Command “sit” then 2. Duration (increase over time) then 3. Release “okay”

SIT

Give the command, “sit,” and bring a closed fist to your chest. If your pup does not sit, very gently pull the leash directly upwards, putting gentle pressure on their collar until they sit. The very moment their butt touches the floor, release the pressure! Then before they get up, use your release word “okay”. Your dog is learning that they must sit or you will make them. If they get up before hearing “okay”, silently use leash pressure to make them sit. Over time, they will choose to sit on their own.

DOWN

Give the command “down,” and point at the floor. If pup doesn't know the behavior or chooses not to:

Option 1: Use leash pressure to gently but firmly pull their collar toward the floor. Be consistent and don't release the pressure - it could take 30 seconds but they will eventually lay down. The moment they do, say “yes”, release the pressure on the leash, and reward.

Option 2: Use a treat in front of their nose to lure their head down toward their belly. It looks a bit silly but dogs will follow the treat with their nose and their body mechanics cause them to fold into a down. Then let them have the treat!

STAY/WAIT

Give the verbal command “stay” or “wait” (these are just two commonly suggested words - choose one and be consistent!) and wait a second or two before giving your dog the release command “okay!”. If they get up before you release them, do not repeat the command. Silently use leash pressure to guide them back into the exact spot they were supposed to stay. Work your way up to 5 seconds, 10s, 30s, 60s, 2 minutes, 5 mins, etc. You should eventually further proof the behavior by teaching the dog that no matter what the people around them do, (I do crazy body movements like jumping jacks and high knees) they should not leave that spot!

RECALL

This is the highest priority, most important command. The goal is for your dog to associate your recall word with a HUGE, FUN PARTY! Give your dog a big reward (cheese, meat treats, favorite toy, big praise) every time you recall them. If they hear the command and do not recall within a second or two, use your leash to reel them in like a fish. This way you prove that if they don't come, you will make them. Eventually, they will choose to recall on their own. While still teaching this command, do not recall your dog to give them a negative outcome. A negative outcome is anything the pup receives to be negative, even if we don't think of it as such. For example, if you only recall your dog when you need to put the leash on and remove them from the fun, take something from them, or prevent them from doing something they really want to do, they will start blowing your recall off. Avoid this by always making recalling worth your dog's effort!

DROP IT

Teach "drop it" by offering the dog something of higher value to them as a trade. Eventually, saying "drop it" will signal to them to automatically drop the item and come to you for something better!

If your dog still chooses to take the object, apply upward pressure on the leash until they drop it. You must not allow the dog to ingest unsafe objects. Physically correcting your dog is not wrong or abuse - it is a necessary, appropriate measure to ensure their safety and training.

It's much harder for a dog to drop something that's already in their mouth! Be careful not to overdo it - your dog will start to ignore you if you don't make dropping it worth the effort.

PLACE

The verbal command is “place”. You can use any object big enough to fit your dog. Most clients use an elevated cot as they are comfortable and offer clear boundaries to the dog. Guide the dog onto their place with a leash. Give treats if you want to, but do not allow them to leave the place until you have given them permission with your release word “okay”.

If pup gets off the bed before being released, silently use the leash to put them right back on. “Place” is solidified when the dog understands that going to their place makes the leash pressure disappear, and they choose to go on their own. Build up the duration of time your dog stays in place, and the distance from which you ask them to go.

RESPECTING THRESHOLDS

For their safety and your sanity, your pup must wait at doors, and ideally, street curbs. They will need reminders at different doors, but eventually will understand that all doors are in your control! To reinforce thresholds, start to open the door. As soon as your dog makes any movement toward the door without permission, shut the door quickly. Repeat until they wait. Then give the release word “okay” and to allow them to go through the door.

BARKING

Barking is self-rewarding - it feels good! Combat this by rewarding them the moment they **stop** barking. Assign a word like “quiet” and only give the reward if they stop barking after hearing the word.

If your pup is an insistent barker, read this article: Four Criteria for Creating an Inhibition by Gary Wilkes
<https://clickandtreat.com/wordpress/?p=3255>

BEING LEFT ALONE

Teaching your dog to be comfortable with being alone is so important for their well-being. Starting this training early helps prevent issues like separation anxiety which can look like destructive behavior, barking, anxiety, and distress when alone.

