

Puppy Training Tricks

Five key behaviors every puppy should learn.

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It's never too early to learn especially for your puppy. But make learning fun and engaging, says dog trainer Donna Duford, owner of Companion Dog Training in North Brookfield, Mass. Puppies aren't born with perfect manners, Duford says. They need to be taught appropriate behaviors.

Her message: Out with the word, no and in with the word, yes. Accentuate the positive in puppy training. The yes can be verbal or conveyed with a clicker to reinforce a desired behavior. Break down a new behavior into baby steps, and teach one step at a time. Be patient, and you will see positive results.

Five key behaviors every puppy should learn: Sit: Hold a treat in front of your puppy's nose and motion up and back at a 45-degree angle. Your puppy will follow the treat, bending its head back until it sits. Say yes or click, and then treat. Repeat this a few times. Next, show your dog the treat, but don't use it as a lure. Wait until the dog sits on its own, then click and treat. Repeat this until your dog immediately sits every time you show it a treat.

Leave It: Hold an object in front of you, in the palm of your hand. When your puppy reaches for the object, close your hand, pull it away and say, Leave it. Repeat this step until your puppy stops reaching for the object. Then, place the object on the floor. If your puppy reaches for it, cover it with your foot or hand. When your puppy consistently leaves the object alone, add the cue, Leave it just before you present the object. As soon as it backs off, click and say, Leave it.

Lie Down: Have your puppy sit. Hold a treat in front of its nose, and motion with it straight down to the floor between the paws. Your pup most likely will follow the treat to the floor, lying down in the process. As soon as your puppy lies down, click and treat.

Stay: Use this in conjunction with the Sit command. As your puppy sits, hold your open palm in front of its face and say, Stay, while you hold the leash in your other hand. When your pup stays for a few seconds, say, Good stay and treat. Repeat a few times. Gradually, extend the time your puppy stays.

Come: Turn training into play time by using the classic children's game of hide-and-seek to reinforce the Come command. Practice this game inside your house. Have someone hold your puppy while you hide in the house. Then call your puppy by saying its name and Come! You may need to repeat your puppy's name a few times until it reaches you. Click and treat. This is a fun way to teach the Come command, and it also teaches persistence in your puppy's search for you definitely a good trait should you and your puppy get separated outdoors.

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