



Module 16: Training Dogs: More on How Dogs Learn

- About house training your dog
- Teaching commands
- Four words to live by
- How your dog reads body language

Module 16 will explore dog fears, phobias and aggression by exploring the following topics:

- House training your dog
- Teaching commands
- Four words to live by
- How your dog reads body language
- Grooming training

Training Dogs: More on How Dogs Learn - 4m42s

16.1 Introduction

Dogs learn through operant conditioning and there are certain natural reinforcements you can use during training exercises to help your dog succeed.

Remember that your dog will learn through the timing and frequency of rewards, from other pets and people, and also that dogs are not all the same.

All of these points from Module 12 are extremely important to note as you start obedience training with your puppy or dog.

16.2 House Training Your Puppy



Any form of training your puppy or dog will go through requires patience, consistency and positive reinforcement.

It will take four to six months for your puppy to be fully house trained based on their growth and ability to learn. Some puppies can take up to a year before they are fully house trained. Every puppy is different and each one will learn in their own way and in their own time.

Size is usually a predictor with regards to the length it may take for you to house train your dog. Smaller breeds naturally have smaller bladders with faster metabolisms; therefore, they require more trips outdoors.

The location in which your puppy or dog previously lived can also be a factor in how easy it will be to break habits learned at another location. During training some setbacks may occur.

You should start training a puppy from the age of 12 to 16 weeks old. At this stage your puppy has enough control of its bladder and bowels to learn to hold the need for urination or bowel movements.

These steps should be followed:

- Give your puppy a regular feeding schedule; do not leave food out between meals.
- First thing in the morning take your puppy outside.
- Do keep a watch on your puppy and look out for signs that he wants to relieve himself.

- Do continue training consistently; don't stop suddenly.
- Take your puppy out before you go to bed.
- Take your puppy to the same location each time to do his/her business. His scent will prompt urination.
- Stay outside with your puppy each time he does his business, at least until you have your puppy house trained. Don't speak to your puppy while he does his business; stay quiet and let her get on with it at his own pace.
- Don't punish your puppy, shout or make a fuss; continue to reward good behaviour.

Remember that the puppy picks up on your energy very easily and will be stressed with any signs of impatience or annoyance.

Show your approval by taking him for a walk or petting him after he relieves himself. Operant conditioning involves rewarding appropriate behaviour and withholding the reward during inappropriate behaviour.

Remember - you also have to do your part in the training. Follow the steps as outlined and make certain you read your dog's communications accurately.

16.3 Teaching Commands

Part of obedience training is teaching your dog or puppy commands.

The earlier you start to teach your puppy, the better. Your puppy starts to learn inappropriate behaviours from the minute it arrives in your home.

Remember, your dog is learning from you and any other pets you may have.

If there are behaviours you do not want your puppy to adopt, you need to put a stop to them appropriately. There will be more in a later section about training out certain behaviours but for now concentrate on teaching some common commands.

How to Teach Sit

You need to be on the same level as your puppy, so either sit on the floor or in a chair. Hold a treat close to his nose. Get your puppy to follow the treat with his head as you move your hand up. As his head moves up gravity will take over, his bottom will start to lower and eventually rest on the floor. As soon as his bottom is on the floor give the treat and immediately praise your puppy. Repeat these steps several times each day.

The next step is adding a second stimulus to get the response you want. When you hold the treat

make certain it is at the correct level for the dog, so he does not try to jump. You also want to have your hand closed around it and held just high enough that your dog will stretch his neck. As your dog sits you will give your dog the treat and say "sit". You will then rub your dog's bottom and tell him "good sit". This reinforces the behaviour you want your dog to have.

Repetition is imperative.

You want to repeat this throughout the day as well as throughout their training. Once you get your dog to sit without a treat and just on your voice command you will still need to practice and provide praise. You can forego the treat but always make certain you tell your dog "good sit" every time they sit on your command. You also want him to sit for other activities.

At each feeding time make your dog sit by the food bowl. When you are about to open the door to take him out to do his business or to go for a walk, make him sit at the door. If he breaks the sit, make your dog sit again before rewarding. The rewards can also be natural. Your dog will learn that sitting at the door is a must before going out, thus they get a reward for going outside as soon as the behaviour "sit" has been completed.

How to Teach Come

Teaching your dog to come when you say, "come" out loud is a culmination of previous techniques and encouragement with the lead.

First, clip a lead onto your dog's collar. It can also be a piece of string. It should be light-weight as you will want your dog to drag it around with him. Once he is accustomed to the line, it is time to pick up the end. You will follow him with the line on his collar. Let your dog get used to the fact that he is attached to you.

You do not have to use the word "come" as a way to get your dog to come to you.

Many people have started using the word "yes" along with treats to encourage their dogs to come towards them.

It is up to you.

If you want to use "come" then you can say "come" when he starts to move towards you.

Follow the word by a treat and praise.

Let your dog walk backward or around, but each time he faces you use the word "come", and provide a treat when he reaches you. Every time your dog responds the way you want him to when you use the word "come", you need to praise your dog.

Once your dog understands that there is a reward for coming towards you, you will start to change the routine. Start offering fewer treats when an appropriate response is given. Instead, start increasing the pleasure of praise and affection. Use the lead to give your dog a signal along with the word.

You always want to provide one word and not repeat the phrase multiple times.

However, you can give a gentle tug on the lead to remind your dog that you two are attached. This will get your dog's attention back on you, so he knows that you want him to come to you. Always gently guide your dog towards you. Never give a harsh tug.

