



Basic Manners

These foundation skills are the most common ones that people will teach their dogs and can be very useful in day-to-day life. As well as giving your dog something to learn and the opportunity to use their brain, it also helps to build a bond between you and get your relationship off to a good start!

Note:

All of the following protocols are written with the intention of using a clicker. While clickers are often the most effective and efficient way to mark and train behaviors, you do not need to use a clicker for these plans to work. You can simply switch out the clicks for verbal markers such as "yes," "good," etc. if desired.

Touch

The touch is a very simple and often times very useful cue. If a dog is fearful or hand-shy, then teaching this trick is a great way to build confidence or trust that people and their touch is a good thing. A great thing, actually!

Teaching the behavior:

1. Begin by holding out your hand off to your side, head level to the dog. Wait for the dog to walk up to your hand to inspect it.
2. Once they touch your hand with their nose, say "Touch", click and reward, giving a treat from your opposite hand.
3. Repeat and begin alternating hands and the distance until they start immediately running towards your hand and pressing their nose up against it. When the dog is consistently touching your hand and without hesitation, you can start rewarding additional body contact. Any time the dog makes contact with you, whether is is with their paw, shoulder, hind end, etc., click and reward.

Tips:

- Be patient, but if the dog loses focus, reset the game.
- Give lots of breaks.
- Time your click to just before/as the nose touches your hand.
- Practice with your eyes closed.

Sit

To teach your dog to sit, it's best to use luring. A lure is a treat that the dog follows around, which allows us to get them into our desired position.

Teaching the behavior:

1. Put a treat in your hand and close your hand into a fist. Get them interested in it by placing it an inch — *no further!* — from their nose.
2. Let them sniff your hand, and move it very slowly so they will follow your hand. Once they are reliably following your hand, place the treat in front of their nose and then slowly bring your hand up and then over their head.
3. They should follow your hand and drop their bottom onto the floor in a sit position. When they do sit, immediately click and reward.

Troubleshooting:

It's important to slowly lure your dog into the sit position. If you move your hand too fast, they either won't be able to follow you or they will simply back up or spin around towards your hand. Here are some other troubleshooting tips if your dog won't follow the treat into a sit:

- Is your dog jumping to try and reach your hand? Try lowering your hand closer to their head. You may be holding it too high and this is enticing them to jump up.
- Is your dog seemingly uninterested in following your hand? Try increasing the value of the treat.
- Is your dog flinching when you move your hand over their head? Try slowing your motion down, or use a different hand signal altogether. That would also be a good time to begin working on hand targeting.

Down

Just like with “sit”, you are going to use the same luring technique to teach your dog “down”. Begin by asking the dog to sit and then, with a treat in your hand, put your hand in front of their face and slowly move your hand towards the ground. This is where you can do a few different things, depending on what works for your dog:

Teaching the behavior:

Standard Down Plan A:

1. Bring your hand all the way to the ground and then begin moving it out and away from your dog.
2. They should follow your hand, and once it gets far enough away their front paws will slide out and they will lie down on the ground. Click and reward!

Standard Down Plan B:

1. Once you get to your dog’s chest level, instead of moving your hand away, begin moving your hand in towards them.
2. They should start to bunch themselves up and eventually their back end and hind legs will slide out from under them. Click and reward!

Tunnel Down

If neither of the above two techniques work, then you can try luring your dog under your leg and into a down position.

1. Begin by kneeling down on the ground, and extend one leg out.
2. With the treat, lure your dog underneath your leg. Make sure they have plenty of room to crawl underneath, but not enough where they can simply walk through.
3. As they begin to go under your leg, slowly extend decreasing the amount of room they have until the only way to go underneath is to lie down and crawl under. The moment they hit the ground, click and reward!

Break it Down!

You can also teach the cue by breaking it down into approximations. For a dog that’s having difficulty picking up on the full behavior all at once, reward for every little step of the way.

1. Click and reward your dog for bending their legs.
2. After a few times of doing that, wait for some paw movement, typically them putting their paw out, almost like they’re about to take a step. Once they do that, click and reward
3. Keep breaking it down until they lay all the way down on the ground, each step earning a reward while the previous does not anymore!

Leave It

Start by holding several treats in your closed fist, and hold it out for your dog to investigate.

1. Most dogs will sniff, lick, and/or paw at your fist.
2. Do not give the dog any instructions or direction; instead, simply ignore all attempts to get at the treats.
3. As soon as your dog backs off, mark (either say, “yes!” or click) and treat by opening your fist and quickly giving your dog a treat using the other hand.
4. When you get to Step 3, where the treats are first visible, if your dog moves towards your open hand quickly close it again. When they back off again, open your fist again and mark (say “yes” or click) and reward when the dog stays back for 2 seconds.

Very quickly, most dogs learn that to get the treat, they must not TRY to get the treat.

Stay

The stay cue is exactly what it sounds like: You ask your dog to “stay,” and they don’t move until you tell them to. This can be done either in a sit or a down. There are three components that make up a strong and successful stay: distraction, distance, and duration. Work this plan on a towel or blanket, and you will automatically get the dog to love doing stay on a “mat” without any extra work!

Teaching the Behavior:

It’s easiest to master the stay cue if your dog already knows a sit or a down cue. You can teach a standing stay, but it’s often more difficult as the dog will be more inclined to walk and follow you later in the exercise.

Begin by choosing which position you’d like to work with your dog in, whether it is a sit, down, or standing. Stand in front of your dog and say “stay” while holding your hand out, open palm (as if you’re giving a “stop” signal) in front of you. Count to “one.” If your dog does not stand or begin walking (also called “breaking” the stay), then click and reward. If your dog breaks their stay, then put them back into the position they were in, and start from the beginning.

The 3 “D”s; Duration, Distance and Distraction:

These are the three components that make up a strong and successful stay.

1. Duration:

Once your dog is able to successfully stay to the count of “one” a minimum of 8 out of 10 times, begin to extend the duration. The next step would be to put your dog into position in front of you, hold your hand out and then count to “two”. If they do not break the stay, click and then reward. After another 8 out of 10 successful stays, increase the duration another second. Our goal is to achieve a 5-second stay.

2. Distance:

After you are able to achieve a 5-second stay, begin to add some distance. Give the stay cue and now take one step back and count to “one”. If your dog does not break their stay, click and return to the dog to deliver their reward. After 8 out of 10 successful stays, move on to taking one step back and counting to “two”. Our goal again is to achieve a 5-second stay.

3. Distraction:

Start working somewhere quiet and predictable, where you can best control the environment, like inside your home. Once they’ve mastered the “stay” indoors, start adding more distractions like tossing a toy or treat, moving outside to a yard, then a park, etc.



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