

Teach Your Puppy These 5 Basic Commands

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Getting Started

To start off on the right foot (and paw!) with your pup, he'll need to know what you expect from him. This will make him feel secure in his ability to meet the goals laid out for him going forward.

The foundation of training is based on [correction and reward](#). Correction should never be harsh or angry, and should never involve physical punishment such as spanking or hurting your dog. All you need is your voice: A firm "No!" is enough correction for most puppies.

A reward is simply anything your dog likes a lot. Most people use small bits of a "high value" food for [training treats](#)—something special—such as dried liver or particularly tasty dog biscuits. Lavish praise or the chance to play with a favorite toy can also be used as a reward. Dogs have to be taught to like praise. If you give the dog a treat while saying "Good dog!" in a happy voice, he will learn that praise is a good thing and can be a reward in itself.

[Puppies](#) can begin very simple training, such as wearing a collar or learning about praise, at about 8 weeks. You can begin teaching the basic five commands described below when the puppy is 12 to 16 weeks old. Always keep [training sessions brief](#)—just 5 to 10 minutes at a time, at first—and always end on a positive note. If your puppy is having trouble learning a new command, end the session by reviewing something he already knows and give him plenty of praise and a big reward for his success. If your puppy gets bored or frustrated it will ultimately be counterproductive to learning.

How To Teach A Dog To Come



You'll want to begin training this command in a quiet area, and indoors. First move into a squat position, with your arms open wide. Say the word "Come." If she starts moving toward you, give her verbal praise. Like all training, use a happy, encouraging tone of voice. You want her to think that the process is fun, not scary.

Whatever you do, don't reach out and grab her as she gets close to you. That will confuse her. When she gets really close, just gently reach out, offer a soft stroke of belly or head, and verbal praise. And if she is food motivated, this would be a good time to offer a yummy treat.

Other actions, such as "Sit" will be added next, but for right now, getting your puppy to stop right in front of you is the goal.

If your puppy doesn't come to you, go slowly to him, attach his leash, then guide him back to the spot where you called him. Praise him the entire time you are leading him there. This shows him that he has to obey, but that you're not angry with him. Never scold him for coming too slowly, and don't ever call him to you in order to punish him—you'll only teach him to avoid you.

How To Teach a Dog To Heel



In traditional dog training, “[Heel](#)” means that the dog is walking on your left side, his head even with your knee, while you hold the leash loosely. Puppy training can be a little more relaxed, as long as you don't pull your dog along or let him get ahead and pull you. Some trainers prefer to say “Let's go” or “Forward” instead of “Heel” when they train this easy way of walking together. Whatever command you choose, be consistent and always use the same word.

Start with your dog standing next to you. Hold his leash in your left hand and a [squeaky toy](#) in your right. Place your right arm across the front of your body so the toy is above and slightly in front of your dog's head. Encourage him to look up at the toy as you give the command and step forward with confidence. Your puppy should step forward with you as he follows the toy.

Keep the puppy's attention on the toy as you walk forward together. If the puppy gets distracted, squeak the toy, get his attention, and praise him. Also praise the pup if he looks up at you. This is called “checking in,” and it's a good thing to encourage.

After your puppy has given you 20 or 30 seconds of attention, give him the toy. Play with him a bit, then relax and try walking again. Gradually increase the time you walk together during your

training sessions, then gradually stop using the toy. Eventually your dog will walk happily at your side whenever he's on his leash.



How To Teach a Dog To Sit

There are two different methods for showing your puppy what “Sit” means. Use whichever one works best for your dog.

1. Get down in front of your puppy, holding a treat as a lure. Put the treat right in front of the pup’s nose, then say “Sit” as you slowly lift the food above his head. He will probably sit as he lifts his head to nibble at the treat. If he backs up instead, put your other hand on his rump and gently guide him down into a sitting position the first few times. Be sure to praise him—and give him the treat—as soon as he is sitting, whether or not he needed help.
2. Squat down next to the pup, place one hand on his chest and the other just behind his rear legs. Say “Sit” as you apply gentle upward pressure to his chest and against his rear knees, guiding him into a sitting position. As soon as he is sitting, reward him!

How To Teach a Dog To Stay

A puppy who knows the “Stay” command will remain sitting until you let him get up by giving him another command, called the “release word.” (This may be something like “OK!” or “Go.”)



Now that your dog knows the "Sit" command, put him in a sit, on your left side, with his leash attached. Turn your body to face him, keeping the leash slack. Hold your hand up to his face, with your palm open, and say "Stay." Now, take one or two steps back, with the leash still loose. Give it a few seconds, then go back to where you were, and put one foot on the leash (but not tightly—just tight enough that he can't jump up.) Use your the "release word," then praise and offer a reward.

He may have gotten up before you released him. If so, stay quiet and calmly return to where you were. Get him back into the "Sit," again use the hand signal above, and step away as before. It's important that the dog figures out how to respond to one command at a time, so in this case, don't repeat the verbal command.

Once he's mastered this command, you'll be able to gradually increase the distance. This is also true for the "Sit" command—the more solidly he learns it, the longer he can remain sitting. The key is to not expect too much, too soon. Training goals are achieved in increments, so you may need to [slow down and focus on one thing at a time](#). To make sure the training "sticks," sessions should be short and (mentally) sweet!

How to Teach a Dog to Lay Down



To teach your pup to lie down on command, begin with him sitting next to you on your left. Kneel down and place your left hand on his shoulders. Put your right hand just behind his front legs. Say “Down” while pressing gently on the puppy’s shoulders; at the same time, scoop his front legs out until he is lying down. Stroke his back for a few seconds to encourage him to relax and stay in that position. Then praise and reward him.

Use your release word, let him get up, and praise him again. Put him back into a sit, then repeat the down command. Eventually your dog will lie down as soon as you give the command.

If your puppy is extremely shy or fearful, he may freeze in place during this exercise. If he is very playful, he may squirm around and not want to lie down. In either case, try a different method of teaching the “Down” command: Begin as before, kneeling beside your sitting puppy.



Put your left hand on his shoulders while holding a treat in your right hand in front of his face. Say “Down” and slowly lower the treat straight down to the floor between the dog’s paws, then slowly pull it straight out and away from the pup. (Imagine making an “L” shape.) Once he’s down, praise him and give him the treat.

<http://www.akc.org/content/dog-training/articles/teach-your-puppy-these-5-basic-commands/>