

AROUSAL UP AND DOWN

Learning to calm down after getting excited or frustrated is a skill which dogs need to practice in order to get good at it. Being able to go from playing one minute, to being settled and relaxed the next is not something that many adolescent dogs are naturally good at.

You can help to teach your dog to de-escalate by getting them energised through play and then doing a calmer activity to lower their arousal again. This could be sniffing for treats on the ground, licking food off a lickimat or chewing a long lasting treat.

Practicing getting your dog's arousal level up and then calming them down, will help them to develop their ability to relax more quickly in everyday life.

This can have a big effect on how well your dog copes in situations they find themselves in.

Make sure to practice at lower levels of arousal first, before moving onto calming down from activities that get your dog more energised.



HAPPY TRAINING!

CAPTURING SIT

Sit is a simple exercise to teach your dog and it forms the basis of several other skills, including door manners and polite greetings.

You can easily build this behaviour by waiting until your dog naturally sits and rewarding them every time. This is called capturing and your dog will start to realise that sitting leads to good things coming from you.

This will result in your dog offering to sit more frequently. Practice in lots of locations throughout your home and garden. If you reward them every time, soon it will become a great default behaviour for your dog when they come over to you.

This will help your dog develop excellent manners around people both inside and out of the home.

When your dog is reliably offering a sit when they come over, you can introduce a cue word. Simply say your chosen word as your dog approaches, before they start to sit. Mark and reward with a treat as soon as they respond.

As your dog gets good at this, you can take your training on the road to build their skills further.



HAPPY TRAINING!

SLOW FEED FROM ABOVE

Throughout adolescence dogs often struggle with self control. Waiting calmly for things is difficult and this often leads to dogs snatching treats, grabbing items with their mouth or vocalising in frustration.

The more we can do to help dogs develop their ability to remain calm in anticipation, the better. It's important to carefully gauge the difficulty of self control exercises to make sure that your dog is enjoying the game and not becoming increasingly frustrated.

One game you can play is to slowly feed your dog treats from above.

Start by asking your dog to sit and hold a treat high above their head. If they remain sitting, mark and quickly bring the treat down to reward your dog in position.

Progress to moving the treat slowly downwards by a few centimeters as your dog watches. If they remain sitting, mark and quickly lower the treat to reward them.

If your dog gets up or jumps at any point, simply raise the food up again.

As your dog gets good at this, you can slowly lower the treat more, so that it gets closer to your dog.

Eventually you will be able to slowly move the treat all the way down to meet your dog's mouth without them trying to reach for it before you mark and reward.

At this stage your dog has taught themselves to control their movement and remain still in anticipation of the treat that's coming.

This skill can be transferred to many real life situations, such as walking to the park calmly for off lead exercise, sitting and waiting to greet visitors in the home, or waiting nicely for you to put their food down to eat.

Practicing this throughout adolescence will really help your dog to thrive.



HAPPY TRAINING!

TEACHING DOWN

Teaching your dog to lie down on cue is really useful in many real life situations, particularly if you dream of being able to take your dog anywhere with you. To start, hold a treat between your thumb and fingers. Show your dog and when they investigate, slowly move downwards from their nose to the floor, just in front of their paws. Wait until your dog lies down before marking and feeding them the treat from your hand.

To reset throw a treat to one side so that your dog gets up to reach it. When they come back repeat luring them into a down again.

After several repetitions remove the food from your hand and repeat the same movement as before. Mark and reward from your other hand when they lie down. From here you can gradually change the signal you are giving so that you don't need to touch the ground. Move your hand in the same way, but stop just above the floor. Wait for your dog to lie down and then reward in position. Every few repetitions, see if your dog understands if you cue a little further off of the ground.

In time you will be able to ask them to lie down with just a small hand movement. At this point you can add a verbal cue if you'd like. Simply say your cue, such as 'down' and then give your dog the hand signal they already recognise. Wait for your dog to respond and as soon as they lie down, mark and reward.

After some practice your dog will understand the cue word and begin to lie down before you've even moved your hand.

Remember to build up at your dog's pace and don't be afraid to drop back to an easier stage if they are struggling.



HAPPY TRAINING!

TEACHING A SETTLE

Often adolescent dogs find it difficult to relax when you go to new places together. They might bark or jump up because they are excited or frustrated.

