

Puppy Basics

Let's Start with Sit!

1. Hold a soft treat in your fingers and lure your dog into a sit. As he sits use your bridge (Conditioned Reinforcer, or CR, which can be your clicker or a special word) and let him have the treat. Before he gets up give your release word. Practice this until he is sitting quickly beside you, in front of you, and in a variety of locations.
2. When he is sitting quickly, continue to have food in your lure hand, but when he sits don't give the treat to him. Use your CR, but give him something else, like a treat from your other hand. You are beginning variable reinforcement. You can even have another family member give him treats, or release him to throw a ball, or release him to go play outside. Use your imagination! Always remember to use your release word.
3. Now lure him into a sit with no treat in your hand. This is now your sit signal. If he sits, give the CR and give him a BIG reward. If he doesn't sit, ignore him and reward yourself! Wait a little bit and try again. Wait quietly a little while after giving your signal. Give him time to make the right choice. Make sure your reward is noticeably better than when you use a lure.
4. When your dog is responding consistently to your hand signal you can add a verbal signal. Say "SIT", hesitate a second and give your hand signal. Gradually hesitate a little longer between signals. Soon your dog will start responding to your verbal signal. Now you can use either signal when you want your dog to sit!
5. By using your release consistently before your dog moves from the sit, you are actually beginning to teach stay! Gradually begin to keep your dog sitting longer before the release. You do this by continuing reinforcement while the dog remains sitting. Use praise, tiny treats, massage and favorite pats to keep your dog sitting until the release. After the release ignore your dog for five seconds.
6. If your dog attempts to get up before the release, shorten the time you wait before releasing to ensure he's successful.
7. Encourage your dog to tolerate and enjoy touching and hugs and pats while he is sitting. Use lots of reinforcement to reward his successes. If he tries to get up, stop reinforcing until he is sitting willingly. Remember to release and briefly ignore after every sit.
8. You can practice many times a day, but keep your sessions very short!