

DOG TRAINING BASICS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO GET STARTED

A COLLAR

In most training programs nowadays, choke collars have gone out of favour and a regular leather or nylon collar is the preferred choice.

I like a harness for everyday use. I once had a puppy slip out of a collar and walk right into a busy street. Luckily, I was right behind him. Since then I have used nothing but a harness on all my dogs for walking and for training.

A LEASH

You will need a short leash to train your dog. A good length is 6 ft. Later on, if you decide you want to train in a park or field, you will want to invest in a longer leash so your dog has more freedom. But for basic obedience training you should be good with a shorter leash.

TREATS (The way to a dog's brain.)

My favorite treats are soft kibble. These are smaller than most treats on the market and much cheaper. Small soft kibble is especially good for small dogs. You can even use semi-soft cat food: your dog won't know the difference.

If a trick is fairly hard to learn, then I will use a special treat such as cut up bologna. I don't keep these treats in my hand as they distract the dog. Instead, I use the clicker to announce the treat.

Some other possible treats include: small cereals, hard cat kibble, broken up crackers or cheese, and peanut butter off the end of a stick. Nothing should be

much bigger than the end of your small finger. You don't want to have to buy your dog a treadmill!

Note: Most commercial training treats are too big and I cut them up.

If your dog is overweight you can get calorie reduced treats. Again these are quite big and can be cut in half.

Another type of treat is a special toy that the dog plays with only at the training session. I use a dog rope toy at the end of the training session as a reward. It is the only time they get to play with this type of toy.

CLICKER (OPTIONAL)

Some trainers swear by the clicker method. I don't use one all the time. However, they are great for when there is a time lapse between the accomplishment and the reward. The clicker tells the dog that a treat is forthcoming. The dog performs the command, you click, and then you give the dog the treat.

YOUR VOICE

Your voice is the most important thing you bring to the training. The tone of your voice says it all. When you give the command, your voice should be firm. When you reward, your voice should be a bit "gushy". Most dogs love to be praised. But dogs don't respond well to yelling. They will either start barking to jump right into the yell fest or they will cower. So get off the blow horn.



I use the words “Good dog”, not “Good boy or Good Girl”! This way I remain consistent.

Some trainers say you should never use the word “No.” I will leave that up to you. I feel that a firm no is the best tool you can use to tell the dog he is doing something wrong. During training I will say, “No, that’s not it.” If the dog nips me while taking the treat, I will say “No, that’s bad.” No yelling necessary.

CUE CARDS

It’s difficult enough to bring the treats, the special equipment and the dog(s) to the training session, never mind lugging around a training book.



You can only do so many tricks per session so I just bring 3 X 5 cue cards listing the tricks I hope to cover. You can really only do one new trick per training session so the other tricks will be a review of what they have already learned.

Some tricks require several steps---especially when you are first teaching them a new trick. So, I write down the steps on a cue card.

As an example. To teach your dog to roll over, you may have to go through several steps such as

1. Sit
2. Down
3. Reach (teaches him to reach toward his back)
4. Finally, roll over.

Some tricks have even more steps and you may need to remember 6 or more steps and the command you used at each stage. It's important to use the same commands or you will confuse the dog. I taught my dogs to do figure eights through my legs with the word "Weave". The dogs remembered the trick from the visual cue, but I forgot the word I used. Now I have learned to write everything down. This is especially important if you are using more than one source (i.e. books, videos, podcasts) for your training methods as I do.

Using cue cards will: 1) ensure you remember the steps, 2) ensure you remember the commands and 3) ensure you don't use the same command for two different tricks!

A STUDENT

Of course, you will need at least one willing student.



THE RULES

(what I learned the hard way)

REINFORCE ONLY GOOD BEHAVIOR. IGNORE BAD.

If the dog goes into bad behavior and doesn't stop – such as excited barking – try turning your back to the dog and don't look at him again until he has stopped the nonsense. Or simply look down at the ground. Ignoring the dog is the key here.

Always end on a positive note. At the end of the training either play with the dog or finish with a trick you know the dog can do.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Start training somewhere where there are no distractions and gradually add more distractions such as noises, other people, and finally other dogs.

