

THE PET CONNECTION

By Deb Waldron

Mobile Pet Groomer

“SIT, STAY, COME” The ABC's of Dog Obedience

We've all been there, friends or family come to visit and Fido manages to embarrass us at every turn. Whether it's jumping up on people, sneaking out the door, or begging from the table our furry kids can make us look like pretty bad pooch parents. But I have good news! With a little information and consistency you can have a dog that you are proud to show off.

Dog training is really simple if you approach it from the dog's perspective. By that I mean remembering a basic fact, dogs are looking for someone to be in control. You are not automatically in control just because you are bigger and can yell louder than your dog can bark. Animals respect and respond to calm, assertive, leadership. So let's apply calm, assertive leadership to teaching our dogs the three basic commands of dog obedience - Sit, Stay, and Come.

The Sit

What a great command! We can all think of about a bazillion times that it would have come in handy if our dog would sit when we ask him to. (If you could add “stay” to the sit you'd be in heaven right? Well, that will come next!) The Sit command is especially helpful for dogs who like to jump up on people. It gives them something else positive to do, instead of just being yelled at to stay down.

Start by having some of your dogs favorite treats in your pocket, yes, we are going to bribe the little darlings! Actually we are not bribing them as much as we are getting them to focus. If your dog is big, stand in front of him, if your dog is small kneel in front of him. Show your dog the treat, most dogs will stare at the treat right away. Slowly move your hand toward but above the dog's head, and at the same time say the word “Sit”. Hopefully your dog will follow your hand with his eyes, and the easiest way for him to keep the treat in sight at this point is to sit. Of course if he sits give him the treat! If he just moves around get in front of him again, show him the treat, wait till he's focused on the treat, and then repeat the hand gesture of moving toward but above his head, and rewarding only if you get the dog to sit.

Remember, your attitude should be calm and assertive, mixed with lots of patience! Keep the training sessions short. It's better to work with your dog twice a day for 10 minutes than to work once a day for a half hour. Most of you will have success quicker than you think!

The Stay

Once your dog is consistently sitting when you ask him to it's time to move on to the Stay command. Start by standing in front of your dog and ask him to sit, if your dog is really small you may want to kneel. Next hold up your hand, palm toward your dog (like a police officer would do to stop traffic) and say the word “Stay”. Keeping your hand up take a small step backward and repeat the Stay command. If your dog stays in place till the count of 1,2,3, pat yourself on the back for owning a genius dog. Then step back to your original position and give your dog a treat, a hug, and call Good Morning America and see if they are interested in having your genius dog on their show. If your dog does not stay, calmly start the process over again. When your dog gets good at staying in place when you are one step away try adding another backward step. When he gets good at that gradually add seconds to the amount of time you are asking him to wait. Always return to your dog to reward him. When you are able to move at least three steps back and have your dog stay until the count of six you are ready to teach your dog the Come command.

The Come

To have a dog who comes when you call him is truly a beautiful thing. And when you put it together with a dog who will Sit, Stay, and then Come when you call him, well, you've just made everybody's life a whole lot better! So let's put this all together. Start by asking your dog to sit, give the stay command, move three steps back, count to six (no cheating!) and call your dog by first saying the dogs name, and then the word “Come”. (Note: Do not use your dog's name for the Sit or Stay command) If your dog does not come right away take another step back and repeat the dogs

name and the command to Come. Keep moving backwards until the dog breaks the Stay and comes to you. Upon his arrival to you reward your wonderful, fabulous dog with a treat! Do not worry if the dog stays standing or sits when he gets to you, we are rewarding him for coming, nothing more. Once your dog gets good at the Come, you can ask him to sit once he gets to you if you want.

OK, there you have it, the ABC's of dog obedience! There are other techniques for teaching these commands, but I hope the ones that I have outlined for you here have been helpful, let me know!!

If you would like to see a certain topic discussed in an upcoming column of The Pet Connection please send an email to Debbie@PamperedPawsSalon.com