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Introduction

Although I use a clicker in most of the training I do, I'm not a clicker purist. There's lots of ways to train any given behavior and I'm happy to use any good idea, clicker or not!

This guide is intended to help you introduce your dog to a set of basic skills that will help your dog be a joy to live with for the rest of his life. Your dog won't be fully trained and I encourage you to continue training after you're done with this course.

I struggle with the problem of pronouns in writing. I think English would greatly benefit from the introduction of a gender-free pronoun and admire the resulting simplicity in other languages that do have neutral pronouns. So far none of the suggestions (such as *sie*, *zie*, *hir*, etc) seem to be getting any sort of widespread recognition let alone acceptance. I prefer not to employ "his or hers" because it is so awkward. I often prefer to revert to an older convention and use "they" or "them" (it wasn't until around 1800 that the "universal masculine" was conceived of as a replacement for the use of "they" as a neutral pronoun) but I know that many people find this jarring.

So for the purposes of this guide, I've settled for using the male pronoun (he and his) for dogs and the female pronoun for the human handler because this reflects my personal training life right now--I am a woman training two male dogs.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Dogs don't speak English (or French or Spanish or even Cat)! They are very good readers of human body language and they are pretty good guessers--so sometimes they can give the illusion of understanding spoken language. They are like people who are in a place where they don't understand the language or the local customs. Most of what we say isn't really directed at our dogs and just washes over them. Even when we talk to our dogs, much of what we say is completely unintelligible to them.

Imagine that you are in a place where no one seems to speak English, people are dressed in some sort of ethnic garb that is colorful and attractive but you don't know what significance any particular costume has and you're not sure of the local customs at all. Somehow you've managed to communicate to the stationmaster at the train station that you want to see the Museum of Ancestral Arts (which you traveled 15,000 miles to see!). The stationmaster summons a young woman and gives her extensive instructions--which you cannot understand. The stationmaster turns to you, smiles kindly, and places your hand on the young woman's arm. The young woman starts off and the stationmaster gives your shoulder a gentle push to get you to follow her. You're hoping that she will guide you to the MAA.

You're walking down the crowded street, trying to keep up with your guide. All of a sudden she turns to you, says something that sounds like "Frooglooks!" in a harsh voice, clamps one hand over your wrist and jerks you sideways.

What happened? What did you do? Did you look in the wrong direction? Did you step in the wrong place? Were you not supposed to smile?

You're upset and confused but you're not sure you remember how to get back to the station and you really want to see the MAA, so you continue to follow the young woman. But now you're suspicious and your muscles are stiff--you walk slower and you try to look everywhere at once because you want to avoid that unpleasant event again.

All of a sudden, the young woman positively snarls "Frooglooks!!!" as she grabs your wrist and jerks you sideways even harder.

Are you trying to blow her off? Are you being defiant? Do you just not care what she thinks of you? Does she need to be rougher with you to get your attention?

Do you really want to follow this woman anymore?

Now imagine that none of the above happened and you are about to leave the station again. The stationmaster summons a young woman and gives her a flood of instructions. The stationmaster places your hand on her arm and gives your shoulder a gentle push to urge you to follow your guide.

You're following your guide down the crowded street when she stops walking. You stop walking as well and suddenly notice that the person who was approaching you is standing still in front of you, looking at you. You take a step sideways and your guide says "Frooglooks!" in a pleased voice and pats your hand gently.

You start off with your guide again, thoroughly enjoying all the new sights. You feel your guide slow down and look ahead of you to see a person wearing the same sort of robe as before standing looking at you. You take a step sideways and your guide says "Frooglooks!" in a pleased voice, patting your hand gently.

You continue following your guide. All of a sudden, she says "Frooglooks!" and you step to the side as a person wearing yet another of those robes passes. Your guide gives you a big smile and gives your shoulder a gentle rub.

What kind of guide would you want to be?

Principles of Training

Positive reinforcement is anything that is presented to the trainee as a consequence of an action that increases the likelihood of the action being repeated.

In plain English, it means that your trainee is more likely to do something again if he gets something he wants for doing it.

Clicker trainers try to manipulate the conditions of training so that their dogs are working with them to get positive reinforcement rather than trying to avoid something unpleasant (like a collar jerk). As I am not a clicker purist, I sometimes use unpleasant events in training certain exercises--but I try to never cause the dog physical pain or fear. I have plenty of ways to make a dog regret a bad decision that don't involve pain!

Clicker training uses an event marker (the click) to signal to the dog that the treat is coming up. Dogs learn very quickly that if they repeat whatever it is they were doing when they heard the click, they can make more clicks happen and get more treats.

Dogs learn fastest when they get a high rate of reinforcement. When beginning to shape a behavior, aim at clicking something 15-30 times a minute. Once your dog understands the exercise you can lower the number of clicks per minute but in the beginning, the more you click the faster your dog will learn.

People sometimes feel uncomfortable with clicker training because they think it means never praising their dog again. This isn't quite the case—you can praise a lot! What is discouraged is talking while your dog is trying to think. Handlers intend to encourage their dog or to promote an up, happy attitude but what usually happens is that the dog can't focus on the exercise because someone they care about is talking!

Dogs learn most things most easily when they are successful 80% of the time. This translates to eight successes out of every ten tries or four clicks out of every five attempts. If the success rate drops below 70% or so, many dogs will get bored with training--it's just too difficult to make that click happen (no one enjoys trying something over and over and not succeeding!). If the success rate goes over 90% or so, the dog is probably enjoying training but is not learning much. Too high a success rate indicates that the trainer is just clicking everything or does not know how to keep making progress.

The timing of the click is very important—you should click the instant you see what you want. Clicking before the dog has done what you wanted is not effective nor is clicking after the dog is done. Consistently mis-timing the click can result in teaching your dog to do something very different from what you intended!

Use the clicker as if it were a camera taking a picture of the dog in the act of doing what you want.

The word “treat” is used in the sense of something special, as in “going to the zoo on Sunday will be a real treat for Johnny.” The treat doesn’t necessarily have to be food; it can be a toy, a special game, or attention. It can even be everyday things like letting your dog go out into the yard--first you have your dog do something, then you click and open the door. The treat can be anything your dog wants that you can control his access to. There are several reasons why food is the most common treat--it’s quick and easy to deliver, most dogs want it, and all dogs have to eat to live anyway.

Clicker training uses the dog’s desire for various things (food, toys, attention, games, etc.) to teach the dog to do things. In order for clicker training to work, the trainer must be able to control the dog’s access to the treat. If the dog has free access to the treat, it probably won’t be effective as a training tool.

In order to be effective, the treat has to be something the trainee wants. Just because the treat works for one individual doesn’t mean it will work for another. For instance, my husband loves liver and onions; if I want him to shovel the driveway in the winter, he does it a lot more cheerfully if I promise him liver and onions when he’s through. I absolutely abhor liver and onions; if someone promised to give me liver and onions when I finished doing my housework, I can guarantee that it would never get done!