You can teach your dog how to happily relax when you go out but first you will need to teach them to settle at home away from distractions.

To start with, get a mat or blanket along with some of your dog's favourite treats.

When your dog looks at you, place the mat on the ground in front of you and as they come over, mark and reward them. Reset for another repetition by throwing a treat away for your dog to follow.

As they come back, wait for their paws to touch the mat before rewarding.

Soon your dog will be running to the mat and eagerly standing on it every time.

At this stage you can cue your dog to lie down before rewarding. After a few repetitions your dog will start to lie down automatically.

From here you can build up the duration. Reward every couple of seconds initially, before gradually lengthening the time further. You can then add distractions to the training environment to build your dog's skills.

If you want to add a verbal cue to the behaviour, just say a word such as 'settle' when your dog starts to move towards the mat. In time your dog will come over and settle, whenever they hear the cue word, or see you lay the mat down.

Practice in your home and garden first before taking it out on the road to busier environments.



HAPPY TRAINING!

INTRODUCTION TO LEAVE IT PART 1

Leave it is a great game to play to help your dog develop self control and could even save your dog's life one day!

The end goal is that your dog will notice things in the environment that are tempting and instead of moving towards them, will automatically look at you. You can also cue your dog verbally to leave things alone.

To teach this behaviour you are going to start out with a piece of your dog's regular kibble in one hand and a higher value reward in the other.

Make a fist with your palm facing upwards and the kibble inside. Offer towards your dog and let them investigate. They will sniff, lick, nibble or paw at your hand but wait until they choose to move away. Mark and reward with a high value treat from the other hand.

Reset your hands and repeat the game.

Soon your dog will realise that the reward they get for moving away is far better than the kibble they don't get to have. They might even choose to stay away from your kibble hand when presented. Reward this choice every time.



HAPPY TRAINING!

INTRODUCTION TO LEAVE IT PART 2

Next open your hand around the kibble slightly so your dog can see the food. If they stay where they are, or back away from the kibble, mark and reward with a higher value treat. If they try to come and take the food simply close your hand.

When your dog is doing well, progress to opening your hand fully and lowering your hand to lie flat on the ground. Eventually you will be able to place the food on the ground and reward your dog if they choose to stay where they are. Be ready to cover up the food if your dog approaches.

When your dog can happily look at you and doesn't approach the food you put down, you can add a cue word. Simply say the word before putting the food down and reward your dog with something else every time.

Practice cueing your dog to leave, but also set them up to make good choices and manage situations so they can't pick up undesirable objects or food throughout the day. Let them know what they can have by pointing it out and encouraging them to investigate. Reward every good choice your dog makes and you will see them start to offer to look at you when they notice things they would like in the environment.

This skill can totally save your dog's life one day, so make sure you practice lots and make it easy and fun so that they LOVE playing this game!



HAPPY TRAINING!

INTRODUCTION TO PEOPLE

Adolescent dogs often struggle with greeting people appropriately. This may be due to overexcitement or fearfulness which can peak during the teen stage.

One exercise which can help your dog understand how to interact with visitors involves setting up a controlled outdoor introduction.

When your visitor arrives, meet them at the door and give them a selection of treats. Ask them to go ahead of you to a designated greeting spot, which should be open and quiet. Now bring your dog outside and stop a short distance away from your guest.

Ask them to wait for any calm behaviour from your dog, such as standing still, sitting or laying down before getting them to throw a treat to the ground just behind your dog.

This will do 2 things - reward your dog for polite behaviour, and encourage them to remain a little distance away instead of rushing at people.

Practice this with people that will have an ongoing relationship with your dog. You can also try having them pet your dog whilst you feed them a treat. Only proceed to this step when your dog is relaxed and happy to be around the person.

If you consistently practice this your dog will happily offer appropriate behaviour whenever somebody approaches.



HAPPY TRAINING!

BUILDING DOOR MANNERS

Teaching your dog good door manners can really help when it comes to collecting mail or bringing visitors into your home. You can help prevent your dog from running through the door or jumping up by teaching them to go to a spot and wait calmly whenever you need to open the door.

