

Basic Dog Obedience Notes

Things to Remember:

- Behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated
- The dog decides what he or she finds rewarding, positive training = rewarding “the good”, ignoring “the bad”
- Dogs learn by association and cause/effect (classical and operant conditioning)
- Dogs are poor generalizers (sit means sit in the house, outside, on the street, etc)
- Good training motivates your dog to enjoy responding to and working with you, as well as increases the dog’s confidence
- Practice for short sessions at home and have fun (2-3 10 minute sessions per day is the goal!), make sure you stop while the dog still wants “more”

Marker Training:

- Clicker, pen, “yes”, but clicker preferable
- Mark once the instant the dog offers the correct behavior (“take a picture”)
- The mark is always followed by a reward (for now it’s food), when the mark happens is the most important part
- Concepts for getting the command:
 - Luring (most common)
 - Capturing (use your clicker like a camera - “capturing” the behavior in the moment like “speak”)
 - Chaining (putting together two or more commands to result in one command (example: “roll over” has two or more commands: “down”, “over”, and potentially “stand” eventually wrapped into one “roll over”)
- Human criteria must be very clear, dog’s job is to figure out how to make it “click”
 - Focus on “taking a picture” of the type of behavior you want - use your clicker like a camera

Homework:

- Find treats your dog is excited about even outdoors with mild distractions (assemble the “treat buffet”)
- Load your marker: click followed by treat. Use at least 3 different kinds of SOFT, STINKY, SMALL treats that your dog is excited about.

Name Recognition (use: getting your dog’s attention):

- Say the dog’s name once
- Mark and reward any movement that acknowledges her name
- Work up to rewarding when your dog looks at you

Goals: Practice in every room of your house. Practice outside with low distractions, then take it on the road and practice in the real environments where you need your dog’s attention.

Watch Me (use: keeping your dog’s attention)

- Reward eye contact or looking towards your face
- Make a kissy noise to encourage the dog to look at you
- Add the verbal command once the dog looks at you every time
- Build duration

Goals: Inside your house with low distractions, can your dog look at you for 5 seconds? 10 seconds?

Sit (use: when they are sitting, they are not [insert behavior: jumping, running around, pulling on the leash...])

- With your dog standing, hold a treat to his nose and slowly move the treat up. As the dog's head shifts up, his butt will shift down. Mark the instant his butt hits the floor and reward.
- Repeat until your dog easily shifts into the sit position.
- Add the verbal command without showing your dog any food.
- A hand signal can be added to this easily, just make a similar motion to the one you used for a lure (with no food in your hand).
- Go back a few steps if your dog seems to be struggling.

If your dog has a verbal sit, start adding more distractions. Start with few distractions or far away from distractions and as the dog can handle these, slowly increase the difficulty.

Does your dog truly "know" the command, or do they consistently offer a sit no matter what the cue is because they know this behavior works?

Goals: Practice in every room of your house. Practice outside with low distractions, then take it on the road and practice in multiple environments. For now, reward heavily.

Homework

- Practice name recognition, watch me, and sit.
- What are three situations where you might use watch me?
- Does your dog's body position matter for either name recognition or watch me?

Tips

- Never say any command repeatedly without the dog responding, this will teach her to ignore you.
- Dogs cannot learn two things at once, so we teach the behavior first, then pair it with the command.

Touch (use: getting your dog to redirect to you or greet a stranger without intensity)

- With a treat held under your thumb, let the dog sniff the treat. As soon as the dog touches their nose to your hand, click and reward.
- Repeat until your dog will seek out your hand to touch their nose to it.
- Add the verbal command without showing your dog any food.
- A hand signal can be added to this easily, just make a similar motion to the one you used for a lure (with no food in your hand).
- Go back a few steps if your dog seems to be struggling.

Once your dog has gotten used to this command, start adding more distractions. Start with few distractions or far away from distractions and as the dog can handle these, slowly increase the difficulty.

Goals: Practice in every room of your house. Practice outside with low distractions, then take it on the road and practice in multiple environments. For now, reward heavily.

Down (use: when your dog is lying down, they are not [insert undesirable behavior here])

- With the dog in either sitting or standing position, lure the dog's head towards the floor. You can pull the treat forward or backward slightly depending on which your dog seems to prefer. Mark when the dog's tummy hits the floor and reward.
- Once your dog slides into a down easily, make a similar motion, but with no food in your hand.
- Trick your dog if necessary to get them used to the idea of doing this without seeing food.

- Gradually start to straighten up, until your dog responds to a hand signal with you in a standing position.
- Now add the verbal command: “Down” followed by the hand signal, until your dog responds to the command without the hand signal.

Goals: Work to where your dog can respond to the verbal “Down” command with you standing by next week’s class.