Dogs are the same as people--what one dog would turn backflips and walk over hot coals to get leaves another dog cold. If a dog doesn’t seem enthusiastic about one sort of treat, try something different. In many cases, switching to human food is effective--try peanut butter, cream cheese, strained baby food meat, bits of fried chicken, etc.

If you are planning on doing a lot of training, you might find the volume of treats affecting your dog’s weight. Consider using part or all of his regular meals for treats.

If using food treats, make sure that you are giving your dog a taste of the treat rather than a full meal. For medium and large sized dogs, treats should be about the size of raisins.

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Small dogs need special consideration. It doesn't take many raisin-sized treats to fill up a Papillon or Pomeranian! If you are using a squishy treat like cream cheese or strained baby food meat, you can deliver just a taste each time on the end of a chopstick. You can also find plastic tubes at camping supply places that can be filled from the end, clipped closed and used like a toothpaste tube--just open the cap and squeeze out a little taste of the contents. I know one person who added water or chicken broth to strained baby food meat to make it very thin and then used an eyedropper to dispense just one drop for each treat.

Food treats don't have to be given directly from your hand all the time. Sometimes it is greatly to your advantage to toss the treat behind your dog or off to one side so that your dog has to move to get it. You can sometimes use one treat to get your dog into position for the next exercise. The instructions in this guide mention when it is to your advantage to deliver the treat other than from your hand.

Equipment

The only equipment you need to follow this guide is a buckle or limited slip collar, a good 6-foot lead (leather is kindest to your hands), a watch with a second hand or a stopwatch, some sort of container for your treats and a 15-foot long line. Nylon or cotton web long lines are sold by many pet supply places (including mail order) or you can make one yourself out of clothesline or parachute cord. Not all parachute cord is created equal! The good stuff is the sort with a braided core covered with braided nylon; the bad stuff has a core that is weak and easily broken that serves as a filler just to provide a foundation for the cover of braided nylon.

There are lots of ways to carry treats and they all have pros and cons. The important thing is that you be able to reach your treats quickly, so you can deliver them efficiently to your dog. You don't want to get caught in one of those routines where you click, then reach into your pocket, pull out your plastic bag, fumble it open and finally manage to get a treat out for your dog. That takes so long you might as well tell your dog to pencil you in for a snack sometime! I often just carry a handful of treats from a container I keep nearby, then go back to replenish as needed.

Frequently Asked Questions About Clicker Training

Will I always have to use a clicker to make my dog do things?

Nope! The clicker is used in the beginning stages of training each exercise because it allows you to tell your dog with great precision when he's doing the right thing. Once your dog understands the exercise, you don't need that level of precision.

Why do I have to wait so long to use a command? How will my dog know what to do if I don't give him a command?

It's more efficient in terms of learning to pair a word with a behavior, rather than saying the word first and then teaching the dog what it means. Add the command when your dog is performing the behavior correctly at least 80% of the time.

Dogs don't understand words--you have to teach your dog what a particular word means, by associating it with an action many times. By associating the learned behavior with the word, your dog learns exactly what that word means--rather than learning that the word means one thing, then learning that it means something a little different and then something a little different again. For example, if you wait to teach your dog the word "heel" until your dog is proficient at walking right next to your left side with his head by your left hip, he knows pretty exactly what "heel" means. But if you start to teach him the word at the same time you start to teach him the behavior, at first he might think it means something like "walk near my person attached to her with a string." Then when he's learned a little more, he might think it means "walk near my person only on one side of her." And so on.

Your dog will figure out what you mean if you don't give him a command by experimenting to see what will make you click and hand out a treat. Pretty much the same way he learns if you do say a command--since he doesn't understand spoken language, he's not any better off when you speak to him.

Will my dog only obey if I have treats?

Only if you teach your dog that he only has to obey when you have treats. I try to get the treats off my body as quickly as possible. I leave my treats in a container on a table nearby and each time I click I go over to the table to give my dog the treat. If I'm at home, I might click and then go to the refrigerator (my dogs love this one!). Once my dog understands the exercise, I start substituting other treats for food--like petting, verbal praise, hugs, special games (my dogs love the Monster game) or toys. I try to vary the treat so that my dog never really knows what the treat might be. They just know it will be something good.

If there is more than one person in the room clicking, won't my dog be confused?

Dogs have an excellent sense of hearing and can localize sounds more accurately than humans. They learn very quickly that unless the click comes from you, nothing will happen.

What if my dog disobeys me?

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You don't have to jerk your dog around by the collar or swat him on the rump to make him regret a bad choice. If your treat is something your dog wants badly, simply withholding the treat will communicate that he made a mistake.

If your dog wants something else more than he wants what you want, you can take that away as well. For instance, if your dog ignores you when playing with other dogs, enlist a friend with a well trained dog to help you show your dog that if he ignores your call to come, the other dog mysteriously (from your dog's point of view) lies down and refuses to play anymore. The secret to the mystery is that your friend told her dog to lie down--but your dog doesn't know that!

Dogs that are trained via positive reinforcement tend to be much more concerned about their handler's emotions. Often the handler's disapproval is enough to get such dogs to try harder to please.

Record-Keeping

I discovered the value of record-keeping even before I discovered the value of clicker training. I was doing a lot of rescue and I discovered that if I wrote down what I was doing in training and how the dog was responding it really seemed to put that rescue on the fast track. I used to think I'd just remember whatever it was I did with a given dog but I discovered that it all faded into a blur very quickly. I was usually pretty eager to get that dog trained and out of my house, so I was very motivated to do whatever it took to make it happen as efficiently as possible.

As a teacher, I have noticed that students who keep training logs progress faster and have more insight into their dog's behavior.

Even a training log that simply notes what exercises were worked on, a rough idea of what level the dog worked at during that session, and a few details about location and major distractions seems to facilitate training. The more detailed the log, the more useful it is later. And there's definitely a lot of satisfaction to be had in looking back and seeing where your dog was a month ago or a year ago.

One trick for keeping track of hard data (number of trials, percentage of successes, etc) is to get an eyeliner pencil and make hatch marks on the back of your hand or on your forearm as you train (tuck the pencil into your watchband to keep it handy). Transfer your data into your training log at the end of every so many repetitions or at the end of each exercise and use a baby wipe to clean your "slate" and get ready for the next set.

At the end of this guide are a set of sample log sheets for each exercise. You can copy those sheets to use in your log. Or invent your own!

Doggie Zen (Leave It)

Doggie Zen is the foundation for many skills for your dog. It gives your dog a chance to learn self-restraint (“Grasshopper, to get the treat you must give up the treat”); it is the foundation for “Leave it!”; it shows your dog how to deal with distractions; it gets your dog started on thinking about how to please you.

Step One

Dogs that reach out to grab treats are more likely to shark the treat (grab your fingers or your whole hand with the treat). Some dogs will also try to snag food out of inattentive hands, particularly the hands of small children. This exercise teaches your dog to wait until the treat is placed in his mouth.

You don’t need a clicker for this exercise—your dog will know he’s done the right thing when the treat lands in his mouth.

