

SAGE RIVER KENNELS

How to Train Your Bulldog Puppy

A Simple Guide to Positive Training for a Smart, Stubborn Bulldog



Small steps. Big rewards. Happy Bulldog.

Sage River Kennels

www.sageriverkennels.com

A Note from Sage River Kennels

Bulldogs are smart, funny, affectionate, and independent. They often understand more than people give them credit for - but they also like to know what is in it for them.

That is why positive training works so well with this breed. Instead of turning training into a contest, we make the right choice easy, clear, and rewarding. The result is a puppy who wants to participate rather than a puppy who feels pushed into it.



Our guiding idea

You do not win a battle of wills with a Bulldog. You build habits the puppy wants to repeat.

This book is written for new Bulldog owners. Keep sessions short, reward generously, laugh when things are not perfect, and remember that consistency matters more than intensity.

If your puppy shows fear, guarding, aggression, panic, or another serious behavior concern, work with your veterinarian and a qualified reward-based training professional.

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Kind training. Clear expectations. A Bulldog who knows exactly how to win.		

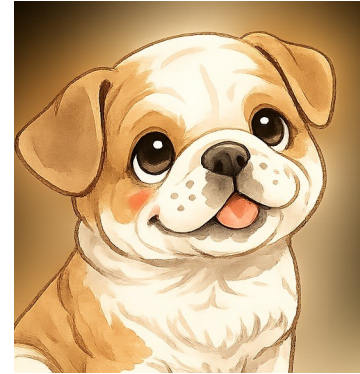
Chapter 1

Understanding Your Bulldog

Smart. Affectionate. Independent. And sometimes wonderfully stubborn.

Bulldogs are people dogs. Most love attention, routine, food, and being part of whatever their family is doing. They are also independent thinkers. That combination can make training hilarious - and occasionally frustrating.

A Bulldog who pauses, stares at you, or walks away is not automatically being difficult. The puppy may be confused, distracted, tired, uncomfortable, or simply unconvinced that the reward is worth the effort.



What usually works best

- Clear cues - use the same word every time.
- Short sessions - stop before your puppy checks out.
- Good rewards - tiny treats, praise, toys, or access to something the puppy wants.
- Consistency - everyone in the home follows the same rules.
- Patience - break a hard skill into smaller, easier wins.

♥ The Bulldog Rule

Do not try to out-stubborn your puppy. Make doing the right thing the easiest and most rewarding choice.

Chapter 2

How Positive Reinforcement Works

Reward what you want repeated.

Positive reinforcement means that a behavior is followed by something your puppy values, making that behavior more likely to happen again. For a Bulldog, that “something” is often food - but praise, play, affection, sniffing, and access to favorite things can work too.

The simple training pattern

- 1 Ask for or notice the behavior you want.
- 2 The instant your puppy gets it right, mark it with a cheerful word such as “Yes!”
- 3 Give the reward.
- 4 Repeat in short, successful sessions.

Rewards can include

- Tiny, tasty treats
- Part of the puppy’s measured daily food
- Happy praise and gentle affection
- A favorite toy or short game
- Permission to go through a door, sniff, greet, or explore

! Why we skip force

Yelling, intimidation, leash jerks, alpha rolls, hitting, and other aversive methods can damage trust and are not needed to teach a puppy. Reward-based methods are the recommended approach in current veterinary behavior guidance.

Chapter 3

Keep Training Short & Fun

Bulldog attention is valuable. Do not waste it.

For a young Bulldog, several tiny training sessions usually work better than one long lesson. Start with about 3-5 minutes at a time and quit while your puppy is still interested.

A great session can be as simple as five name responses, three sits, one happy recall, and done. Training can also happen naturally during the day instead of only during formal “practice time.”



A good Bulldog training rhythm

- Train 2-5 short times during the day.
- Work on one main skill at a time.
- Use tiny rewards so training does not become an extra meal.
- Practice before something the puppy wants: dinner, play, a door opening, or a sniff break.
- End on an easy success.

If your puppy stops taking treats, starts wandering away, or becomes silly and bitey, the session may already be too long. Stop, reset, and try again later.

