

Homework – Week Two

Sit and Down – If your dog is going to compete in agility, as well as function as a pet in the “real world,” he will need to be able to “sit” and “down” on command. If your dog can do these things already (reliably), you’re ahead of the game. If not, you need to teach him. This is usually not too difficult and can be done with purely positive methods.

“Sit”

Use a tidbit of food as a lure. Hold the food over the dog’s head and move it slowly backwards. You may want to do this close to a wall or fence so the dog can’t back up. Most dogs will put their heads up and their butts down, in an attempt to get at the food. If he doesn’t volunteer to put his butt down, you can gently guide him into a sitting position, by running your hands gently along his back, over his tail and “tucking” him into a sit. *Note – do not press down on his hindquarters, as this can cause injury or damage to the dog’s back end.* As soon as the dog is sitting, click to mark the behavior, and give him the treat. Repeat. Continue until the dog is sitting when you hold the food over his head. At this point you can begin giving the command “sit”. When he will “sit” on command, begin rewarding him only when he does it on command.

“Down”

Again, use a tidbit of food as a lure. You may start with the dog in a sitting position, but it is usually considered that you will get a faster down if he is used to going down from a standing position.

Hold the food in your right hand. Put your left hand on the dog’s shoulders. Hold the food in front of his nose and bring it forward (away from the dog) and down – all the way to the ground. Encourage the dog to go into a prone position by gently pushing down on his shoulders and slightly to the side. (You want to push him a little off balance, not “fight” with him by pushing straight down.) As soon as he is down, click and treat while he is still in the down position.

Note – “Down” is a submissive position for dogs and they may be uncomfortable in this position. It’s important to make it as positive and non-threatening as possible.

Continue to work on the “**touch the hand**” game that you started in the first week of class. Be sure you have only *one* hand outstretched. The other arm/hand should be against your body or otherwise out of the way. The dog should be coming to your hand when you give the command “Here”. Click and treat.

Agility Uses for Hand Targeting ... in case you were curious about the reason we teach hand targeting in agility class (or if I forgot to mention it in class)...

Think of hand targeting as a sort of biscuit on a stick that is a hands-off way of “leading” your dog. Often when making a 180-degree turn to the left with your dog on your right, a dog will duck behind the handler and take the shorter inside (left) curve. Hand targeting can help guide your dog through a turn so you don’t lose him behind you. Hand targeting can be used to help regain your dog’s attention and focus by giving himself something else to focus on. Hand targeting is very helpful for tightening up turns. Hand targeting is also very good for positioning your dog at the start of a sequence or course - the less physical pushing and pulling that you do with your dog, the happier your dog.

Target Work -- Also continue having your dog run to a target and touch it with his nose. Click and treat.