Hold a treat between your index finger and thumb. Wave the treat in circles around your dog’s head until he stops trying to grab it. Reach forward and as your dog opens his mouth, press down on his lower jaw as you release the treat. If your dog tries to grab the treat when you move your hand forward, pull your hand away and continue waving the treat around.

Waving the treat in circles helps speed up the process because it seems to make the dog dizzy!

It can also help to press down on the dog’s lower jaw as you place the treat on his tongue (thanks to Margie English for passing along this idea from Dawn Jecs).

Goal: Your dog waits for you to place the treat in his mouth five times in a row.

Step Two

Get your treats and your clicker ready. Show your dog a treat, then close your hand around it. Let your dog nuzzle, lick, etc, to try to get the treat out of your hand. Wait until your dog pulls his head away from your hand, click and give your dog the treat.

As long as your dog is reasonably gentle, let him try to get the treat. If your dog starts to get unreasonably rough (biting too roughly, pawing your hand with a front foot roughly, etc), pull your hand away from your dog and turn your head away from him. Give him a short time out (5-10 seconds), then give him another chance.

Repeat this exercise until your dog is no longer touching your hand before giving up on the treat. Sometimes dogs get into an almost superstitious ritual of touching your hand before pulling away. If you think this describes your dog, start giving him a time-out each time he touches your hand--turn your head away from him and stare at the ceiling for 5-30 seconds (long enough for your dog to notice).

Goal: Your dog watches your hand without mugging it until you click five times in a row

Step Three

Get your treats ready and have your clicker in one hand. Review the Step Two by closing one treat into your hand and hold it toward your dog. Let your dog try to get the treat from you. Click when he gives up on the treat. You may have to give your dog several review tries--this is exciting stuff for many dogs!

When your dog has stopped touching your hand before giving up, then start moving your fingers after your dog gives up--before you click. Many dogs will dive right back onto your hand. Be patient, let him give up on the treat again, then wiggle your fingers again. Be sure not to click until you can wiggle your fingers and your dog is still holding back from your hand.

Goal: Your dog pulls away from your hand five times in a row even as you wiggle your fingers.

Step Four

Get your treats ready and have your clicker in one hand. Review Step Three by closing one treat into your hand and holding it out toward your dog. After your dog gives up on the treat, wiggle your fingers. Click only if your dog is staying off your hand even though you are wiggling your fingers.

Then start barely opening your fingers when your dog gives up on the treat, so he can see the treat. Be ready to close your fingers fast if he dives back onto your hand! Click when your dog can see the treat and still stays off your hand.

Goal: Your dog pulls away from your hand five times in a row even when he can see the treat you are holding.

Step Five

Review Step Four by opening your fingers so your dog can see the treat.

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Then place the treat on your knee, on the seat next to you or on a coffee table--it should be within easy reach for your dog. Hold your hand over the treat and be ready to cover it fast if your dog tries to dive on the treat. When he pulls away, raise your hand again so he can see the treat. When your dog is staying off the treat even when he can see it, click and let him have the treat.

Goal: Your dog stays away from the treat even when he can see it sitting on a surface five times in a row.

Step Six

Review Step Five by placing the treat on another surface with your hand over it, ready to cover it.

Then place the treat on the floor and be ready to cover the treat with your foot. It might be easier to do this in socks or slippers, rather than shoes! If your dog tries to dive on the treat, cover it with your foot. When he pulls back, raise your foot so he can see the treat again. When he is staying away from the treat, click and let him have the treat. If your dog has a problem with scarfing stuff up on walks, pick the treat up with your hand and have your dog take it from your hand when you treat him. Teach him that good things come only through you!

Goal: Your dog stays away from a treat on the floor five times in a row even if your foot isn't covering it.

Step Seven

Review Step Six by placing a treat on the floor (using your foot to cover it if necessary).

It's time to associate a command with the action. I use the words "Leave It!"--you can use any command as long as you are consistent.

Hold a treat out on your open hand--be ready to close your hand if your dog tries to dive on the treat! When you see your dog pull away from the treat, give the command, then click and treat. This is going back to Step Two, so it should be quick and easy.

Repeat this at least 15 times. Then test your dog to find out if he's made the association by moving the treat toward your dog's nose and then giving the command. If he moves his head away from the treat, click and give him two or three treats, one treat at a time.

If your dog doesn't move his head away from the treat, repeat associating the command with the behavior 15 more times. Make sure that you aren't giving the command until your dog is committed to staying away from the treat.

Goal: Your dog moves away from a treat if you give the command to leave it five times in a row.

Step Eight

Time to teach your dog that Doggie Zen applies to other people as well as you!

You need a helper for this step. Show your helper how to move the treat in circles around your dog's head and then place the treat in his mouth (as in Step One). Sometimes it helps to give your helper a rehearsal by pretending that your hand is your dog's head and having your helper practice the maneuver with you.

Goal: Your dog waits for the treat to be placed in his mouth even if it is being held by another person five times in a row.

Step Nine

Show your helper the second step of Doggie Zen (holding a treat in your closed hand). Then have your helper hold the treat. When your dog pulls away from your helper, take the treat out of your helper's hand and give it to your dog. You want your dog to think that good things come through you.

Be ready to teach your helper how to do this properly! Many times it is easier for your helper if you hold the clicker and decide when they should open their hand.

Goal: Your dog pulls away from other people holding out treats five times in a row.

Step Ten

You need a helper for this step.

Place a treat of some sort on the floor near your helper. When your dog spots the treat tell him "Leave it" and have your helper cover the treat with her hand or foot if your dog tries to dive on it. When your dog leaves the treat, click and give your dog a treat from your hand.

Progressively place the treat a little farther away from your helper but never so far away that your helper can't defend it.

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Goal: Your dog learns to leave treats on the floor alone on the command “Leave it!” five times in a row.

Step Eleven

For this step, you need to make or invent some food-like objects. A food-like object is something that smells good enough to eat but can't be eaten. You can:

*Get raw wooden craft balls and smear them with cheese or hot dogs to make them smell good (this doesn't work well for dogs that love to retrieve).

*Get some wire craft mesh and use it to make a container that you can put treats into.

*Get an old fashioned metal tea ball and place treats in it.

*Use a plastic tub and poke holes into it so your dog can smell the treats but not reach them.

*Get a section of PVC pipe, drill holes in it, place treats inside and use duct tape to close up the ends.

Food-like objects don't have to be totally dog-proof, they just have to make it sufficiently difficult for your dog to get at the treat that you have a chance to intervene if necessary.

Before you let your dog in, place a couple food-like objects around the area in which you are training. Walk around the area casually with your dog and when your dog spots one of the food-like objects, say “Leave it!” If your dog leaves the food-like object, click and give your dog a treat.

Repeat this step in as many places as you can, as many times as you can. Again, this is potentially a safety issue--dogs will cheerfully scarf up all sorts of stuff that is very harmful to them.

Goal: Your dog leaves smelly objects alone as soon as you say “Leave it!” without checking them farther five times in a row.

Step Twelve

Distribute some small, dry treats around your training area before you bring your dog in. Put your dog on leash and walk him into the training area.

