

Beginner Obedience Skills

WEEK 1

Marker Training

Charging the mark “**YES & REWARD**”

WEEK 2

FOCUS ON THE HANDLER / LOOSE LEASH WALKING

This exercise is vital to teaching our dog to walk with us staying within a certain proximity to our body. In order for your dog to be able to ignore competing motivators and distractions in the environment we must spend time working with us on where they should be and that good things happen when they are close and pay attention. Your dog should be allowed

HEEL POSITION

Heel position is exactly that ‘a position’ in relation to your body, Not an action the dog performs such as walking forward. Heel position is next to us on one side or the other. Normally the dogs front shoulder should be lined up with our leg. Having a dog walk in heel position is not really necessary for most pet owners. I use it when I am competing or when I need my dog to walk closely by me due to a problem in the environment. Loose leash walking or a variation of the heel position is what most people use.

Call your dog’s name, use a lure at the tip of the nose and as you draw your arm back in a loop to end up next to your side, give the dog the cue “heel”. As soon as the dog is in the desired position next to you, give the “mark & reward.”. You will have to repeat the process many times, while resisting the urge to pull the dog to your side with the leash. If your dog does not walk himself to your side operant conditioning will not occur and your dog will not remember how to connect the cue to the action.

START & STOP

As you are working on heel and loose leash walking, start and stop often. Be sure you communicate with your dog so he knows what is going on, and makes an effort to stay next to you.

ABOUT TURN

Get your dogs attention by calling his name and make sure you have you lure (treat) in hand. Dangle the treat in front of your dogs nose, and remind him to “heel” as you slow your pace and slowly turn away from your dog 180o. Once you are facing the opposite direction give your “MARK” and release the reward.

INSIDE ABOUT TURN

Get your dogs attention by calling his name and make sure you have you lure (treat) in hand. Dangle the treat in front of your dogs nose, and remind him to “heel” as you slow your pace and slowly turn in toward your dog 180o. Once you are facing the opposite direction give your “MARK” and release the reward.

REWARD MANAGEMENT

Be sure that you have access to your food rewards at all times. Keep several in your treat hand so you are able to be quick to deliver the reward. You do NOT want to be digging for a reward after your dog has performed a behavior you like. When this happens it slows the training process and allows the dog to be focused on something other than what he is being rewarded for. There should only be a 1.5 second pause between the mark and the reward delivery.

WEEK 3

SIT

Get your dogs attention by calling his name and make sure you have your lure (treat) in hand. Dangle the treat in front of your dogs nose, slowly lift the treat straight up aiming for the space between his ears at the same time say "sit". As soon as your dogs rear touches the ground "MARK & REWARD"! Repeat several times. Remember: your dog is not expected to stay sitting! We are only teaching the meaning of a command, in other words we are building an association between the word "sit" and the action of "putting his rear on the ground". We will add duration to the exercise later on.

DOWN

Get your dogs attention by calling his name and make sure you have your lure (treat) in hand. Dangle the treat in front of your dogs nose, slowly lower the treat straight down aiming for the space between his front paws, at the same time say "down". Be careful not to let your hand float out away from your dog, it is vitally important that you aim for the space between his front paws. As soon as your dogs front elbows touches the ground "MARK & REWARD"! Repeat several times. Remember: your dog is not expected to stay down! We are only teaching the meaning of a command, in other words we are building an association between the word "down" and the action of "putting his body on the ground". We will add duration to the exercise later on.

WAIT

For this exercise we will not be using a lure. We will however, still be using a mark & reward so be sure you have treats available. You will also not need a leash for this exercise, as it becomes too easy to make a habit of pulling on the leash to control the dog. As you approach a doorway hold up the palm of your hand and give the cue to "wait", then block your dog's path with your legs so that he can not go through before you. You may have to dance back and forth as though playing soccer in order to keep your dog from exiting. When your dog stops moving forward and waits patiently at the door "MARK & REWARD", then give the "ok" and allow him to follow you through the door. This exercise should be done at any exit, such as kennel doors, crate doors, vehicle doors etc. If practicing with a crate door... give your dog the "wait" cue before you open the door. If your dog moves toward the door give the "eh eh" and quickly close the door before he can exit. Try again until he gets the idea that he needs to wait for the the cure "OK" before he can exit his kennel or crate.

