



## **BASIC DOG TRAINING**

### **The kind, fair and effective way**

Training can be started at any age, the sooner the better. You can start simple training with your puppy as soon as he or she has settled into his/her new home. Older dogs are also receptive to training, although some may be less keen or quick to learn than a younger dog. Done properly, training should be fun, both for you and your dog, as well as exercising his brain and reinforcing the good relationship between you.

### **Positive rewards**

In order to be effective and to gain the best results, all training should be based around positive rewards. Positive reward training works because if you reward your dog with something he wants as soon as he does what you ask, he is far more likely to do it again. Rewards can be anything that your dog or puppy really wants and could include; food treats, a favourite toy, playing a certain game or petting. If you are using food treats, you will need to reduce the size of your dog's normal meals or use his whole meal divided up into smaller portions, to prevent your dog putting on weight. Always combine the giving of a reward with verbal praise such as "Good dog".

When teaching a new command, you will need to reward your dog every time that he does what you ask correctly. Once he has the hang of the command, however, it is a good idea to change the way you reward by only giving the reward every now and then, because this will make your dog try harder for his reward. Always verbally praise your dog each time, even if he is not being rewarded with a treat.

### **Why punishment doesn't work**

Punishment should never be used in training. If you punish your dog, it will only teach him to be scared of you and may eventually teach him to be aggressive. He will mistrust you and your relationship may break down.

If your dog is being what you consider to be disobedient or naughty the best thing to do is to have a 'time out'. You must completely ignore him (and that includes looking at him) or shut him out of the room for 5-10 minutes. This works because dogs crave attention and being part of the pack and so removing this is something that your dog understands far better than being shouted at or hit.

### **The basic commands**

The five basic commands you will need to teach your dog in order to obtain a good degree of control are;

Sit, down, stay, come and heel (for walking nicely on the lead)

This is our guide to training in a kind and effective way.

### **Sit**

- Have your dog standing in front of you. Show him that you have a food treat in your hand.
- Slowly move your hand and treat above and over his head towards his tail, as you give the command "sit". His head should go up as he tries to reach the treat.....
- .....and his bottom should go down into the 'sit' position. Give him the treat and praise him.

Do not push his bottom down to make him sit, as he is likely to push up against your hand as a result and may hurt his back.

When training your dog to sit, use the command "sit". Do not use "sit down" as this may confuse your dog when you try to teach the 'down' command.

### **Down**

- Ask your dog to sit and show him the treat in your hand.
- Slowly move your hand down towards the ground in front of him (just in front of his feet), as you use the command "down".
- He should follow your hand with his nose and lay down. Give him the treat and praise.

If you have trouble getting him to lie down in this way, put an object such as a coffee table or a chair between you and your dog and try again. He will have to lie down to get under the barrier to get the treat. Remove the barrier when he gets the hang of it.

Do not push or force his back down as he will push against you and may hurt his back.

### **Come**

- Practice this command in your home first. You'll need to divide your dog's dinner into smaller portions and use these for training. Ask someone in your house to hold your dog by the collar or lead while you show him a portion of his food in his bowl and walk away from him for a few steps. As he is released, call his name and command him to "come".
- He should come to you for his food. Praise him and put his food down as he reaches you so that he can eat it.
- After a couple of days if your dog is coming to you on command, start to make him sit before you give him his food portion. This will give you extra control for when you are outside. Do not actually command him to sit, but instead lift his bowl above and over his head (as before when teaching him to sit), so that he will learn to automatically sit whenever he comes to you.
- Repeat this, gradually getting further away and then out of sight of your dog, in different rooms of your house and then in your garden, until he is coming to you reliably every time he is called.

Now you can try the recall in a safe enclosed outdoor space.

- Keep your dog on a long or retractable lead, and let him move away from you to investigate the surrounding area. Call him as before.
- When he comes, praise and treat him and then release him (though still on the lead). This will teach him that coming to you will not always mean that it is the end of his walk, but will in fact mean something nice.
- If he does not come to you straight away, do not pull him to you but wait until he eventually decides to come to you. When he does come, praise him, no matter how long it takes.

**Punishing him, no matter how cross you are, will only make him scared of you and less likely to come.**

When he comes on the lead every time - try without the lead. Always praise and/or treat, no matter how long it takes. He will soon learn that it is good to come to you when he is called.

### **Stay**

- With his lead on for extra control, make him sit or lay down.
- Step away from him as you command him to "stay". Silently count to five...

- .....step back to him, treat and praise.
- If he gets up, ask him to sit again and repeat the procedure.

