



Beginning Homework • Week 4

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Sit for Guests

Part of raising a polite pup involves learning how to sit to greet a guest, friend or neighbor. Last week, we went around approaching you, but now you are to learn how to approach others and welcome others into your home – with a leash of course. Before you can even begin moving towards someone you and your dog are going to say “hi” to, you must have some attention from your dog. They cannot be lunging or pulling you towards your friends, or their ability to keep four on the floor will be much more challenging. After you have a bit of focus, you may begin moving towards your guest. If your dog immediately bolts to the end of the leash and you know a jump is pending, back away gently with consistent pressure. I like to call this “penalty yards”. If you can’t walk up nicely, you can’t walk up at all.

Once your dog has regained a bit of his composure, begin the approach again. If unsuccessful, penalty yards, if all is well proceed forward on a loose leash. Before you make it to your guest, and *before* your dog has the idea to jump up ask your dog to sit. When they do, your guest is the one to provide the treats, the pets and the praise. Keep the meeting brief! Don’t hang around long enough for your dog to ruin their nice greeting. Practice this exercise a few times this week at your front door – see if you can greet a friend without the extra paws!

Leave-It, Part 2

Your dog should be getting pretty good at leaving treats from your open hand so it’s time to start practicing with items elsewhere. Start with a short amount of leash, then toss a treat just out of range of your dog. Brace your body and hold firm. Avoid the desire to yank back, and wait until your dog reaches the end of the leash. Say “leave-it” one time, and wait for your dog to turn towards you. As soon as they do say “yes!” and reward from your treat pouch or hand. Leave-it is rarely a “leave-it then take it” exercise. It isn’t “leave my sandwich, eat my sandwich – or leave the kitty, now get the kitty” so you want to avoid frequently allowing your dog to take the leave-it item as the reward. However, you don’t want your dog to never be allowed the leave-it item, as it can be a bit of a bummer exercise. So keep it light and fun, and don’t over practice. Have fun practicing in different locations too. Coffee table edges, countertops, or anywhere else your dog is prone to sticking his nose where it doesn’t belong, are great places to practice “leave-it”.

Come (Recalls)

Keep practicing recalls and keep them fun and exciting. Remember – a recall is never to something negative, and never call your dog if they aren’t going to come. They’re learning right now, so keep expectations reasonable and stay joyful and positive when practicing. I like to use a toy that they love, but is only used for recall practice. As soon as you break out this high value reward, your dog knows they’re in for a fun time. Try running away from your dog while making loud joyful sounds to encourage their chase instinct to kick in when practicing “come!”. Say your dog’s name one time, then a loud, clear “Come!” followed by running off saying things like “woohoo! Hurry hurry! Where’s my puppy!?” while waving a toy over my head. Do I look silly? You bet. Is my dog coming? You bet – any other dog in the vicinity too.

Loose Leash Walking

Keep practicing. The more consistent you are, the faster your dog will learn. Make sure you are *never* following a dog on a tight leash. Stop, change directions, get out a treat or toy, anything other than following behind a pulling dog. You might only be having success in the house right now, but it's a great start. If things are continuing to go well, consider working in your back or front yards. Up and down the driveway, walkway, porch or however you come and go from your home is excellent practice. Your dog becomes familiar with where you go when you go together and a pattern of just following behind them in these situations is easy to fall into. Make sure you're practicing when you don't actually have anywhere to go. This will increase your patience with the exercise and allow you to turn around and head back home if your dog pulls and can't seem to focus. It can be a challenging exercise, but keep it fun and joyful! Adventures together should be a great time, so stay happy and consistent when working on not pulling!

Stay, Part 2: Distraction

Do you remember the "3 D's" of stay? Duration, Distraction & Distance. We've been practicing duration for right now, and it's time to add some distractions. Of course in the classroom we've always got distraction, but we're going to add even more. Put your dog in a position and say "stay", then casually move your body to create a small distraction. Lift an arm, wiggle a shoulder, tap a toe, then say "yes!", give a treat and release. Make sure you're using that release word! If your dog gets up, make the distraction smaller and shorter. If your dog is having success, you may continue to increase the level of distraction. Can you jump up and down? Can you turn your back? Practice and see.

Drop

Teaching your dog to release something it wants can be challenging but incredibly useful. My favorite way to get a dog that happily and easily releases things to me it's lots and lots of exchanging. When my dog has something he's allowed to have, I ask for it with "drop", examine it briefly then return it to him. Sometimes I'll take something he's allowed to have, then give him something better. Sometimes I'll take something he's allowed to have and exchange it for something different. I will occasionally take something he's allowed to have, and put it away – for no other reason than to get him used to every outcome of relinquishment. He's learned that usually it's fine, sometimes it's great and occasionally it's a bummer, but this consistent training and practice means if I see him carrying something valuable or dangerous, I can get it from him without an epic chase around the yard or house.

Teaching the drop command is pretty easy and fun. I like to use a tug-toy and have a lot of fun with the exercise. When your pup is happily playing away with you, place a piece of soft and smelly food right on their nose. The desire to eat the food will cause them to relinquish the object. Say "yes!" and let them eat the food. As soon as they're finished chewing, resume the game. Your dog will enjoy this playful way to learn and usually they pick it up very quickly.

******Tell me you read your homework next week, and I'll give you 5 lucky bones!******