Before you begin you will want to set up appropriate management for your dog while they are learning. Having your dog behind a gate or x-pen, on a tether or in a separate room can help prevent your dog from practicing undesirable behaviour at the door. Make sure that this is in place every time you go to the door until your dog is trained fully.

Practice without a real visitor at first. Stand by the door and cue your dog to go to their spot and sit. When they get into position, mark and reward them where they are before releasing them to move away from their spot again.

When they are doing really well with this it is time to add in the doorbell sound. Ring the doorbell and then immediately cue your dog to go to their spot. After repeating this several times your dog will start to recognise the doorbell as a signal to move to their spot, even without an additional cue from you.

Next you can add opening and closing the door before returning to your dog to reward them. You can start to bring in an object from outside the door or pretend to have a conversation with somebody to increase the difficulty and build your dog's skills.

The final stage is practicing this with real people and at varying times of the day. Spending time teaching your dog brilliant doorbell manners will make everyday life much easier.



HAPPY TRAINING!

MANNERS AROUND PEOPLE

If your dog struggles to remain calm around people you meet in the street, you'll want to be proactive in handling this situation. Allowing your dog to excitedly rush up to and greet people by jumping up will only strengthen this behaviour as your dog grows up.

Throughout adolescence you want to help your dog learn how to remain calm around people and not become frustrated if they don't get to greet them.

Make sure to watch out for people approaching and ask them to stop before they get too close. Get your dog's attention and focus so that they can wait calmly next to you at a distance while you speak to the person. Reward your dog for remaining settled throughout - either in a sit or standing up, whichever is most comfortable for your dog.

If you notice your dog gets more excited when facing the person, simply prompt them to face you throughout as this will help to keep them calm.

Practicing this in lots of situations with a variety of people will really help to teach your dog remain calm when out and about.



HAPPY TRAINING!

STAIR ETIQUETTE IN THE HOME

When it comes to moving up and down stairs, it's important to teach your dog safe etiquette so that you don't end up having an accident if your dog runs into you.

Teaching your dog to wait calmly as you walk up or down the stairs before calling them to follow you is a great idea.

Start by getting your dog to sit, lie down or stand at the bottom of the stairs. You're going to move up a step before returning and rewarding your dog if they stayed in position.

Gradually practice increasing the number of steps you take before coming back to your dog.

When you can get all the way to the top and your dog is still in position, you can call them to you, rewarding them when they arrive.

Be sure to also practice with your dog at the top of the stairs as you come down them.

By practicing this with your dog proactively, you will never have to worry about staying safe when you need to carry things up or down the stairs and your dog is around.



HAPPY TRAINING!

ITS PICNIC TIME

Teaching your dog to relax in the real world takes practice. If you want to be able to take your dog anywhere with you and have them settle by your side without becoming frustrated, overly excited at passers by or worried about things around them, you will need to create opportunities for your dog to practice and build their skills.

One excellent activity to do together is go on a picnic! Choose a quiet location away from busy walking routes. Lay down a picnic blanket and get your dog to settle in a down while you relax next to them. You can calmly stroke your dog or give them a long lasting chew to enjoy if they need some help to settle. Reward them for calm behaviour throughout as you relax together while the world carries on around you.

You can practice taking your own snack to enjoy while your dog has theirs which will help build wonderful food manners as well as relaxation in the real world.

The more opportunities you create for your dog to practice this, the better they will become at relaxing and ignoring distractions around them. This not only helps with settling but also improves their focus, walking skills and ability to recall away from distractions.



HAPPY TRAINING!

FIGURE 8 WALKING

Once you have taught your dog the position you would like them to walk in, you can start to develop their skills further. Walking in figure 8's can help your dog to practice turning with you whilst remaining on a loose lead throughout.

As you walk, you can reward your dog by your side when the lead is slack.

Start off by setting out 2 objects to walk around in a quiet area like your garden or neighbourhood. By walking in figure 8s you will be able to practice turning away from and towards your dog. If they turn with you, mark and reward them by your side. If they start to pull forward or back, stop moving and encourage them back to your side before continuing.

When your dog is getting good at this you can practice using obstacles you find on your walks such as planters, trees or even bike racks.

Not only are you building excellent walking skills but you are teaching your dog to ignore the objects you are moving around and building up their confidence in novel situations.



HAPPY TRAINING!