Chapter 4

Teaching Your Puppy Their Name

The name means: "Look at me."

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Your puppy's name is not really a command. It is an attention cue. When your Bulldog hears their name, you want the automatic response to be: turn toward my person.

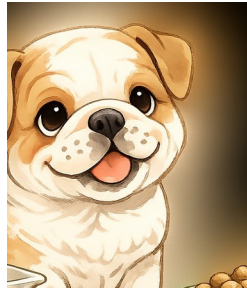
- 1 Stand close to your puppy in a quiet room.
- 2 Say the puppy's name once in a happy voice.
- 3 The instant the puppy looks toward you, say "Yes!" and give a treat.
- 4 Repeat a few times, then stop.
- 5 Practice in different rooms before adding distractions.

The Name Game

Say the name, wait for eye contact, mark, reward. That is it. Do a few repetitions while you are sitting on the couch, standing in the kitchen, or walking through the house.

♥ Important

Try not to use your puppy's name as a scolding word. You want the name to predict attention and good things - not "Uh-oh, I'm in trouble."



Chapter 5

Sit

The first easy win.

Sit is useful because it gives your puppy something simple to do instead of jumping, crowding doors, or bouncing around for attention.

Teach the motion first. Add the word once your puppy is predictably following the lure.



- 1 Hold a tiny treat close to your puppy's nose.
- 2 Slowly move the treat up and slightly back over the head.
- 3 As the puppy's bottom touches the floor, say "Yes!" and reward.
- 4 After several easy repetitions, say "Sit" just before you make the hand motion.
- 5 Add a release word such as "Okay" or "Free" so the puppy knows when the exercise is finished.

Do not push the puppy's rear end down. Let the puppy discover the position and earn the reward.

Chapter 6

Down

Teach calmly - never by force.

Down can take a little more patience with Bulldogs. Some puppies dislike putting their belly on a cold, slick, or uncomfortable floor. Start on a rug or non-slip mat if needed.

- 1 Begin with your puppy standing or sitting in a quiet place.
- 2 Hold a treat at the nose, then slowly lower it straight toward the floor.
- 3 Move the treat slightly forward so the puppy stretches into a down.
- 4 The moment elbows and body settle, say "Yes!" and reward between the paws.
- 5 When the motion is easy, add the word "Down" before the hand signal.

If your Bulldog refuses

- Try a softer surface.
- Use a better treat.
- Make the movement slower and easier.
- Capture the behavior instead: when your puppy lies down naturally, mark and reward it.

Remember

A puppy who does not understand is not being stubborn. Make the picture clearer before making the request harder.

Chapter 7

Come When Called

Make “come” the happiest word your puppy knows.

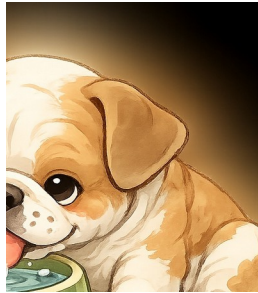
A strong recall can protect your Bulldog for life. Start indoors where success is easy. Do not wait until your puppy is racing toward something exciting to begin teaching it.

- 1 Get a few feet away and make yourself interesting - crouch, clap softly, or open your arms.
- 2 Say the puppy's name and “Come!” one time in a happy voice.
- 3 Back away a step or two as your puppy moves toward you.
- 4 When the puppy reaches you, mark and reward generously.
- 5 Release the puppy back to play sometimes so “come” does not always end the fun.

Recall rules worth remembering

- Never punish a puppy for coming to you - even if it took a while.
- Practice short distances before long ones.
- Outside, use a leash or long line until recall is dependable and the area is safely enclosed.
- Use an especially good reward for difficult recalls.

If you call “Come!” five times while your puppy ignores you, the puppy is practicing ignoring the word. Say it once, then make the situation easier.



Chapter 8

Wait and Stay

Two useful skills with different jobs.

WAIT means: pause until I give permission.

Use wait at doors, gates, food bowls, the car, or before greeting someone. Begin with one second. Ask for a sit, show your open palm, say "Wait," pause, then release with "Okay" and reward.

