

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Basic Dog Training Techniques

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

The most common reason owners turn their dogs over to the animal shelter is because the dog misbehaves or is not well trained. Miscommunication is the biggest barrier to training. Your requests must be clear and consistent, and you must be patient.

The response your dog gives to a request may be purely accidental at first. For example, you can teach your dog to bark on command by giving the cue "SPEAK", knock on the door (to start the barking), and then reward the dog when the desired behavior occurs. The reward that you use must be something that your dog LOVES, such as a tiny food treat. We want our dogs to learn to respond to our request because they want to, not because they are afraid.

To teach your dog to sit, hold a treat right under his nose to get his attention, then push the treat towards him and slightly upward. This is called a lure. As he follows the treat with his nose, his head should go up and his bottom down. If the puppy stands up, hold the treat lower, closer to his head. Reward him every time the correct response is given. When the sit is reliable, begin saying "sit" right before the lure. You will eventually be able to quit using the lure, using only the vocal cue, "SIT".

Now that your dog is sitting on command, let's start working on "DOWN". Start with the dog in a sit position and a treat under his nose. Lower the treat to the ground between the puppy's front legs. The dog should follow the lure into the down position. You may need to lure the dog under your leg or a low table to get him into the down position. Praise and reward with enthusiasm!

Next, put your dog in a down or sit position. Tell the dog to "STAY". If your dog stays for 1/2 second, release him with a word such as "OKAY" and reward. Gradually increase the time span. This is a difficult exercise and requires great patience. If your dog moves, the time was increased too quickly. Put him back in position and start over.

To teach your dog to come, get him excited so he'll want to come to you, run across the room and give the command "COME". The dog

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should willingly come to you. Give encouragement, praise and a treat. Call him every time you feed him but never call your dog to you to punish him! Practice this frequently and spontaneously. If the only time you call your pet to you is to put him up or punish him he won't want to come to you.

The difference between having a dog easy to love and one that can be a nuisance is often determined by whether or not he knows basic commands. It is not your dog's fault if he misbehaves, he simply doesn't know any better. It is up to you to help make your dog's life more enjoyable by teaching him basic "doggie manners" and then including him in your family's life. If all of this seems a little complicated, we recommend attending obedience classes. GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!!!! 🐾