

Basic Training

Food-based Rewards

You can teach your dog to do almost anything by pairing a food treat and a voice cue with an action your dog takes. Often people are opposed to giving a dog food for simple obedience. However, giving a dog a treat to make the association between a word and the dog's actions is an excellent training method. The way to your dog's brain is through his stomach! Once your dog understands a command, you can wean him off the treats. There is no reason for you to constantly buy his obedience with food just as he should not always have to perform cute tricks to get your attention.

You may also wish to lure your dog into various positions you can cue later. For example, if you hold your hand in a strategic position, directly above and slightly behind your dog's head, your dog will need to look up and back at the same time. He may jump around at first but don't move your hand. It may help to be near a wall so that he is limited in the area he can maneuver. As soon as he sits, immediately allow him to have the



treat. His rump may not be on the ground for long so be sure you are releasing the treat for sitting and not for getting back up! Once your dog is offering the position to get the treat, add the request to sit. Only say it once and only give the treat if he complies.

Clicker Training

You might also use a "clicker" to mark behavior you like such as raising a paw or sneezing. You would start by pairing the sound of the clicker with a food reward several times each day for a few days. Then using the sound of the clicker to let a dog know that whatever he just did is worth a treat. When he starts offering the behavior to get a treat, you should add a name for the behavior and only give a treat when you request the behavior. You

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should continue to pair the request, click and treat for a several weeks to be sure the behavior will last.

Some trainers choose to capture standard obedience behaviors through this method; sit, lie down and even withhold the click to develop duration and work up to distance and distractions. Research shows that dogs may learn the initial behavior more quickly this way. The sound of the clicker is not confused with people's regular conversations so it serves as unique information to a dog learning something new.

Working With Distractions

In any type of training, practicing at a distance, in different places and with increasing distractions is all part of creating a well-trained dog. If you plan to make any requests of your dog off leash, when guests are arriving or when other dogs are around, this is a necessary part of any teaching program. Finally, remember that research shows that punishment can prevent a dog from learning or offering new behavior, especially in stressful situations. Keep it positive and you'll keep him learning!

