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TRAINING TIPS

Ta-Da!

Tricks do double duty:
They're fun and they aid in obedience.

by Joan Hustace Walker

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f you enjoy watching dogs perform tricks, it's time to join the fun! Travis Bronsen and his boxer, Presley, winners of the inaugural Greatest American Dog competition, share their secrets for trick training.

LEARN THE BASICS

When Bronsen, a Los Angeles, Calif., resident, entered his 16-month-old puppy in the CBS reality program, Bronsen confesses that he and Presley did not know much. "Presley knew how to sit and fetch, but that was about it," Bronsen admits.

So, prior to competing in the show, the two spent time working with one of L.A.'s most sought-after trainers, Steve Brooks (www.stevebrooksK9U.com).

"Steve trained me on how to be a good owner, a good partner with my dog and a good trainer. He trained me how to train my dog," Bronsen says.

The following tricks are some that Brooks helped Bronsen teach his puppy.

TRICK #1: PAW TOUCH

This trick may take lots of practice, especially for puppies with short attention spans.

1. Start with your pup standing next to a small board (or other flat object).
2. When your pup touches the board with his paw, point at the board, say "touch" and reward him.
3. Repeat, being careful not to do too many repetitions at one time. (You don't want to bore your pup.)



Presley awaits the open-hand signal to "touch" — a trick every dog can do — from his owner, Travis Bronsen.

4. Once your pup has made the connection of touching the board with his paw with the finger point and the cue, place the board a few inches away. Repeat the process of marking the behavior with the point-and-voice cue, and reward.
5. Don't give your pup a cue multiple times; only give the cue when he gives the cue. Gradually back