

How to Train Your Dog When You Don't Have Time-- Real Life Training for Busy People

I work with busy people. They commute. They have families. They've got a lot going on. It's hard to fit one more thing into their schedule, yet training the dog has to get done. There's no way around it, you gotta teach your dog or you'll be living in chaos in no time.

I get it, my schedule is packed, too. I have a hard time fitting training into my schedule and I'm a professional dog trainer, for goodness sake! So I feel for you, Mr. or Mrs. Commute Downtown/Mom/Dad/cleaner-upper/chauffeur.

If you think you can't fit dog training into your packed schedule, think again. I've got a couple of ways to ease your pain.

Sneak Training Into Your Schedule

These are the things you're going to do for your dog, no matter how busy you are:

- Feed him
- Talk to him
- Pet him
- Walk him
- Play with him
- Put his leash on
- Take his leash off
- Let him outside
- Let him inside

There are probably lots more things you'll do with/for your dog, so add those to the list, too.

So, we've already established that these are the things you're going to do for your dog regardless of how busy you are, so now just ask your dog to do some things before you do those things.

If the dog does what you ask (sit, down, shake, speak, whatever), do whatever it is you were going to do for him! It takes just a minute, I swear!

If your dog doesn't do what you ask, don't do anything. He doesn't get petted, he doesn't get his food bowl put down yet, he doesn't get that rousing game of fetch...yet. Wait about a minute, and then ask him again to do something. It can be anything he already knows how to do. When he does what you ask, throw the ball, invite him up onto the couch, rub his belly, whatever he likes! It's that easy.

I'm a multi-tasker. I'm happiest if I'm getting multiple things done at once. I'm a "stealth trainer." I look for opportunities to train AND do something else with my dog at the same time. For instance, when I take my dog to the vet, I'm training in the lobby, I'm training on the scale, and I'm training in the exam room. I'm even training when I'm paying my bill.

Here's my stealth training logic: I'm captive at the vet's office. I have to be there. There's really not a whole lot else I can get done while I'm waiting in the lobby or in the exam room - except training. So, I take treats - delish treats - with me to the vet's office. Happy Dog + Happy Vet = Happy Me. But better than that: the down time at the vet office isn't really down time if I'm working with my dog! It's a win-win for me. I'm killing two birds with one stone. (Except I shouldn't use that analogy in the same paragraph that I talk about being at the vet's office...)

Here's another favorite place for me to train my dog: at a red light when I'm waiting to cross the street. While that annoying orange hand is flashing, I'm steady training. I'm working on eye contact, sit stays, down stays - whatever! I can't do anything but wait, so I might as well sneak in some training while I'm forced to stand still. Practicing Sit and Down Stays while watching TV reading or eating is also a good way to multi-task, you're sitting there anyway!!

Here's the best part: your dog will begin to think that every time is training time. Not just when you get the treats out or when you're wearing the clicker. Nope, training can happen in any place, at any time. It really increases your dog's focus on you. He never knows when you might give him the opportunity to earn a treat, so he's checking you out all the time just to be sure you're not asking him to do something. Another benefit: your dog will be better mannered all the time, not just in one particular location.

Now you have a strategy for training your dog, even if your schedule is packed tight. Just remember: ask your dog to do something before for you before you do something for him (something you're going to do for your dog anyway). You'll get good results and you'll get them quick. Your dog will start to pay close attention to you, not wanting to miss any opportunity to earn something he wants (and it isn't always food!).