

Training the German Shepherd Puppy

A solid education in obedience and leadership is essential to teach your German Shepherd the rules of his new human world.

Word Association

Use the same word (command) for each behavior every time you teach it, adding food rewards and verbal praise to reinforce the positive. The pup will make a natural connection and will be motivated to repeat the behavior when he hears those key words. For example, when teaching the puppy to relieve himself outside, use the same term, like "Go potty," each time he eliminates, adding a "Good boy!" while he's doing his business. Your pup will soon learn what those trips are for.

Its All in the Timing

All dogs learn their lessons in the present tense. You have to catch them in the act (good or bad) in order to dispense rewards or discipline. You have three to five seconds to connect with your dog, or he will not understand what he did wrong. Thus, timing and consistency are your keys to success in teaching any new behavior or correcting any bad behavior.

Basic Principles

Successful puppy training depends on several important principles:

1. Use simple, one-word commands and say them only once. Otherwise, the puppy learns that come (or sit or down) is a three- or four-word command.
2. Never correct your dog for something he did minutes earlier. Three to five seconds, remember?
3. Always praise (and treat) as soon as he does something good (or when he stops doing something naughty).
4. Be consistent. You can't snuggle together on the couch to watch TV today, then scold him for climbing onto the couch tomorrow.
5. Never call your dog to come to you and then correct him for something he did wrong. He will think that the correction is for coming to you and will be hesitant to respond to the come command in the future. (Think like a dog, remember?) Always go to the dog to stop unwanted behavior, but be sure you catch him in the act.
6. Never hit or kick your dog or strike him with an object. Such physical measures will only create fear and confusion in your German Shepherd and could provoke aggressive behavior down the road.
7. When praising or correcting, use your best doggie voice. Use a light and happy voice for praise, and a firm, sharp voice for warnings or corrections.

On that note, your dog also will respond accordingly to family arguments. If there's a shouting match, he will think that he did something wrong and head for cover.

Next step: Games to Play With Your German Shepherd Puppy

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