Place (use: when your dog is in their “place”, they are not [insert undesirable behavior here])

- Click and treat any time the dog is touching their “place”. Toss the treat to the side away from the “place” to get them to approach again
- Once the dog understands “the game”, begin adding the command
- Allow a paw or a partial “place” first, then ask for more of the body on the “place” area
- Start moving the “place” area around so the dog has to go back to it and be on it in new positions
- Reward heavily for the dog putting their whole body on the place and lying down
- Goal is to never touch or lure the dog to the “place” - make it a thing the dog does by choice

Homework:

- What are three situations in your life where you might use a touch or a down?

Come (use: all the time!)

- Remember; get your dog’s attention *before* calling her to come (this is why we did name recognition first). Say the command *clearly one time*. If the dog doesn’t respond, make it easier for her before trying again.
- Start with short distances. Call come as if you are outside with the wind blowing, dogs barking, and squirrels chattering and you need your dog to hear you. When the dog gets to your feet, mark, then give her a jackpot.
- At first, always jackpot the dog when she responds to this command correctly (use big rewards!).

Homework:

- Slowly increase distance
- Practice where the dog can’t see you (hide and seek!)
- Practice with different tones of voice
- Have different people practice this behavior with your dog
- Get a long line and start to practice at different distances gradually increasing the difficulty of distractions

Tip: To get a good recall, remember to think from your dog’s perspective. If “come” always ends her fun, why would she listen to you? Never reprimand your dog for coming to you.

Leave It (use: “don’t look at that thing I dropped on the ground! Look at me!”)

- Set a treat near your dog.
- Cover the treat and wait as your dog tries to get it.
- When the dog is polite and waits, mark and give him the treat. You are waiting for **eye contact** from your dog.
- As the dog understands that stealing won’t work, start to uncover the treat, but cover it back up if the dog tries to snatch it. Mark and reward when the dog waits politely **and gives you eye contact**.
- Always reward from your pouch or another hand, and pick up the treat you have asked them to “leave”.
- When the dog is waiting politely every time you set a treat down, then add the word. Say “leave it” then set down the treat. **Remember: they get one chance to “leave it”**.
- When the dog is good at leaving a treat, begin to add in toys. When they get good at leaving toys on command, begin using environmental distractions (other dogs on a walk, people - remember, “leave it” is a modified “watch me” command)

Homework: Start to expand on the items your dog can leave – treats, toys, wads of paper, old shoes, etc. For now, reward every time he gets the behavior right.

Goals:

- Can the dog leave three treats at once?
- Can you set a treat on your dog's paw?
- Can the dog obey a leave it for up to 5 seconds?

Tip: If your dog was asked to leave bacon flavored poison, have you practiced enough that he would understand the command?

Polite Walking (use: to not get your arm pulled off on a walk)

- Practice with your dog in your yard at first. Anytime they fall within the imaginary "hoopskirt", click and give a treat.
- Attach a leash, allow the dog to drag the leash and continue Exercise #1.
- Pick up the leash (still in the yard) and begin to practice Exercise #1 as if you are walking. Make your movement semi-random so the dog can't "predict" where you are going to get the treat.
- If the dog begins to pull, stop immediately and wait for a count of 3. If the dog hasn't turned back to you to "check in" by a count of 3, take a couple of swift steps backwards and call your dog in a cheery tone so they will come back to you with enthusiasm.
- Try the walk again, with lots (LOTS!!!) of treats anytime they are in your "hoopskirt" area. Anytime they are not and begin to pull, stop, wait 3 seconds, then take a couple of steps backwards away from the direction your dog was pulling in.
- Keep rewarding for nice walking beside you or check-ins when the dog looks up at you.

Remember: practice with LOW DISTRACTIONS first, then slowly work your way up. Don't forget to practice "leave it!" when your dog begins to pull towards something they see.

- Turn pulling into an exercise in checking in with the handler.
- Toss a treat, when your dog pulls towards it plant your feet. Mark and reward when the dog looks at you.
- Then teach the dog where to walk.
- Reward the dog on either side for walking nicely next to you. Mark and reward whenever the dog is walking nicely beside you or checks in with you.
- If the dog pulls out in front, plant your feet and wait for him to check in, then continue walking.
- If you want, add a command to tell the dog when to walk next to you.

Homework: Practice a lot, first indoors, then in your backyard, then slowly increasing the difficulty of the distractions where you are walking. This one takes time, both for the human to get used to marking and rewarding while moving and for the dog to believe that it's now more fun to walk next to your human.

Remember that you can practice this organically as well by having the dog off-leash and having them walk next to you in your home/fenced yard and click/treating any time the dog happens to be next to you.

Wait (use: for those times that you'd like your dog to wait but be able to come to you)

- Start with a familiar position, usually sit.
- Give the wait signal and reward immediately when your dog does not move. This is just 1 second at first!
- Gradually increase the amount of time you require your dog to hold still. Once you reach 5 seconds, start increasing and decreasing the difficulty of the behavior randomly – 1 second, 6 seconds, 2, 4, 7, 3, 8, etc.
- Begin moving away from your dog and rewarding for holding position.