When he spots a treat, tell him to "Leave it!" Stand still and hold the leash short enough and tightly enough that he can't reach the treat. The instant your dog looks away from the treat or looks at you, click and treat!

When you get to the point where your dog is immediately looking away from the treat when you say "Leave it!" start occasionally giving your dog permission to eat the treat off the floor after you click (you can point to the treat on the floor and verbally encourage your dog to eat it). Sometimes give your dog a treat from your hand, sometimes give your dog permission to eat from the floor. A dog is much more likely to obey your "Leave it!" command in unexpected situations (in other words, in real life) if he thinks that there's a sporting chance you might decide that he can have whatever it is he spotted.

Repeat this step in as many places as you can, as many times as you can.

Goal: Your dog obeys your "Leave it!" command even when there is no one next to the treat to defend it five times in a row.

Continuing Training

The more helpers you can persuade to help you with Doggie Zen, the more likely your dog will be to believe that it applies to all humans.

When your dog is really good on leash, you can start training for off-lead control. Seed your training area with treats as in Step Twelve and start out with your dog on lead. Carry the best, most luscious treats on you--you want your dog to want what you have more than he wants what is on the floor. After your dog is giving you a quick response on lead, casually unsnap the leash and continue practicing as before.

If he dives on a treat off-lead, try not to freak out. This tells you he needs more work on lead. Do several more practice sessions on lead and then test him off-lead again.

Power Steering (Loose-Leash Walking)

There are many different ways to teach loose-leash walking. I've included three different ways: targeting, responsible heeling and penalty yards/paper-clip heeling. I suggest you read through each method and pick the one that you feel most comfortable with.

If you must walk your dog for exercise and he's already a puller, try to change the situation so he's not practicing pulling anymore. One solution is to walk your dog on a Flexi-lead--most dogs don't pull on Flexis. Keep the Flexi unlocked as much as possible so that your dog can freely reel the line in and out.

Another solution is to use a head halter or a pinch collar while walking your dog to physically prevent him from pulling. Yet another solution is to get a SnapBack™ (a bungee cord-like shock absorber) so your dog can't pull easily. SnapBacks are available from www.snapbacks.com or by calling (888) 933-2545.

Option 1: Targeting

Targeting means teaching your dog to touch something with his nose--in this case, the target is your hand.

This works for teaching your dog to walk on a loose lead because it gives him a job to do. He can't do that job and pull on leash at the same time!

This is particularly effective if you have to walk your dog in crowded places because it gives you very tight control over your dog's head. It does take longer to teach a dog to walk on lead with this method but it also promotes a greater sense of teamwork between dog and handler. It is an especially effective method for shy or fearful dogs.

Step One

Get 15 treats ready and have your clicker in one hand. Hold out your other hand toward your dog and click when your dog nudges your hand. Give your dog a treat. Repeat!

Sometimes dogs will nudge a hand once or twice and then stop doing it. If your dog stops, try holding that hand with your other hand up near your face (as if your hand is a toy that you're teasing your dog with), pet that hand, whisper secrets to your hand, start to hold your hand out toward your dog and then pull it back a

couple times to tease your dog. Make your hand seem important and exciting to your dog.

If you suspect your dog may have been taught not to touch human hands (some people tap their dogs on the muzzle to teach them not to touch), you can try rubbing a little cheese or hot dog on your hand to make it smell interesting to your dog. You might even try putting a tiny smear of peanut butter or cream cheese on your hand for your dog to lick, so that you can click.

Goal: Your dog nudges your hand 15 times.

Step Two

Get 15 treats ready and have your clicker in one hand. Give your dog a little review of the first step (just touching your hand with his nose). Then hold your hand a little farther away, so your dog has to turn his head or move one front foot in order to touch your hand.

Goal: Your dog turns his head or moves one front foot in order to nudge your hand 15 times.

Step Three

Get 15 treats ready and have your clicker in one hand. Give your dog a little review of the second step (turning his head to touch your hand with his nose). Then hold your hand a little farther away and when your dog starts to move his head toward your hand, move your hand just a little more so that your dog actually has to take one step to follow your hand before he can nudge it.

Goal: Your dog follows your hand for one step in order to nudge your hand 15 times.

Step Four

Do a review of Step Three by holding your hand a little off to one side of your dog so that he has to take one step with his front feet to touch your hand.

Count out 15 treats. Then move your hand a little after he starts moving so that he has to take two steps with his front feet before he can nudge your hand. It's difficult to see a dog's hind feet when they are facing you, so don't worry about whether the hind feet are moving--just keep an eye on those front feet.

Goal: Your dog takes two steps to nudge your hand 15 times.

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Step Five

Do a review of Step Four by moving your hand a little so that your dog has to take two steps with his front feet before he can nudge your hand.

Then move your hand a little more, so your dog has to take three or four steps with his front feet in order to nudge your hand.

Goal: Your dog takes three or four steps with his front feet in order to nudge your hand.

Step Six

Do a review of Step Five by moving your hand a little so that your dog has to take three or four steps with his front feet in order to nudge your hand.

Now try moving your dog in circles or serpentines by holding out your hand and having him follow it. Make sure to click every five or six steps, even if your dog hasn't completely finished a circle or serpentine--better to click too soon than to wait too long and not be able to click at all!

Goal: Your dog can follow your hand in a circle or a serpentine.

Step Seven

Review Step Six by moving your dog a few times using your hand.

If you want your dog to walk on your left side, hold your left hand at your side with the palm toward your dog and move forward a step or two. Hold your treat in your other hand. Click as your dog moves forward with you. Practice walking with your dog while using your hand as power steering--click your dog for taking 3-6 steps with you.

Mix up the number of steps you take before you click. Sometimes you take three steps, sometimes you take up to six steps. The idea is to keep your dog guessing as to just when you might click and hand out a treat.

Your step intervals might look something like this: 3, 3, 5, 3, 4, 6, 3, 4, 3, 6, 5, 3, etc.

Goal: Your dog can walk as many as six steps with you while watching your hand.

Step Eight

Find a helper for this step. First do a review of moving your dog with your hand.

Then have your helper hold out treats or a toy to tempt your dog while you move your dog with your hand. If your dog gets distracted, say nothing! Your helper is there to prevent your dog from getting the treat; all you have to do is wait until your dog figures out that your helper is lying--your helper appears to be offering a treat but won't ever give it to your dog.

Because this is a new, more difficult situation for your dog, help your dog by lowering your expectations. You may have to go so far as to hold out your hand and click your dog for bumping it with his nose (just as you did in the beginning). Remember to help your dog succeed!

Goal: Your dog moves to bump your hand even with distractions.

Step Nine

Review moving 3-6 steps forward with your dog.

Then start teaching your dog to sit when you halt--walk forward two or three steps, then stop, then tell your dog to sit. Repeat this 5-10 times, then test your dog by stopping and hesitating for a second before telling your dog to sit. Click and treat your dog for sitting.

If your dog doesn't sit, tell him to Sit. Then repeat stopping and telling him to Sit immediately 5-10 times and then test your dog again by hesitating before telling your dog to Sit.

