

Dog: Sit Command



Benefit

This one is a must and a behavior any dog can learn. A staple of all good dog manners, sitting when asked can help with polite greetings and as a first step to learning many other behaviors. For many dogs, sitting becomes their way of saying “please” when they would like you to throw a ball or open a door.

What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese, or a favorite toy.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.

How to Train It

Step 1. First, stand in front of your dog, facing her. Hold a treat between your thumb and your fingers and place your hand within an inch of your dog’s nose, fingers pointing up, palm facing up. Slowly lure your dog into a sitting position by bringing your hand forward and up over her nose a little. (If your dog jumps, you’ve moved your hand too far away or too far upward.) Your dog will shift his weight back and lower his hind end. When your dog’s rear hits the ground, click (or say “yes!”) and release the treat.

Step 2. Step back so your dog has to stand up to follow you and repeat the exercise. Do this until your dog easily follows the lure into a sit.

Step 3. Next, get rid of the treat as a lure. Face your dog and hold your hand (without the treat) in front of your dog in the same hand signal as before with the treat. Move your hand in the same way as before. When your dog sits, click and treat from the other hand. Repeat this step several times in different places around the house.

Step 4. Now it’s time to add the verbal cue. Face your dog, say “sit,” and give the hand signal. When your dog sits, click and treat. Keep practicing this step until your dog sits nine out of ten trials using the verbal cue and hand signal.

Step 5. Now try without the hand signal. Say “sit” and if your dog sits, click and treat. (If your dog needs a little guidance, show her your palm and indicate the upward movement.) Keep practicing this step until your dog reliably sits when given the verbal cue.

Tips

- Remember to say “sit” only once. Otherwise, you water down the word.
- If your dog is having trouble with any step, go back a step and practice that until it’s solid before you move on.
- Refrain from pushing your dog’s rear end down—otherwise you will have to do that for a cue. The cue should be the hand signal and the verbal cue—you should not have to physically touch your dog for the command. The same goes for pulling up on the leash as the cue.