WEEK 4

DURATION OF EXERCISES

This exercise is an extension of our other exercises. Once you have taken your dog through the level 1 or the learning phase of training, and you are confident that he understands the meaning of the command your using you can begin to add duration to your work. Start as you normally would by asking your dog to do something he knows such as "sit". When he sits, add a duration marker such as "good" or something else that will tell him he is doing a good job but the exercise is not over. Use a nice low tone so you don't excite him and do not use your reward marker "yes" otherwise he will get up and expect the exercise to be over. Start by adding a few seconds of time to your work each time your dog is successful. If your dog makes a mistake give a negative marker "eh eh" and start the exercise again. There will be no reward when mistakes are made you simply start again and shorten your exercise the next time.

RECALL

The recall is the first phase of teaching your dog to come when called. We want your dog to associate positive things when he comes to you so, NEVER EVER call your dog when your upset and never scold your dog after calling him to you.

Start this exercise with walking in a forward motion, dog in heel position (next to your side). Have a food reward ready, then call your dog's name, stop walking forward and start walking backward as you wave the treat in front of his nose. As you walk backward, using your lure to guide your dog, give the command "Fido come". Then stop walking and reward your dog while he is in front of you.

It's always a good idea to pet and touch your dog's collar just before the release of the reward. This desensitizes your dog to having his collar reached for and he is then less likely to play the bolt game when you do need to put him on a leash.

LEAVE IT EXERCISE

For this exercise we will NOT be using a lure so be sure you do not accidentally lure your dog with your free hand on this one.

Start by getting a hand full of treats and putting them on the floor. Cover those treats with your hand. Hide your other hand behind your back. You will reward your dog from the hidden hand. Let your dog sniff, dig, nibble or anything else he wants to do to try and get the treats from under your hand. As soon as he stops and looks away "mark & reward". This is called "shaping" an exercise. Once your dog gets the idea that he has to ignore the food under your hand in order to receive a reward you can add the command "leave it" to your work.

Hide the food under your hand, when your dog tries to get the food, give the command "leave it" as soon as your dog ignores the hidden food "mark & reward"! It is very important that you do NOT say "no or eh eh" or give any other negative markers. This should be a fun game for you and your dog. Once your dog understands that "leave it" means to ignore something you can make the game more interesting.

STAY

Start this exercise with asking your dog to "sit" in heel position. One in the correct position you can then use a flat hand in front of the dog's nose as the hand signal, give the command "stay" or "wait" and slowly pivot out in front of your dog. Pause briefly then pivot back to heel position and "mark & reward". Be careful that you do not pivot to close to your dog's muzzle as this will cause them to get up and move back, also be careful not to step on his toes. If your dog gets up give your negative marker "eh eh" and start the exercise again, do not reward. Always be sure that you are traveling the same path each time, as you pivot to the front of your dog and your return to heel should be exactly the same. Do not start the exercise from the front or any other location at this point in training.

WEEK 5

STAY WITH HANDLER MOTION (T-pattern):

With your dog in a sit stay, back to the end of your leash. At the end of your leash pivot your body 90° to the left or right (keeping your face turned toward your dog). Then take a few steps... pivot 180° so that you are facing the opposite direction and take a few steps that direction. As you move around use your dog be sure to re-enforce the exercise by using your duration marker "goooooood sit" in a nice low even tone of voice. Travel side to side in front of your dog a couple of times then stop directly in front of your dog, walk straight toward him and pivot your body back to heel position. Mark & Reward for a job well done! Consistency in this exercise is vital here be sure that you always travel the same direction and do not release your dog until you are in heel position.

If your dog makes a mistake by getting up before he is released, simply give a verbal interrupter (negative marker) such as "eh eh eh"... then remind him to "sit" and start again. NO harsh tones or intimidating gestures should be used.

STATIC RECALL

Start with a sit & stay, pivot out in front of your dog and walk backward to the end of your leash. Once at the end of your leash, show your dog the food reward then call him to you by calling his name then giving your "come" command and signal. Mark as soon as your dog is moving toward you deliver the reward when he is close in front of you. Once your dog is consistent with this you can add the sit in front to your work. Step 2: When your dog arrives in the correct location in front of your body ask him to sit... MARK & REWARD!