It's important to stop first and then tell your dog to Sit--you want your dog to start anticipating that when you stop, the very next thing you'll do is tell him to sit. He will start sitting before you say "Sit", which is very handy.

Goal: Your dog sits when you stop walking.

Step Ten

Review taking 3-6 steps forward with your dog a few times. When your dog is working smoothly with you, start extending the number of steps you take before you click. Work up to being able to take 12 steps at a time before you click.

Mix up the number of steps you take--sometimes you only take 3 steps, sometimes you take as many as 12 steps. Remember--keep your dog guessing!

If your dog gets distracted while you are walking, say "Oops!" and stop. Stand still until your dog is watching you again (probably wondering why you stopped).

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When you have your dog's attention again, hold out your hand and start walking again. If this happens more than once, it's probably an indication that you are taking too many steps before clicking. Remember to mix in many short walks (3-5 steps) with a few long walks.

Goal: Your dog walks up to 12 steps at a time before you click and treat.

Step Eleven

You need a helper for this step. First do a review of moving your dog with your hand.

Then have your helper try to distract your dog while you move him with your hand. She can hold out treats, toys, say things to you and your dog--anything is fair except saying your dog's name or physically blocking your dog's path. Start out moving your dog short distances, only 3-5 steps and gradually work up to moving your dog for up to 12 steps before you click.

Goal: Your dog moves with you for up to 12 steps while someone tries to tempt him away.

Step Twelve

Review automatic sits (Step Nine) with your dog--take two or three steps forward, then halt. Click and treat when your dog sits. If your dog doesn't sit, remind him of what you want 5-10 times in a row by coming to a halt and then saying "Sit." Then test him--come to a halt and say nothing. If he sits, click and treat. If he doesn't sit, say "Ooops!" then do another set of review halts (5-10 repetitions of walking forward two or three sits, halting and telling your dog to Sit).

Once your dog is sitting automatically, gradually increase

the number of steps you take before you halt. Vary the number of steps you take from three to twelve. Mix it up so your dog won't be able to predict just how many steps it will be.

Goal: Your dog does an automatic sit after walking as many as 12 steps in a row with you.

Step Thirteen

Review automatic sits with your dog.

When he is working smoothly with you, start looking straight ahead as you halt. Just look straight ahead, come to a halt and then look to see if your dog sat. If he sat, click and treat. If he didn't sit, say "Ooops" and review automatic sits with him by doing 5-10 halts while looking straight ahead, telling him to sit, then click and treating for the sit. Then try doing another halt looking straight ahead again without the verbal command.

When he's succeeded doing an automatic sit five times in a row while you look straight ahead, practice coming to a halt while looking upwards. Click and treat for a sit. If he doesn't sit, say "Ooops" then review automatic sits with him as above.

When your dog succeeds in doing an automatic sit five times in a row while you look up, practice coming to a halt while looking away from your dog. Click and treat for a sit. If he doesn't sit, say "Oooops" then review automatic sits with him as above.

Dogs learn things in a very literal manner--if they learn something with you making direct eye contact, they often don't realize that it is the same situation if you are looking away! Dogs are like Amelia Bedelia, the maid in the children's story who takes everything literally--when her employer told her to "draw the curtains" Amelia obediently took pencil and paper and sketched the curtains.

Goal: Your dog does an automatic sit even if you are not looking at him.

Step Fourteen

Time to start phasing out the clicker. Your dog has a fair understanding of moving with you and doing automatic sits and you don't need the precision of the clicker anymore for this exercise.

Practice moving with your dog and doing automatic sits--move from 3-12 steps with your dog. Instead of clicking, just hand your dog the treat directly. If your dog gets distracted, stop moving until you have your dog's attention again. Then take a few steps and hand your dog a treat.

Do some halts so you can reinforce for an automatic sit and sometimes just hand your dog the treat while you are still walking.

Remember--keep your dog guessing!

Goal: Your dog moves up to 12 steps with you and does an automatic sit without the clicker, just treats.

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Step Fifteen

You need a helper for this step. First do a review of moving with your dog and automatic sits (just using treats, no clicker).

Then have your helper do whatever she can to distract your dog. She can do anything *but* call your dog's name or physically block his path--she can offer treats, toys, run around, make funny noises, etc. Vary the number of steps you take before you halt from three to 12.

Do some halts so you can reinforce for an automatic sit and sometimes just hand your dog the treat while you are still walking.

Goal: Your dog moves up to 12 steps with you and does an automatic sit with distractions.

Step Sixteen

Practice moving with your dog and doing automatic sits--move from 4-15 steps with your dog. Instead of clicking, just hand your dog the treat directly. If your dog gets distracted, stop moving until you have your dog's attention again. Then take a few steps and hand your dog a treat.

Do some halts so you can reinforce for an automatic sit and sometimes just hand your dog the treat while you are still walking.

Be careful to vary the number of steps you take--sometimes you take just a few, sometimes you take as many as 15 steps before handing your dog the treat.

Goal: Your dog moves up to 15 steps with you and does an automatic sit when you halt.

Step Seventeen

You need a helper for this step.

First practice moving with your dog and doing automatic sits--move from 5-20 steps with your dog. Instead of clicking, just hand your dog the treat directly.

Then have your helper try to distract your dog. She can offer treats, play with toys, run around, make strange noises--do anything but call your dog by name or physically block his path. Lower your criteria to reinforcing your dog for moving 1-15 steps with you to help your dog deal with these distractions. If your dog gets

distracted, stop moving until you have your dog's attention again. Then take a few steps and hand your dog a treat.

Do some halts so you can reinforce for an automatic sit and sometimes just hand your dog the treat while you are still walking.

Be careful to vary the number of steps you take--sometimes you take just a few, sometimes you take as many as 15 steps before handing your dog the treat.

Goal: Your dog moves up to 15 steps with you and does an automatic sit when you halt with distractions.

Step Eighteen

Practice moving with your dog and doing automatic sits--move from 5-20 steps with your dog. Instead of clicking, just hand your dog the treat directly. If your dog gets distracted, stop moving until you have your dog's attention again. Then take a few steps and hand your dog a treat.

Do some halts so you can reinforce for an automatic sit and sometimes just hand your dog the treat while you are still walking.

Be careful to vary the number of steps you take--sometimes you take just a few, sometimes you take as many as 20 steps before handing your dog the treat.

Goal: Your dog moves up to 20 steps with you and does an automatic sit when you halt.

Continuing Training

Gradually increase the number of steps your dog takes before you give him a treat. Practice in as many places as you can, with as many distractions as possible.

Option 2: Responsible Heeling

I call it Responsible Heeling because it means giving the responsibility to stay with you to your dog. Rather than the usual situation of the handler trying to control the dog's movements, Responsible Heeling creates a situation where the dog chooses to stick close to the handler.

Responsible Heeling works best for people who don't have to routinely walk their dogs on leash. It works terrific with puppies and also is very good for people who want their dogs to be off-lead during hikes, etc.