After a few successful sessions, drop the lead before stepping away. If he is doing this short 'stay' correctly, gradually increase the distance between you and your dog and/or the time that he is asked to stay. If he gets up when he is not supposed to, go back a stage to a shorter distance or time and then increase again slowly until he is doing as he is told every time.

When you are confident that your dog will reliably stay during training, you can progress to unclipping his lead before stepping away.

### **'Heel' and walking on a lead without pulling**

Practice in your home and garden first as there are fewer distractions for your dog than in the street.

- Choose which side you would like your dog to walk on and then stick to it.
- Hold the lead in the opposite hand and put a treat in the hand nearest your dog.
- Show your dog the treat and walk forwards.
- As he follows your hand, say "heel" and give him a small bit of the treat.
- Keep some treat in your hand and keep going. As he keeps to your side, say "heel" and give him some more treat. Don't stop walking.
- If he doesn't keep up with you, or pulls in a different direction, suddenly change direction and encourage him to come with you. Praise him when he catches up and give him some treat. He'll soon get the idea.

It is a natural, enjoyable behaviour for a dog to want to find out what is happening in his local area by sniffing the ground, lampposts and fences for scents left by other dogs. On walks you should allow him to have a sniff around, but only when you say so and not when he feels like it. When you are ready to let him do this, use a command such as "off you go", so that he can learn when he is allowed to do this. You could use this loose lead 'freedom' as a reward for when he has been performing well on the lead.

### **'Important Training tips' - doggy 'do's and doggy 'don't's**

#### **Do**

- Practice in your home and garden first, before trying commands in public areas
- Start training with your new dog or puppy as soon as possible
- Keep sessions short (15 mins. max.) and fun
- Train him when he is hungry - before his dinner time he will try harder for his treats
- Reward or treat him on a random basis, once the new command has been learnt
- Try to use hand signals with verbal commands, as some dogs may find it easier to recognise these
- Keep commands clear and consistent
- Take your time and be patient
- Stick to one new command per training session at first to avoid confusing your dog
- Consider going to a good local training class
- Try to finish on a high note - your dog is more likely to want to train again next time!

#### **Don't**

- Let your dog get bored - stop immediately if you see this happening
- Tell him off if he gets it wrong
- Shout or physically punish him - it will make him scared of you and may cause him to become aggressive
- Train him if he is tired

- Chase him when you want him to come - he'll think it is a great game and will run away even more
- Try to train him in an area with lots of distractions, such as other dogs, people, noises, smells.
- Expect too much too soon
- Expect him to understand a command until you have taught him what it means

## **Training classes**

If things aren't going well and/or you feel that you need more support, you should consider going to an organised training club.

Having the resources of a trainer and classmates can be very useful, with the added benefit of being able to socialise your dog and teach him how to interact with other dogs under controlled, 'safe' conditions.

From puppy classes to competitive obedience or flyball, there is a class out there to suit both you and your dog's needs and interests.

A good club should;

- Be in a hall that is safe for both dog and owner
- Have adequate space for the size of class
- Have classes small enough so that the instructor can safely supervise all dogs at all times
- Be able to give all individuals adequate attention
- Put you in the appropriate class for your level
- Make sure that all dogs are under control at all times
- Be run in a calm and friendly manner
- Not allow shouting at dogs or handlers - it is supposed to be fun!
- Make sure that all dogs wear flat collars for training (no choke or 'check' chains), unless there is a particular reason for using other equipment
- **Never** use or encourage the physical punishment of dogs for any reason

You can find a training club by;

- Word of mouth - ask other dog owners if they could recommend any clubs in your area
- Ask local vet clinics, rescue organisations or libraries if they have lists of local classes, although these will probably not be recommendations so check them out first! A good trainer will be happy for you to sit in on a class before deciding if you would like to join. If they do not want you to watch it is probably better to try somewhere else.
- The Kennel Club and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) should be able to recommend a club in your area.

## **Useful contacts**

### **Association of Pet Dog Trainers**

Peacocks Farm, Northchapel, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 9JB Tel: 01428 707620  
www.apdt.co.uk

- All APDT members have to use methods which are kind, fair and effective and must adhere to a strict code of practice. Members offer all sorts of services from one-to-one training, puppy classes, training classes, agility, flyball and heelwork to music!

### **The Kennel Club**

1-5 Clarges Street, London W1Y 8AB Tel: 0870 6066750 www.the-kennel-club.org.uk

- The Kennel Club will be able to give you details of various types of training clubs around the UK.

You may also be interested in these other factsheets from Dogs Trust: Barking, Beating boredom, Dogs Trust Guide to Behaviour Problems, Housetraining, Indoor kennels, Socialisation and Training your dog to come to you.

*For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to:*

*Dogs Trust, 17 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7RQ.*

*www.dogstrust.org.uk*

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