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Dog Care

Sit Training

The “Sit” Exercise

All mannerly dogs should know that sitting is the best way to encourage people to say hello!

Step 1: Teach your dog to sit on command. Stand up, show the dog a treat in your hand, say “Sit!” and lift the treat up and back over the dog’s nose (aim for about four inches above and in line between the dog’s ears). Most dogs will track the treat with their eyes, causing the head to go up and back, while the rear end naturally goes down onto the floor. Voilà! You have a sitting dog. Immediately say “Yes!” and give the dog the treat. If the dog backs up or jumps up, you are likely holding your hand too far away from the dog’s nose. You can also practice by a wall so the dog can’t back away from you. Get the dog standing up again and repeat the procedure.

Step 2: Once the dog catches on and sits when you lure him with the treat, fake him out by pretending that you have the treat in your hand. Show him the treat, but surreptitiously switch it to your other hand. Say “Sit,” hold out your hand and move it in exactly the same manner as you did before. Invariably your dog will sit. Say “Yes!” and bring your other hand in to deliver the treat to his mouth. After a few repetitions, do not show him the treat first. This teaches him to be less reliant on seeing an actual treat in order to perform the behavior.

Step 3: Gradually lessen the amount of movement with your hand. Say “Sit,” hold your hand up about 8-10 inches from his face, and wait a moment. Most likely he will sit. If he doesn’t, help him out a bit by moving your hand up and back. Try it again. The goal is to just say “Sit!” without having to move your hand at all or even hold it out toward him. Always deliver the treat from your other hand. You can also get him used to the treats being on a table or counter or in your pocket. This way, after he sits, you reach to get the treat to give him. This teaches the dog to be patient and it teaches him that he never knows where the treat will come from. Without these last two steps, some dogs become so reliant on the treat that they won’t sit unless the treat is clearly visible.

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