

BASIC OBEDIENCE TRAINING

Whatever the method you choose to train your puppy, *the first step is to be absolutely sure that your puppy understands what is expected of him.* It is important to **CONSISTENTLY praise** your puppy for doing the right thing. Positive reinforcement is a much more powerful and safer tool than punishment. Once your puppy understands what you want him to do and he misbehaves, a mild reprimand is all that is needed; followed by showing the puppy the correct behavior and praising him.. Ignoring or isolating the puppy after he misbehaves can also be useful. Improperly applied or excessive punishment often backfires. Many puppies become afraid of their owners or sometimes try to fight back aggressively because they don't understand why they are being punished. ***Punishment after the fact does not work!***

WALKING WITH A COLLAR AND LEASH. Get your puppy used to a collar and leash right away. These are essential to protect the dog throughout its life. Start with a narrow, soft nylon collar and lightweight leash. When you are outside, try to walk along with your puppy, keeping the leash loose so that he does not get used to walking while pulling. If he lags behind or runs ahead, a few short, gentle jerks on the leash are usually all that is needed to get him walking on a loose lead again. Some dogs may do better with a harness.

PRACTICE KEEPING YOUR PUPPY'S ATTENTION AND EYE CONTACT. One of the biggest problems in training a dog is getting his attention so that he will listen to you. Getting your puppy to look at you and pay attention will make teaching any kind of command much more successful. Encourage your puppy to make eye contact with you by saying his name and holding a food tidbit close to your face. When your puppy looks at you, praise him for maintaining eye contact. Now that he's looking at you, he's ready to listen to a command.

SIT. This is the easiest command to start training. Take a food tidbit and hold it in front of your puppy's nose in a closed fist. Pass your fist toward the back of your puppy's head as you say "Sit!" As his head goes up and back and follow the treat, he usually will automatically sit. Repeat this exercise regularly until your pet learns to sit as soon as the command is issued.

STAY. Stay is nothing more than a long sit. To teach your puppy to stay, stand in front of him and ask him to "Sit." When he does, praise him but don't give him a treat. Instead, say "Stay" and you step back and give him an open hand signal. Then, immediately give him the treat. Repeat the process, increasing distance you step back from your puppy. Go only one step at a time.

DOWN. After your puppy has mastered "stay," he is ready to learn the "down" command. Start by giving him the "stay" command. Then, as you say "down" take a food treat in your fist, place it as his nose, and pass it down to the floor. Your puppy will follow the treat and lie down. After your puppy consistently goes into the "down" position, you can teach your puppy to stay in this position just as he learned for the sitting position.

COME. When your puppy will sit or lie down and stay while you take ten steps away, he is ready to begin the "Come" command. Give your puppy the "Sit" (or "Down") and "Stay" command. Take five steps back, whistle, say your dog's name and "Come" in an excited tone of voice. You may want to open your arms or make some other welcoming gesture to encourage him to come. When he gets to you praise him and give him a treat. Follow with a "Sit." Repeat the command (taking only five steps) ten times, then increase the distance to ten steps. Always praise your puppy when he comes to you on command. Never call a puppy to scold him or do anything that he won't like (such as giving medication or a bath). Responding to the "Come" command should always be a positive experience for the puppy.