STAY means: hold this position until I release you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Ask for an easy sit or down. |
| 2 | Say "Stay" and show a calm hand signal. |
| 3 | Pause for just one second. |
| 4 | Return to the puppy, mark, reward, and release. |
| 5 | Add time gradually. Add distance later. Add distractions last. |

The Three Ds

Duration, distance, and distraction all make a stay harder. Increase only one at a time.

For Bulldogs, tiny wins build patience better than repeated failures. Ten successful two-second stays teach more than one frustrating thirty-second attempt.

Chapter 9

Leave It and Drop It

Not everything on the ground belongs to them.

Leave It = do not take that.

- 1 Put a treat in your closed fist and let your puppy investigate.
- 2 Wait quietly. Do not repeat the cue yet.
- 3 The moment the puppy backs away or looks away, say "Yes!"
- 4 Reward from your other hand.
- 5 When the puppy understands the game, add "Leave it" before presenting the closed hand.

Drop It = release what is already in your mouth.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Offer a trade that is better than the item the puppy has. |
| 2 | When the mouth opens, say "Yes!" and give the trade. |
| 3 | Pick up the released item calmly. |
| 4 | Practice with safe toys before you need the skill in an emergency. |

Do not chase your Bulldog around the house for a stolen sock. Chasing can turn stealing into a very rewarding game. Trade up instead.



Chapter 10

Walking Nicely on a Leash

Reward a loose leash.

Loose-leash walking starts inside the house, not halfway down the block. Teach your puppy that staying near you makes the walk continue.

- 1 Use comfortable, properly fitted walking equipment and begin in a quiet area.
- 2 Take one or two steps. When the leash is loose, mark and reward beside your leg.
- 3 If the leash becomes tight, stop moving instead of pulling back.
- 4 The moment the puppy creates slack or returns toward you, mark, reward, and move again.
- 5 Use sniffing and moving forward as rewards too - not every reward has to be food.

Bulldog tip

Keep early walks short and pleasant. The goal is not mileage. It is learning to move with you, check in, and keep the leash soft. If your puppy has breathing, orthopedic, or exercise concerns, ask your veterinarian what equipment and activity level are appropriate.

! What not to do

Avoid leash jerks and dragging. If your Bulldog plants their feet, stop and figure out why before turning it into a pulling contest.

Chapter 11

Jumping, Mouthing & Puppy Biting

Teach the behavior you want - not just what you want stopped.

Jumping

- Reward four feet on the floor.
- Ask for a sit before greetings.
- Turn attention away from jumping, then reward the instant the puppy settles.
- Have visitors follow the same rule.

Mouthing and puppy biting

- Keep appropriate chew toys within reach.
- Redirect teeth from skin or clothing to a toy.
- If biting becomes too hard or wild, calmly end play for a brief moment.
- Reward gentle play and calm contact.
- Do not use hands as wrestling toys if you do not want the puppy grabbing hands.



A useful mindset

Instead of asking only, "How do I stop this?" ask, "What do I want my puppy to do instead?" Then teach and reward that behavior.



Chapter 12

Handling & Grooming Training

Make care feel normal before you need it.

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Bulldogs need regular hands-on care, so handling practice belongs in basic training. The goal is for your puppy to learn that having paws, ears, face, mouth, and body handled predicts calm attention and rewards.

Practice a little at a time

- Touch one paw, treat, release.
- Lift an ear gently, treat, release.
- Briefly touch the lips or look at the mouth, treat, release.
- Handle facial wrinkles gently without turning it into a wrestling match.
- Introduce a brush, towel, nail tool, bath area, and vet-style body exam gradually.

Keep consent in the picture

If your puppy pulls away or becomes worried, make the step easier. Forcing a frightened puppy through grooming can make the next session harder. Short, positive repetitions build cooperation.

Think “touch - treat - release.” Five calm seconds today can make grooming much easier later.



Chapter 13

When Your Bulldog Says “Nope”

Yes, they heard you.