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This works best if you have access to a place to train with enough room for you to move around freely with your dog. Look around you--there are often safe places to practice with your dog. Outdoor tennis courts usually have terrific fencing (ten or twelve feet high!). Sometimes soccer fields or baseball diamonds are fenced or mostly fenced (you can station a friend or loved one at the exit to prevent escapes). You might have friends with a fenced yard. Sometimes training clubs allow people to rent ring time when their training space isn't being used for classes.

If you can't find a securely fenced area but have access to large open spaces, you can have your dog drag a long line so that you can prevent him from getting too far away from the training area. Parachute cord works well for long lines if it is the strong sort (the strong stuff has a braided core; the weak pseudo-parachute cord has a weak inner core that just acts as a filler for the outside braided part). The length of your line depends on the relative speeds of you and your dog--the slower the handler and the faster the dog, the longer the line should be. In her irresponsible youth, my dog Chamois used to drag 175 feet of line.

If you use a long line, attach it to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar with a SnapBack™ to act as a shock absorber to reduce the risk of injuring your dog's neck. Tie knots every 10 or 15 feet in the line and a great big knot at the end, so that the line won't slip out from under your shoe.

Use the long line by stepping on it. Don't try to grab it with your hands--who knows what it has been dragged through? And you run the risk of rope burn or breaking a finger. Just step on the line to stop your dog. Most dogs will turn around when they can't go any farther--just act innocent, as if you have no idea why your dog can't keep going (most dogs never figure out that it's because you have your foot on the line!). If your dog doesn't turn around fairly quickly, walk down the line until you get within arm's reach of your dog--then tap your dog on the butt ("ding, dong, Avon calling!"), tickle your dog's flank or his ear, blow at his eye (which will make him blink), etc. Think like a mosquito--just do small, insistent things that your dog can't keep on ignoring.

For the beginning steps you don't need a large open space--just somewhere with enough room for you to walk a few steps in each direction. In the beginning steps a place that is neutral--not highly distracting to your dog--works best.

Step One

Train in a place that is fairly neutral for your dog. Get your clicker and 25 treats ready.

When your dog looks at you, click and toss him a treat. You want your dog to have to look away from you to get the treat. Don't say anything to your dog, just wait silently for him to look at you again.

If your dog understands the clicker, very shortly he'll be diving to get his cookies then immediately turning to stare at you again. This is like cookies for nothing! What more could a dog ask for?

Goal: Your dog is clicked 25 times for looking at you.

Step Two

Train in a place that is fairly neutral for your dog. Get your clicker and treats ready.

Do a little review for your dog by clicking him for looking at you 3-5 times. Then when your dog looks at you, move backward carefully so that your dog takes a step toward you--click and treat. Toss the treat a few feet away so your dog has to move away from you in order to get the treat.

Goal: Your dog is clicked 25 times for taking one step toward you as you move backward.

Step Three

Train in a place that is fairly neutral for your dog. Get your clicker and treats ready.

Review Step Two with your dog by moving backward carefully and clicking your dog for taking one step toward you. Repeat 3-5 times.

Then keep on moving backward so that your dog has to take two steps toward you before you click. Toss the treat so your dog has to turn away from you to get the treat.

Goal: Your dog is clicked 25 times for taking two steps toward you when you move backward.

Step Four

Train in a place that is fairly neutral for your dog. Get your clicker and treats ready. Review the previous step 3-5 times.

When your dog looks at you, carefully move backward and click your dog for taking three steps with you. Toss that cookie! (Doesn't that sound funny?)

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Goal: Your dog is clicked 25 times for taking three steps toward you when you move backward.

Step Five

You need a helper for this step. Review the previous step 3-5 times with your dog.

Then have your helper try to distract your dog. You may have to lower your criteria initially to clicking your dog for just looking toward you. Instruct your helper to keep the level of distraction low enough for your dog to handle. It really helps if you instruct your handler to avoid eye contact with your dog and pretend your dog doesn't exist initially.

If your dog is having a great deal of difficulty in avoiding the temptation, hand the treat to your dog directly from your hand to make it clearer to him where his best advantage lies.

Goal: Your dog looks at you and moves up to three steps with you when you move backward with distractions.

Step Six

Train in a place that is fairly neutral for your dog.

Review Step Four 3-5 times with your dog. When your dog is moving toward you promptly, maneuver things so that your dog is toward your right side in front of you. The easiest way to do this is to toss the treat so that your dog is in the correct spot when he turns back toward you after getting the treat.

If you want your dog to walk on your left, take one step backward. If your dog starts moving with you, pivot on your left foot so that you are facing the same direction as your dog, with your dog on your left side. You will be pivoting backward. This way, you are ready to move in the same direction as your dog without having to move your dog into position. Click and treat if your dog keeps looking at you.

If you want your dog to walk on your right side, reverse these directions.

Goal: Your dog moves toward you and keeps looking at you as you pivot to face in the same direction as he is.

Step Seven

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Six with your dog 3-5 times.

When your dog looks at you, take a step backward. When your dog moves toward you, pivot on your left foot and then take a step forward. Click your dog for moving with you. Over several repetitions, increase the number of steps forward you take until your dog is moving with you for three steps forward.

Goal: Your dog moves toward you when you back up, then continues moving in the same direction as you pivot and walk forward up to three steps.

Step Eight

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Walk away from your dog. JUST GO! Walk briskly, like you are trying to get somewhere in a hurry. Walk in a large circle to your left (counter-clockwise) around the edge of your training area. Watch your dog out of the corner of your eye, trying not to be too obvious that you are keeping track of him--you want him to have the impression that you've forgotten him.

When he follows you or catches up with you to see what on earth you're doing, click and toss the treat ahead of you (to encourage him to move forward with you). Click whenever your dog is within about eight feet of you. If your dog doesn't notice the treat, point to it and then continue walking while he eats it. If your dog sees the treat but doesn't want to leave you long enough to eat it--HOORAY! Accommodate your dog by handing him the treat directly.

Reverse these instructions if you want your dog to walk on your right.

At this stage in training, do lots of clicks and treats for your dog making an attempt to stay with you. Especially at first, don't be picky about which side your dog is on (he'll probably be on the inside of the circle).

If your dog just hangs around and doesn't appear to notice you're doing something, do something to up the ante a little. Walk farther away from him, go out of the area, go give another dog a treat.

Every time your dog tries to catch up with you, click and treat.

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Goal: You click your dog 25 times for catching up with you.

Step Nine

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Walk away from your dog. Same thing as in Step Eight--just walk away briskly and pretend not to look back. When your dog catches up to you, click and deliver the treat the same way you did in Step Eight (either tossed ahead of you or delivered directly to him).

Mix up clicking him immediately when he catches up with taking one step with him before you click him.

Goal: When you walk away from your dog, he catches up with you and can walk one step with you before you click.

Step Ten

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Walk away from your dog. Same thing as in Step Eight--just walk away briskly and pretend not to look back. When your dog catches up to you, click and deliver the treat the same way you did in Step Eight (either tossed ahead of you or delivered directly to him).