Only once you trust the dog should you bring him in an area where there are excited children like at a park or near a playground. At this stage you will also want to invest in a longer leash and something to tie your dog to such as a hook that twists into the ground or a lasso that goes around the tree. Some tricks require that a dog have some freedom. But always ensure you still have control.

TIME

Young dogs can only concentrate for a short period of time. Eventually you should be able to do 2 to 3 fifteen minute sessions per day, assuming you have that much time to allot to this activity.

My best advice here is to give what you can. Also, never give up just because you missed a week, a month or even the whole winter. You'll be surprised what dogs will remember and for how long.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NEVER DO

So here's the rub—you can never “spank” no matter how disobedient the dog is. This is the first thing all dog owners need to know. When your dog comes to you never, never, never (do I need to say it again?) NEVER hit him or yell at him. It doesn't matter if you've been calling to him for half an hour and he ignored you, when he does get back to you, you need to grit your teeth and say, “Good dog!” Or, if you're too angry to manage that, stay calm and say nothing.

Hitting a dog when he gets back to you tells him he will be punished for coming to you. Think about it. Would you go to someone if he said, “Come here, I'll smack you one!” Or “Come close, so I can grab you by the scruff of the neck and yell right in your face!!”

The best advice I ever got was to run the other way when your dog is running away from you. You can yell “Bye, Spot.” I only have to say “Ha-haw”, and my dogs want to know what I'm up to. Make it a game for the dog to catch you instead of the other way around. I know this goes against all our instincts. If the dog doesn't come, try throwing yourself on the ground, again acting as if it's a game.

TRAINING MORE THAN ONE DOG AT A TIME

Always use the dog's name before the command:

Spot, Jump.

Rover, Sit.

This will alert all the dogs as to which dog you are asking to do the command.

Also, if you are training two dogs at once, don't allow one of the dogs to take over the training of the other dog(s). I have always had at least 2 dogs and one is always dominant. The alpha dog will have a surprising number of tricks inside her fur. She will steal the other dog's reward, she will stand between you and the other dog(s), and she will do the trick the minute you give the command before any of the other dogs even have time to make a move. You need to regain control fast. I had one beta dog just give up. He actually left the room and looked like he was glowering back at me for having lost control of the situation. It took me a while to convince him to come back to class.

Teach the dog to sit on a mat while you train the other dog(s). Reward him for doing so. Return him to the mat with no treat if he leaves the mat.

Oh, and size does not always determine which dog will be challenge you. Some small dogs have attitude.

BASIC TRAINING STEPS

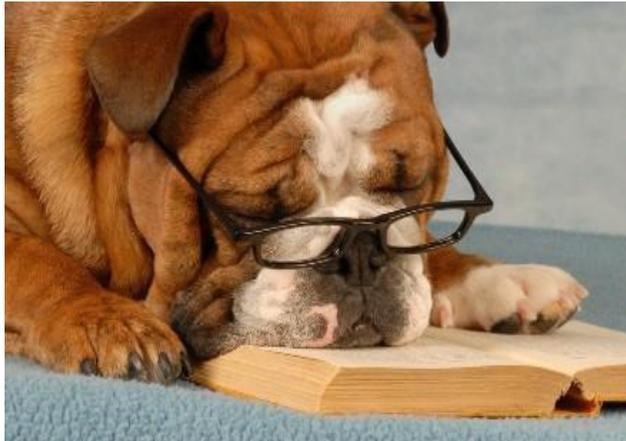
Following are the steps to train your dog to pay attention.

1. Say the dog's name.
2. Say the command
i.e. "Spark, Focus" *said in a firm tone.*
3. Use a hand signal.
i.e. "Hold up your hand."

If the dog performs, that is, he looks at you and anticipates the next command.

4. Click the clicker or say your approval command such as "Good dog."
5. Provide a treat.

FURTHER RESOURCES



Teach your dog to behave – Bashkim Dibra

101 Essential Tips, Training Your Dog – Dr. Bruce Fogle, DVM

Dog Care & Training – Carina MacDonald

Dog training handbook – a 10 week training course, Stella Smyth & Sally Bergh-Roose

<https://dogmantics.com/>

<http://www.useyourclicker.com/nana-the-border-collie.html>