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Leash and Obedience Training

Mastering basic obedience commands and teaching your dog to be a good citizen on and off the leash is part of responsible pet ownership. Understanding the basics of dog training will allow you and your dog to interact with each other and with the public in a safe and enjoyable way.

Leash Training

Teaching your puppy to walk on a leash will take some time and patience. For the first few days or weeks that your puppy is home with you, it is recommended that you keep a collar and leash on him at all times so that you can easily correct unwanted behavior and keep the puppy safe. Allow your puppy to walk around the house with the leash attached and dragging so that he can get used to the idea. When he no longer pays attention to the leash, then you can begin to pick up the leash and gently lead him around the house. Nylon or leather leashes are preferable to extendable leashes because they allow you to keep more control over your puppy. Once your puppy has mastered walking on a leash, you can start to train basic commands.

The ABC's of Dog Training

Terms to know:

1. **Reward:** Something that the dog finds desirable, usually a treat, or a "lure."
2. **Positive reinforcement:** Making a desired behavior more likely to occur by rewarding the behavior with something the dog wants (treat).
3. **Behavior shaping:** The process of teaching complex behaviors by first rewarding behaviors that are *like* the one you want, and then gradually withholding reinforcement until the complex behavior is performed reliably.
4. **Punishment:** Introducing something into the dog's environment that the dog does not like in order to discourage undesired behavior. Research

has shown that punishment is not an effective way to train dogs. Punishment has been shown to increase fear and aggression in animals and children. **We do not recommend using punishment in dog training.**

- **Withholding reinforcement:** When your puppy does something that you do not want him to do, or you give a command and he does not obey, you do not offer the reward. **In dog training, withhold reinforcement instead of punishing.**

Teaching Your Dog Commands Using Positive Reinforcement

The process below can be repeated using other commands as well.

Sit

1. Start with your dog standing close to you and attached to the leash. From a standing position, push your dog's hindquarters down and say "Sit."
2. Once the dog is sitting, **immediately** give the treat (reward). Say "Good boy," or another positive phrase to let your dog know verbally that they are doing the right thing.
3. Get your dog to stand up again and then repeat the above process. You may have to repeat this a few times before the dog begins to do it on his own. **Always, always, immediately reward the desired behavior with a treat.**
4. Once your dog has mastered sitting on a leash, you can remove the leash and repeat the command. Since you are now changing it up, you may have to repeat step one (using your hand to show the right behavior), a few times. If your puppy does not immediately do what you want him to do, remain patient. Do not punish or yell. Simply do not offer the treat until he sits.
5. When you give a command, give it only once and then wait for the dog to respond. Some people will give a command repeatedly and very fast. "Sit...sit...sit!" This can confuse your dog and make him less likely to obey. Give a command, wait five seconds or so and then give it again if it is not obeyed. Use the same tone and volume.

Stay

1. With your puppy standing or sitting close to you on a leash, Hold up one hand in front of their face and say "Stay." Walk a few paces away from your puppy. If he follows, face him, hold up your hand, repeat the command.
2. Repeat this until he remains in one place while you walk a few feet away. Reward him for staying and say "good boy."
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2, rewarding him every time he stays.
4. Each time, walk further away from your dog until he is able to "stay" with you standing a long distance from him (such as across the room). This is up to you. Some dogs are trained to stay while their owner leaves the room completely.
5. Give your dog a release command so he knows when he no longer has to stay. For example, you can say, "OK!", "Come on!" etc. Call him over to you and reward (treat) him for coming. You may have to repeat this step a few times before he understands the release command.

Remember:

- When training commands, never use physical punishment. You want your puppy to associate obedience with fun and rewards. This will make him more likely to obey you in the future.
- Knowing basic obedience opens up opportunities for you and your dog to have fun and socialize with other dog owners, the public, in dog parks, etc.
- An adult dog has the cognition of about a 2 ½ year-old human.
- We will gladly give you a referral to a professional trainer in the area if you wish. Please ask!