Why It's Important: Dogs need to learn that being alone is a normal part of their daily routine. Training your dog to be independent helps them develop confidence and teaches them to handle being alone with ease.

How to teach your dog to be alone:

1. **Short increments:** Begin with short periods of separation. Find the amount of time that the dog is okay alone before they start to whine or bark. Work just **under** that threshold. When the dog barks, you've left them alone too long. Gradually increase the duration (30 seconds, a minute, 3 minutes, 10 minutes etc.) as they learn to be okay by themselves.
2. **Create a Safe Space:** Use a crate or a specific area of your home as your dog's "safe space." Make it comfortable with bedding, toys they cannot choke on, and a shirt or jacket with your scent on it. This space should feel like a sanctuary. Never, ever use it as a punishment.

BEING LEFT ALONE

3. **Positive Leaving/Neutral Returning:** Make departures and returns seem like no big deal. Leave and return as if the dog is not there to avoid creating anxiety. You can calmly put down a treat or a puzzle toy when you leave to make the experience better.

4. **Consistency:** Practice leaving your dog alone daily. This regular practice helps reinforce their belief that it's not the end of the world to be alone - you always come back!

5. **Monitor Progress:** If you can, set up a camera once or twice to see how your dog does home alone. If they seem stressed, take one step back in training and reduce the duration of separation. It won't always be like this!

If you work on this consistently, your dog will become happier, more resilient, and more secure. This training also benefits you - you can go do things you love without worrying about your pup at home.

CREATING A CALM DOG

Daily breed-specific exercise and enrichment: Your dog's breed was created for a purpose. Give them outlets that fulfill their purpose and you will have the happiest, best behaved dog. Google "(insert dog breed) breed specific exercise" for ideas for your dog. Good exercises for most dogs are pulling/running (get a Nonstop Dogwear harness, do not use a normal harness), searching (hide treats), destroying (give them an Amazon box filled with treats), biting/tugging (tug, flirt pole, bite toys), herding (herding ball or flirt pole), and exploring (new walking route or weekend hike).

Daily Training sessions: Just 10 minutes a day of obedience training can fulfill your dog's desire to work, learn, and interact with you. 10 minutes of intense training is about the same as a 25 minute walk on a 5 foot leash.

Weekly Sit On The Dog: This exercise is incredible for helping pups learn how to calm their body in different situations. Put your dog's leash under your butt, sit down, and only stand up when they are laying down calmly. Don't interact with the dog no matter what they do. Ignore all barking, whining, pulling, jumping, etc. The first time you do this, try it in your living room. Expect to spend about 45 minutes there. Progress to more distracting and stimulating situations.

Monthly New Activity: Do something new and difficult with your dog! Challenge yourself to do a long hike, test their obedience around other dogs, or visit a cafe or restaurant with an outdoor patio. Just like your 9-5 gets old, your dog's daily routine gets old. Keep them young and fulfilled with new experiences!

MY PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Walk your dog on a 15 foot (or longer) leash. The “normal” 5 foot leash is much too short to allow them to sniff, explore, move their body, and actually enjoy the walk. The longer the leash, the less pulling, the more peaceful and fulfilling the walk.
- Play rough with your dog to bond and teach them an on/off switch. When you’re done playing, you’re done.
- Do not allow your dog to meet other dogs on walks.
- Avoid dog parks like the plague.
- If your pup is struggling with allergies, sensitivities, ear infections, poor body condition, or behavior issues... take a closer look at kibble.. The “Pet Fooled” documentary on Amazon Prime is great. Dogs are obligate carnivores which means they have zero need for carbohydrates or fiber fillers. Would you feel good if you had dry cereal for every meal?
- Look into e-collar training for the ultimate offleash freedom and fulfillment. When properly conditioned (over a course of weeks under the guidance of a professional) and used correctly (reinforcement - not punishment), e-collars provide the highest level of freedom while keeping your dog safe. E-collar trained dogs are the happiest, most fulfilled dogs.



YOU GOT THIS!

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There are no bad dogs