At some point, almost every Bulldog owner experiences it. You give a cue. Your Bulldog looks directly at you. You know they heard you. They know you know they heard you. And absolutely nothing happens.

Welcome to life with a Bulldog.

The answer is not to become louder or more forceful. Bulldogs often cooperate best when training feels clear, worthwhile, and fun.

Ask yourself

- Is the reward valuable enough?
- Has the session gone on too long?
- Is my puppy distracted, tired, hot, worried, or uncomfortable?
- Am I asking for too much too quickly?
- Does my puppy actually understand what I am asking?

❤ Sometimes it is confusion. Sometimes it is comfort. And sometimes?

It really is a Bulldog being a Bulldog. Keep your sense of humor, make the task easier, reward success, and try again.



Chapter 14

Troubleshooting Training Problems

When progress is not a straight line.

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My puppy is too distracted. Move farther from the distraction, use a better reward, and make the task easier.		
My puppy only listens when food is visible. Stop showing the treat first. Give the cue, mark the behavior, then reach for the reward. Gradually mix food with praise, play, and real-life rewards.		
My puppy knows it at home but not outside. That is normal. Dogs do not automatically apply a skill everywhere. Retrain it at an easier level in each new environment.		
I keep repeating the cue. Say the cue once. If there is no response, reset the situation instead of turning "Sit" into "Sit, sit, sit, SIT."		
We had a setback. Go back one step, lower the difficulty, reward easy wins, and rebuild.		
My puppy is getting frustrated. End the session. A break is better than practicing frustration.		

If behavior involves aggression, serious fear, guarding, panic, or a sudden personality change, contact your veterinarian and a qualified reward-based behavior professional.

Chapter 15

The Bulldog Training Cheat Sheet

Catch them being good.

Do

- Use positive reinforcement.
- Keep sessions short and upbeat.
- Say cues once, then help the puppy succeed.
- Reward immediately after the behavior.
- Be consistent across the whole household.
- Use tiny rewards and count food treats toward the puppy's daily intake.
- Make difficult situations easier before expecting more.

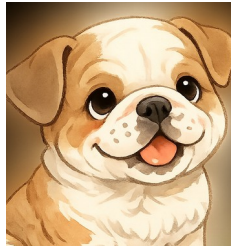
Do not

- Yell, hit, intimidate, alpha roll, or jerk the leash.
- Turn a training problem into a battle of wills.
- Expect a puppy to perform a new skill around huge distractions.
- Punish the puppy after they finally come to you.
- Assume "stubborn" always means "knows it and refuses."

♥ Catch Them Being Good!

Reward the things you want more of: lying quietly, four feet on the floor, walking beside you, coming voluntarily, choosing a toy instead of your shoe, waiting at a door, and settling calmly.

Notice it. Mark it. Reward it. Calm behavior grows when calm behavior pays.



Chapter 16

Printable Training Log

Little steps become big habits.

Bulldog Training Quick Guide

Cue	What it means
Name	Look at me
Sit	Bottom on the floor
Down	Lie down calmly
Come	Move all the way to me
Wait	Pause for permission
Stay	Hold position until released
Leave It	Do not take it
Drop It	Release what is in your mouth
Loose Leash	Walk with slack in the leash
Settle	Relax calmly

Weekly Training Log

Date	What We Practiced	Reward Used	What Went Well	Next Step

Keep this page simple. Progress happens with consistency, not perfect handwriting.



Training Resources

This guide was written in original language for Sage River Kennels and informed by current reward-based dog-training guidance and Bulldog-specific training resources.

American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB)

Humane Dog Training Position Statement (2021). AVSAB recommends reward-based methods for dog training and behavior work.

American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB)

Position Statement on Puppy Socialization and public resources on reward-based training.

American Kennel Club (AKC)

Bulldog Puppy Training Timeline: What to Expect and When to Expect It.

American Kennel Club (AKC)

Is Your Dog Stubborn? Probably Not! - practical discussion of motivation, clarity, environment, and training setbacks.

Be patient. Be consistent. Make it fun.

A well-trained Bulldog is not perfect - they are simply easier to live with, easier to keep safe, and more confident about what you expect.



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