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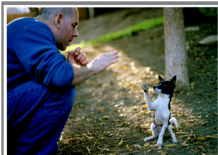
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TRAINING TIPS

Basic Cues

Every dog should know sit, down, stay and come.

by Jean Huxter Walker



Whether big or small, all breeds need to taught the fundamental cues of sit, down, stay and come, according to Steve Brooks, a professional dog trainer in Los Angeles, Calif. (above, training a Chihuahua the most advanced cue of "leave your paw").

hold all the cards, and you can pay or withhold things that matter.

2. Get the timing right. Link the command with the correct behavior by "marking" the moment your pup performs the correct behavior by saying "Good boy!" or clicking with a clicker and rewarding the behavior (with a big smile, pat, toy or treat). This requires good timing from the owner. When teaching a new behavior, the reward must occur in rapid succession and within one to two seconds of the puppy giving the correct behavior.

3. Don't require what your pup doesn't know. "Before you ask your dog to do something, make sure he knows how to do it," Brooks says. "If you start him with that feeling in your gut, if you aren't feeling lucky, if your dog doesn't have room to lie down for a down cue, if he doesn't know the command yet, don't ask him." Your goal is to set up the exercises so that your dog has the greatest chance of succeeding. You want correct responses and you want to be able to reinforce this behavior with rewards. "You want your puppy to win every time," Brooks says.

If your pup doesn't respond to a command, this requires action, too. Your pup must experience a consequence within one to two seconds of failing to give the behavior. "This doesn't have to be a punishment," Brooks says. "It can be a look, withholding a treat, pocketing a toy — any number of things."

SIT CUE

To teach your puppy to sit using a lure, put him on a leash, take a treat in your hand and slowly move the treat from the tip of the pup's nose to the point between his ears. As he follows the treat, he will nod back into a sit.

Once he is in the act of sitting and is 99 percent there, say "sit." Mark the behavior with a "Good boy!" or click from a clicker, and reward him.

"Down the road, you can ask your pup to sit when he's not already sitting," Brooks says.

DOWN CUE

You can use a treat to lure your puppy into a down. From a sitting position, take a treat and slowly move

Imagine being able to walk your puppy down the street on a slack leash, or saying "ah," and not only does your pup sit, but he stays in position, too. Maybe your greatest wish is to have a puppy who comes when he's called. Though a well-behaved puppy may seem like a distant dream, Steve Brooks, a professional trainer and founder of Steve Brooks K9U (www.stevbrooks.com) in Los Angeles, Calif., says every dog can and should be trained!

THE TENETS OF POSITIVE TRAINING

These are three rules to remember when training your puppy the positive way.

1. Rewards must be valuable. Your puppy must see his training rewards as being something for which he's willing to work. "If your puppy gets everything for free — if you've got toys all over the yard, if he gets petted every time he jumps up, if you feed him treats and don't require him to do anything first — it's more difficult to use reward-based training effectively," Brooks says. "Your puppy needs to learn that you



Reinforcing your puppy a few times (such as sit and down) will help make him a well-mannered adult later in life.



If reliable recall for "come" used in a steady tugboat behavior is useful to your pup, as it helps to ensure his safety, if pup will also have taught in some cases added to less likely to accidentally see him caught or associated after dangerous situations.

the treat from his nose to the floor in front of him. Say "down" as he completes the down. Mark the behavior with a "Good boy!" or a click from a clicker, and reward him.

Want another method? Fasten the leash to a locked-door handle and put the pup's treat just out of reach. A puppy will often flip down in an attempt to stretch just a little farther for the treat. As soon as he is 99 percent on his way into a down, say "down." Mark the behavior and reward him.

STAY CUE

There are countless ways to teach your puppy the stay cue. However, Brooks offers a fun approach to this cue that involves two family members. The first family member (person A) is the person who will give the stay cue and walk away from the dog. The second family member (person B) is the "put him back in a sit/down" person. Brooks outlines how it works:

1. Person A has a bag of treats.
2. Person B sits in a chair next to the puppy.
3. Person A puts the puppy in a sit or a down,

depending on which position the puppy is most comfortable with.

4. Person A gives the "stay" verbal cue and hand signal (flat hand crossing and stopping in front of the pup's nose).

5. Person A walks several steps away to the end of the room with the bag of treats, with a relaxed, confident body posture, and then walks right back.

6. If at any time during the exercise the puppy gets up, person A makes a U-turn and puts on the brakes.

7. Person B puts the puppy back in the sit or down position and cues person A to come back.

8. Person A walks back to the puppy, smiling and in a calm, relaxed walk. The puppy is treated, praised and given a treat. "The puppy learns that good things happen to those who wait," Brooks explains.

9. The pup remains in the stay position as person A picks up the leash, makes eye contact, then gives him the release cue ("OK"). "You want your puppy to know that you're the reason he can get up," Brooks says.

10. The stay exercise may start off as a 30-second to one-minute exercise, but with a week, the goal is

to gradually increase the exercise to 10 minutes. Brooks suggests working on this exercise in the morning and using the pup's morning food ration as his reward.

COME CUE

There are dozens of ways to teach puppies and dogs to come. Brooks says. The following are just a sampling of what you can do easily at home with another family member or by yourself.

1. Hide and Seek. Have each family member hide somewhere in the house with a bag of treats. Call your puppy's name. As he's coming to you in a dead run, say "come!" Mark the recall with your voice by saying "Good boy!" or with a click from a clicker, and reward him with praise, smiles and a treat.

2. Sneaking the Puppy. Have one family member hold your puppy. Have another family member call the puppy's name. Hold him until he's so excited he's about to burst, then release him. "As he builds up speed coming toward you, say 'come!'" Brooks says. Mark the recall and reward your pup with lots of attention and praise.

3. Heel to Walk. While on-leash, walk briskly forward. When he starts to pull forward or ignore you, quickly and gently back up. When your puppy spins around and comes running toward you, say "come." Mark the recall and reward him with lots of attention, praise or a treat, then resume walking briskly forward. Using positive, reward-based training, Brooks gets terrific results with clients of all breeds of train-



The stay cue helps puppies and dogs to interact.

ing expertise and dogs of all ages, breeds and abilities. For positive, reward-based training to work, however, it's important to understand the ground rules that form the foundation of this type of training. Using the examples in this article, you should have your dog trained in no time, even if you're new to puppy training. ♦

Jean Huxter Walker is the author of "Training Your Boss" (Harvard, 2001) and lives in Chapeau, Ill.

Walk Nicely

Here's a bonus cue that can come in handy. A dog who walks nicely on-leash knows that when he's positioned at your left side, this is a good place to be, says Steve Brooks, a professional trainer in Los Angeles, Calif. Here are a couple of ways to train for this behavior:

Off-leash

"Go into your [leash] bag and with something really good in your left hand," Brooks says, such as your pup's favorite toy. "In your right hand, have some leaves, bark or wood chips; nothing your puppy would be interested in. Then, just walk around the yard like a dog who's in-heat-out-off. When your dog finds your left side, give him some

food and praise, and reinforce that this is a good side to be on. Then, nonchalantly drop him from your right hand. He'll run over to sniff the ground and realize, 'Hey, that's not good.' Start running — that will get his head up and he'll start chasing you. When he catches up to you on your left side, praise him. When he chooses to heel, reward him."

On-leash

When walking on-leash, remember that dogs will instinctively pull harder in opposition to restraint. "Before your puppy has a chance to pull you," Brooks says, "apply a little pressure, forward pressure with the leash to your puppy. He'll instantly move backward from the pressure."