

TRAINING YOUR DOG EVERY DAY

HOW TO REINFORCE SKILLS AND
COMMANDS AT HOME



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HOW DOGS LEARN RULES

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. Every time your dog is able to rehearse a bad behavior, that behavior becomes stronger and the time and work required to solve the problem increases!

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

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!

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 very initial teaching phase if we are using luring with food in our hand.



Try not to repeat commands more than once - it will greatly decrease the command's value and teach 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.

IMPORTANT TRAINING WORDS

“Yes!” marks the precise moment of the correct behaviour, and 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.

“Okay!” means the dog is released from the previous command and free to do what they were waiting to do! Your dog will learn to wait for this word, so be consistent with it!

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, like human children, have a deep need to feel safe and secure. However, they also 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 Associations:** Make departures and returns seem like no big deal. Leave and return as if they're not there to avoid creating anxiety. You can offer a treat or a puzzle toy when you leave to make the experience positive.

4. **Consistency:** Keep training sessions consistent. 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, and 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.

SIT

Give the verbal command, “sit,” and bring a closed fist to your chest. If your pup does not sit, or gets up before being released, gently pull the leash directly upwards, putting gentle pressure on their collar, until they sit. The exact second his butt touches the floor, release the pressure! Your dog is learning that they must obey you, or you will apply pressure!

DOWN

Give the verbal command “down,” and point at the floor. If pup doesn’t do it, you must enforce it one of two ways.

1. Use leash pressure to gently but firmly pull their collar toward the floor. Be consistent and don’t release the pressure - they will eventually lay down. The second they do, release the pressure and reward with a treat!
2. Use a treat to lure their head back and down toward their belly. It looks a bit silly, but dogs will follow the treat with their nose and their bodily 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 of your choice. I use “okay!”. Pup should know to stay in the position until released. If they don’t understand 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 this command with a HUGE, FUN PARTY! Give your dog a very high value reward (cheese, meat treats, favorite toy, big praise) every time you recall them. Never, ever recall your dog and 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. This happens commonly, avoid it by making recalling worth your dog's effort!

LEAVE IT

"Leave it," works best when said as soon as you see your dog's intention to mouth/take/eat something he shouldn't. 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 "leaving it" worth the effort. Enforce "leave it" by offering the dog something of higher value to them as a trade. Eventually, saying "leave it" will signal to them to automatically drop the item and come to you for something better!

"Leave it," doesn't work better when said in a harsher or louder tone. It should sound the same as any other command word.

PLACE

The verbal command is “place”. You can use any object big enough to fit your dog as a place! 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. Do not allow them to leave the place until you have given them permission with your release word (“okay” or “free”).

If pup gets off the bed before being released, grab the leash and take them back to the place. “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 eventually 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 and to allow them to cross the threshold!

BARKING

Barking is self-rewarding for dogs - it feels good! Combat this by rewarding heavily the moment they **stop** barking. Quick rewards and good timing are crucial! Pair this with the word “quiet” and use it carefully - this command can “expire” with too much use and not enough rewarding.



YOU GOT THIS!

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There are no bad dogs