Mix up clicking him immediately when he catches up, taking one step with him and taking two steps with him before you click him. The progression might look something like this: 1, 2, 1, 0, 1, 2, 2, 1, 0, 0, etc.

Goal: When you walk away from your dog, he catches up with you and can walk two steps with you before you click.

Step Eleven

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Walk away from your dog. Same thing as in Step Eight--just walk away briskly and pretend not to look back. When your dog catches up to you, walk one step with him,

click and deliver the treat the same way you did in Step Eight (either tossed ahead of you or delivered directly to him).

Mix up walking 1-3 steps with your dog before you click.

Goal: When you walk away from your dog, he catches up with you and can walk three steps with you before you click.

Step Twelve

You need a helper for this step.

Start out by reviewing Step Eleven with your dog several times--click him after taking 1-3 steps with you.

Then have your helper start tempting your dog. She can offer him treats, tease him with a toy, talk to him, anything but say his name. If he falls for her, have her make it easier for him by avoiding eye contact while she continues to rustle the treat bag, etc. If he tries to sit or lie down by her, have her move around a little to keep him on his feet.

While your helper is tempting your dog, you keep on walking. Don't look at your dog, don't call your dog, pretend you've forgotten your dog. If you see your dog glancing back and forth between you and your helper, you can make it easier for him by making your circles smaller so you are closer. If your dog is totally ignoring you, repeat one of the options in Step Eight to up the ante for your dog.

At first, click your dog as soon as he catches up with you. Resist the temptation to click him when he looks away from your helper--dogs learn real quick to just hang out near the helper and glance repeatedly at their owners.

When your dog is consistently ignoring your helper, quit for that session.

Repeat this step until your dog pays very little attention to your helper from the outset.

Goal: Your dog catches up with you even when tempted away by someone else.

Step Thirteen

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

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Walk away from your dog. Same thing as in Step Eight--just walk away briskly and pretend not to look back. When your dog catches up to you, click and deliver the treat directly to his mouth.

Mix up walking 1-5 steps with your dog before you click him.

Repeat this step until your dog is staying with you most of the time.

Goal: When you walk away from your dog, he catches up with you and can walk five steps with you before you click.

Step Fourteen

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Attach a leash to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar. Hold onto the leash with an open hand so that if your dog pulls away from you the leash will just fall off your hand. The leash is not to restrain your dog--you are busy teaching your dog to restrain himself. If you are using a long line as a safety line, use that as well (just let it drag as usual).

Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Start walking with your dog. Click and deliver the treat directly to him every 1-5 steps. If your dog pulls the leash away from you (which he can easily do) just let it fall and immediately walk off in the opposite direction.

Repeat this step until you can go for a whole training session (3 to 5 minutes) without losing the leash.

Goal: Your dog walks with you on lead without pulling it out of your hand for up to five steps at a time.

Step Fifteen

You need a helper for this step.

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Attach a leash to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar. Hold onto the leash with an open hand so that if your dog pulls away from you the leash will just fall off your hand. The leash is not to restrain your dog--you are busy teaching your dog to restrain himself. If you are using a long line as a safety line, use that as well (just let it drag as usual).

Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Start walking with your dog. Click and deliver the treat directly to him every 1-5 steps. Have your helper start distracting your dog--she can offer treats, toys, make strange noises, do just about anything but call your dog by name. If your dog pulls the leash away from you (which he can easily do) just let it fall and immediately walk off in the opposite direction to your dog.

Repeat this step until you can go for a whole training session (3 to 5 minutes) without losing the leash.

Goal: Your dog walks with you on lead with distractions without pulling it out of your hand for up to five steps at a time.

Step Sixteen

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Attach a leash to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar. Hold onto the leash with an open hand so that if your dog pulls away from you the leash will just fall off your hand. The leash is not to restrain your dog--you are busy teaching your dog to restrain himself. If you are using a long line as a safety line, use that as well (just let it drag as usual).

Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Start walking with your dog. Click and deliver the treat directly to him every 1-6 steps. If your dog pulls the leash away from you (which he can easily do) just let it fall and immediately walk off in the opposite direction.

Repeat this step until you can go for a whole training session (3 to 5 minutes) without losing the leash.

Goal: Your dog walks with you on lead without pulling it out of your hand for up to six steps at a time.

Step Seventeen

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Attach a leash to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar. Hold onto the leash with an open hand so that if your dog pulls away from you the leash will just fall off your hand. The leash is not to restrain your dog--you are busy teaching your dog to restrain himself. If you are using a long line as a safety line, use that as well (just let it drag as usual).

Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

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Start walking with your dog. Click and deliver the treat directly to him every 1-7 steps. If your dog pulls the leash away from you (which he can easily do) just let it fall and immediately walk off in the opposite direction.

Repeat this step until you can go for a whole training session (3 to 5 minutes) without losing the leash.

Goal: Your dog walks with you on lead without pulling it out of your hand for up to seven steps at a time.

Step Eighteen

You need a helper for this step.

Train in a place fairly neutral to your dog. Attach a leash to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar. Hold onto the leash with an open hand so that if your dog pulls away from you the leash will just fall off your hand. The leash is not to restrain your dog--you are busy teaching your dog to restrain himself. If you are using a long line as a safety line, use that as well (just let it drag as usual).

Review Step Seven with your dog 3-5 times.

Start walking with your dog. Click and deliver the treat directly to him every 1-7 steps. Have your helper start distracting your dog--she can offer treats, toys, make strange noises, do just about anything but call your dog by name. If your dog pulls the leash away from you (which he can easily do) just let it fall and immediately walk off in the opposite direction to your dog.

Repeat this step until you can go for a whole training session (3 to 5 minutes) without losing the leash.

Goal: Your dog walks with you on lead with distractions without pulling it out of your hand for up to seven steps at a time.

Continuing Training

Gradually extend the number of steps you take with your dog before clicking and the level of distractions.

Option 3: Penalty Yards/Paper-clip Walking

This option works for people who have established a habit of pulling on leash. Yes, you read that right--it's the handler who gets the leash-pulling habit, aided and abetted by their dog. A dog can't pull on lead if there isn't a handler pulling back!

All of the following steps should be done with a 6-foot leash attached to your dog's buckle or limited slip collar.

The penalty yards concept is my interpretation of an idea I got from Lana Mitchell.

The leash over the shoulder idea came from Margie English, who attributes it to Olive Point.

Step One

Tie the leash to something solid or stand on the end of the leash. Count out 25 treats.

Wait for your dog to look at you, click and hand him a treat. If your dog is fascinated by something else going on, move farther away from the distraction. As much as possible, just stand quietly by your dog and wait for him to look at you. You want your dog to discover that looking at you can make good things happen for him.

Goal: You click and treat your dog 25 times for looking at you.

Step Two

Hold the leash in your hand and review Step One with your dog, clicking him 3-5 times for looking at you. Then count out 25 treats.

When your dog is looking at you, take a slow-motion step forward. Click and treat in the middle of this step. Just hand the treat directly to your dog. Continue taking slow-motion steps, clicking in the middle of each step and handing the treat directly to your dog.