- Begin moving away from your dog, rewarding for holding position, then calling to you.

Homework: Work up to a 30 second sit-and-wait, then the dog coming to you.

Drop It (use: drop the chicken bone you just found on the street!)

- Remember this is like bartering with your dog and that bartering is a natural dog behavior
- Allow your dog to take the item (you may say "TAKE IT!" to work on two commands at once! Bonus!)
- Present your dog with a really good treat (baby food, cheese, etc) and wave it under their nose. Some dogs will be stubborn and not want to give up their toy. Just wait them out. Give them the treat when they drop the toy.
- Next, add the command after allowing the dog to take the item. You may want to also add a hand signal (finger pointing to the ground, etc). Immediately after giving the command, present the special treat.

Homework: practice "drop it!" at various times or opportunistically in your home. Remember to practice it outside and on a walk as well (this is where it becomes most important for most people). Remember to have the good treats or, alternatively, go get the good treats! Practice with low-level toys/items and work up to higher-value items.

Important note: never try to force the dog to drop the item that they have or try to take it from their mouth.

Distance Stay (use: for the times you want to be able to go get the groceries without your dog trying to run out with you)

- Give your dog the stay signal then take a half step and come back to the dog. Do not fuss with your treat pouch until after your mark.
- Once your dog gets the idea, add a step at a time.
- As you move farther and farther from your dog, remember to always return to the dog before marking the behavior and rewarding. It's important that the dog not practice breaking the stay.
- If the dog moves before the mark, just say "oops" and immediately make the exercise easier.
- If you started with a hand signal, add the verbal command once you can take ten steps away and return to your dog without him moving. The order is word followed by hand signal.

Tip: The best way to get a reliable stay is slow and steady. Practice in short sessions and never let the dog get it wrong more than once. You'll get more out of practicing multiple easy stays than you will from pushing your dog too hard and him breaking his stay.

Stand (use: grooming your dog, good vet visits, etc!)

- With the dog in a sitting position, lure her into a stand.
- Repeat until the dog moves into the stand position easily.
- Then, with no food in your hand, say "stand" and step away from the dog.
- When she stands to follow you, click and reward in position.
- Begin to take smaller steps until the dog can respond to the verbal command.
- Be careful that the dog is learning to stand, not stand then take several steps towards you.

Homework: work on a stand from a sit and a down.

Duration Stay (use: for those times that you'd like your dog to sit politely next to you for awhile despite distraction)

- Start with a familiar position, usually sit.

- Give the stay signal and reward immediately when your dog does not move. This is just 1 second at first!
- Gradually increase the amount of time you require your dog to hold still. Once you reach 5 seconds, start increasing and decreasing the difficulty of the behavior randomly – 1 second, 6 seconds, 2, 4, 7, 3, 8, etc.

Homework: Work up to a 30 second sit-and-stay.

Effective Reinforcement

- To build value for behaviors and motivate your dog to love offering them, reward every time when a behavior is new. This pays in the long run.
- Once a behavior has been extensively practiced, start to mark and reward randomly. Teach the dog to trust that if they listen to you a paycheck will come, they just don't know when.
- If you mark a reward must follow, but now you are not marking every time.
- You can reward without marking.
- Gradually increase the number of behaviors the dog can do between rewards.
- Always reward if the dog was struggling or made a good choice, such as listening around a distraction.
- Start practicing with treats in places your dog might not expect, versus on your body.
 - Hide them in your home and practice.
 - Hide them on your walking route and practice.
- Use "real life" rewards. Open the door when your dog is polite, attach the leash when he is calm, set down dinner when he offers a sit stay. Use cause and effect to your advantage.

Tricks for your dog!

Kiss: Dab a little bit of peanut butter on your hand (or cheek, if you're brave). Get down to your dog's level and allow them to "lick" your cheek or hand. Add the command "Kiss!" and point at your cheek or hand. The dog should lick the peanut butter (use only a very tiny bit!), and then click and reward for the dog "responding" to the cue. After 5-10 repetitions, begin asking your dog for a "kiss!" without adding the peanut butter, and click and reward for when they do give you a "kiss".

Shake/Paw: Hide a treat in your closed hand and present it to your dog (a soft smelly treat works best for this). Your dog should lick and paw at your hand. The instant your dog paws your hand, click and treat. After 5 repetitions, add "Paw" or "Shake" as the command while presenting your hand (make sure you still have a treat in your closed hand). After 5-10 more repetitions with the command, begin presenting your empty hand to the dog and click/treat for them touching their paw to your hand.

Spin: Take a treat and lure the dog in a circle. When they complete the circle, click and give them the treat. Do this 5-10 times, slowly. Then, add the word "Spin!" and repeat 5-7 more times. Then lure the dog in a circle with your finger (no treat). Click/treat when they complete the circle. Slowly make the circle smaller/higher with subsequent repetitions until you can move one finger in a circle in the air and the dog will spin.