You also want to make certain that if your dog does not follow your "come" command that you are not negatively reinforcing the behaviour to ignore you. A negative consequence or angry response will affect your animal. You also never want your dog to "come" and give him a punishment. This will confuse your dog and also it will teach your dog that if they come to you they might get hurt.

How to Teach Stay

"Stay" is an extremely difficult command and behaviour to teach.

Puppies are full of exuberance and like to move around whether it is to follow you or to go and play. "Stay" can be too difficult a command for some dogs when they want to be close to you. There are some good ways to teach your dog to stay; especially when it is very important. You do not want your dog to go chasing a duck, cow or a car. You want to ensure they are safe at all times and will stop and stay at your command.

Make certain when you teach your dog how to stay that you are training with important factors in mind. Your dog should understand the command is for their safety. This can happen by you using the command only when it is appropriate and not when you just want to go to another room.

You can train your dog later on how to stay when you leave a room, but for now focus on keeping him safe with the obedience command.

- Put a lead on your dog and have him sit in a comfortable position next to you.
- Next use a flat palm and wave it toward his muzzle as you say "Stay".
- Step in front of your dog, wait to see if your dog moves, and only wait for a few seconds, then step back beside him and give your dog a reward if he did not rise or move with you.
- If your dog moves then simply take the position again and tell him to sit. Give the "Stay" command along with the hand signal. Move in front of your dog again.

Do not give your dog a reward if he moves.

This means you will not give your dog a treat, praise or affectionate pat. You will just have him sit again and try the hand signal with the phrase again.

Practice the same command throughout the day at different times. Never forget to reward your dog when he stays. You can praise him, give him a treat or offer affection.

You also need to teach him a release word that means your dog can move again. This can be the word "Okay" or "Come". You can also use a signal such as a different hand waving motion, perhaps a gesture you teach with the command "Come".

How to Teach Down

Dogs love to jump but it is not always appropriate behaviour.

Your dog can also get into trouble if they are under your feet. So, while it is difficult to teach your dog to contain their excitement, it is necessary. The posture you are asking your dog to be in is submissive, which makes it hard to understand.

Always use a happy voice when you teach this command.

As you did with the Sit command, hold a treat in your closed hand and have your hand near your dog's muzzle. When your dog notices the scent of the treat, move your hand towards the floor. Gravity will ensure your dog moves lower as he follows the treat in your hand. You will want to move your hand in front of him along the floor, while the head follows your treat-filled hand. The body will follow and he will stretch down.

When your dog is down, give the treat.

Repeat the process.

Repetition will always make the appropriate response happen again. If your dog tries to get the treat without going down, simply shake your head indicating "No" and say "Nope" out loud. If your dog breaks the position then start over again. You should never push your dog down. Your dog will eventually get the point that the treat is given when he follows what you ask.

This is the operant conditioning part of training your dog with commands. The repetition is also necessary to ensure the lessons stay in their mind. Remember, you have to give the treat as soon as the appropriate behaviour is seen and repeat the training frequently to ensure it holds.

16.4 Your Dog Reads Body Language



Dogs pick up very quickly on our body language and immediately respond to annoyance, irritation or impatience.

Always keep your shoulders and posture relaxed and speak in a calm, assertive tone. Give a lot of praise and keep your behavioural responses consistent in order to help your puppy learn faster. Do not terminate training sessions suddenly. Keep training your dog 3-4 times a day for short durations until he is completely conversant with common commands.

More than the words you say to your dog, your dog is looking at your actions.

Every move you make during training is a gesture to your dog. How they interpret that gesture will determine if they stay in the training position you are currently working on.

Whenever you like a behaviour, you must respond with a happy voice saying something like "That's good" while rewarding by touch or treat. You always want to provide proper positive reinforcement as this entices your dog to learn more.

16.5 Training for Grooming

Grooming is not something most dogs like.

They would rather play, be close to you and get affection. Your dog will allow you to groom them with a brush, clip their nails and bathe them because there is a reward in it for them.

The trick is teaching the reward with the obedience you wish to see. Start off slowly with grooming.

Let your dog smell the utensils you will be using. If they are new there will be a new scent about them which could affect your dog. A good idea is to use treats to help overcome the new scent. For a brush you could find hair that came from your dog and rub it into the brush. By associating the equipment with your dog they are more likely to accept the new objects.

Ask your dog to sit. Ask them to stay. Start with the brush. If they like it they will enjoy the attention. You may need to reinforce their still behaviour with your hands by petting and rubbing them.

Once the brush is learned the next part is teaching your dog to give you a paw. Like the other commands you learned, repeat by using the gesture you associate with the dog to give you his paw. Usually you want to hold out your hand and place your dog's paw in it. Do this just a few inches off the ground. Give your dog a treat. Next time hold out your hand and wait for the paw to be placed in yours. If this happens, give a treat. If not, do the gesture again until the paw is placed in your hand. Keep increasing the level of your hand and the paw. Always provide praise or a treat. When your dog is ready, raise the clippers and try to clip one nail. If they move away, be patient, wait for the paw, praise, and then clip the nail. If they allow you to clip a nail, reward your dog by saying "good" in a happy voice and with a treat. Soon your dog will realise you want their paw and they will get a reward for the process of having their nails clipped.

Summary

In this module you learned how to train your dog with obedience training pointers, as well as how to start grooming your dog.

You now realise that training your dog is a lot of work, with necessary repetition of various stages.

You also know that if there are two parts to the command or behaviour you want to see, you need to

teach your dog the proper response in stages.

Training your dog is about repetition, patience and reinforcement of the behaviour over a long period of time, not just one training session.

You and your dog will train together with positive reinforcement, whether natural or through praise and treats.

You also know that you retrain your dog through reinforcing proper behaviour and ignoring bad behaviour.

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