If your dog starts to pull on the leash, just stop and wait for your dog to notice that nothing is happening. If your dog is pulling to get to some distraction, you may have to move farther away from that distraction.

Goal: You click and treat your dog 25 times in the middle of slow-motion steps forward.

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Step Three

Hold the leash in your hand and review Step One with your dog, clicking him 3-5 times for looking at you. Then count out 25 treats.

When your dog is looking at you, take a slow motion step forward, then take a second step forward. Click and treat after the second step.

If your dog starts to pull on the leash, just stop and wait for your dog to notice that nothing is happening.

Goal: You click and treat your dog 25 times after two slow-motion steps forward.

Step Four

Hold the leash in your hand and review Step One with your dog, clicking him 3-5 times for looking at you. Then count out 25 treats.

When your dog is looking at you, take three slow-motion steps forward, click and treat.

If your dog starts to pull on the leash, just stop and wait for your dog to notice that nothing is happening.

Goal: You click and treat your dog 25 times for taking three slow-motion steps on lead with you.

Step Five

Okay, your dog should now have the idea that sticking close to you leads to good things happening. Now we're going to really work on the pulling habit--the one that both of you have developed!

One problem that many handlers have is that they are no longer clear on when their dog is pulling on lead. Is it when the leash snap is horizontal? Is it when the leash is taut but not really tight? Is it three pounds of pressure on the leash? Is it when there's enough pressure on the leash to move the human's hand? If the human can't decide, the dog will never be able to figure it out. On the other hand, if the human can decide on a consistent standard, most dogs are happy to go along with it.

I'm here to make this decision for you!

Stand next to your dog and throw the leash over your left shoulder, so that the handle hangs down your back (if your dog is walking on your left; reverse these directions if you want your dog to walk on your right). If you have sloping shoulders or are wearing slippery clothes, you may have to drape the leash around your neck. This is less desirable, particularly with nylon web leashes, because it can lead to leash burn around your neck (but if you're careful and keep a layer of fabric between your skin and the leash, you'll be fine).

You're going to keep your hands off that leash unless it is slipping off your shoulder. At that point, you are allowed to grab the leash to stop it from sliding off.

Now, set a container with one or two treats in it about 20 feet away from your dog. Make sure your dog knows what is in it.

Throw that leash over your shoulder and set off. Click and treat your dog for every step toward the container.

If the leash starts to slip off your shoulder, grab it! You have two options, pick one:

1) Penalty yards: Carefully walk backward until you reach the place you started from. Be careful in handling the leash--you want to restrain your dog, not jerk on his neck. Don't click or treat while you are walking backward. When you reach your starting place stand there until your dog notices that something has happened. Start forward again, click and treat for every step forward with a loose leash.

2) Paper-clip Heeling: Do an about-turn and walk in the other direction until your dog catches up to you. Be careful in handling the leash--you want to restrain your dog, not jerk on his neck. Don't click or treat while you are walking away from the container. Turn back around, click and treat for every step forward with a loose leash.

Repeat until your dog manages to walk up to the container of treats with a loose leash. Click and let him scarf up the goodies. Then drop a couple more treats in the container, go back to your starting place and practice it again.

Goal: Your dog walks 20 feet being reinforced for every step forward without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Six

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw your dog's leash over your shoulder and start walking toward the treat container. Click and treat

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your dog for every step toward the treats. If the leash starts to slip, grab it and then do Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every step forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Seven

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every other step forward. If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every other step forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Eight

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every 1-3 steps forward. Mix up the number of steps you take with your dog--keep him guessing. If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every 1-3 steps forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Nine

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every 1-4 steps forward. Mix up the number of steps you take with your dog! If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every 1-4 steps forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Ten

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every 1-5 steps forward. Mix up the number of steps you take with your dog! If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every 1-5 steps forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Eleven

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every 1-6 steps forward. Mix up the number of steps you take with your dog! If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every 1-6 steps forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Twelve

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it, clicking and treating your dog for every 1-7 steps forward. Mix up the number of steps you take with your dog! If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet being reinforced for every 1-7 steps forward on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Thirteen

Set a container with one or two treats about 30 feet away. Throw the leash over your shoulder and walk toward it. When you get to the container, click, let your dog have those treats and then re-load the container. If the leash starts to slip, grab it and do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

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Repeat.

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet on a loose leash without having to go through Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Step Fourteen

Throw the leash over your shoulder--no container of treats on the floor! Walk in big circles around the training area, clicking and treating for every 1-10 steps with a loose leash. Mix up the number of steps you take before you click--you want to keep your dog guessing.

If the leash starts to slip, grab it and then back up at least 12 feet (Penalty Yards) or turn around and walk the other way until your dog is paying attention to you again (Paper-clip Heeling).

Goal: Your dog walks on a loose lead without the temptation of a container of treats to focus him.

Step Fifteen

Spend some time thinking about what is most distracting for your dog when you are walking him on lead. Some dogs pull to get to other dogs, some pull to get to other human beings, some pull to dive on possible food, some pull to sniff.

Arrange for that distraction during this step in such a way that you can control it. If your dog pulls to go to other dogs, find a friend with a well-behaved dog to tempt your dog. If your dog pulls to go to other people, find a helper. If your dog prefers food, well, you've been practicing that all along--try using something unusually fragrant and tempting (warm fried chicken taken off the bone is often a major temptation!). You can use hot dogs or cheese to make spots of scent throughout the training area (or scent tissues and lay them around the area).

Throw the leash over your shoulder and go back to clicking and treating for every step. If your dog is handling this well, vary clicking for every 1-3 steps.

When your dog has successfully walked 30 feet toward this temptation, click and give your dog permission to investigate the temptation (let him play with the other dog or person, let him have a bite or two of chicken or sniff the scent spots).

Goal: Your dog walks 30 feet with a loose leash toward a high-value temptation.

Step Sixteen

Set up the same distraction you used in Step Fifteen. Review that step with your dog, walking toward the temptation and clicking every 1-3 steps.

Then start moving around the temptation, walking past it or having the temptation move around (if you are using food, you can have a helper carry the food around for you). Click and treat your dog every 1-3 steps as you move around. If your leash starts to slip, back up at least 12 feet (Penalty Yards) or walk in the opposite direction until your dog is paying attention to you again (Paper-clip Heeling).

At the end of your training session, click and give your dog permission to play with the temptation.

Goal: Your dog walks around the high-value temptation on a loose lead.

Step Seventeen

Put a container on the floor with one or two treats on it about 30 feet from your dog. Stand next to your dog and hold the leash in your left hand so that it leaves a J shaped loop hanging between you and the dog. Yes! You get to hold on to the leash!

Walk your dog toward the container on the floor, clicking and treating every 1-5 steps. If your dog is pulling on leash, you will feel the leash move in your hand. Immediately do either Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling.

Goal: You and your dog walk 30 feet toward a container of treats on the floor without either of you pulling on the leash.

Step Eighteen

Arrange for the high-value distraction and repeat Steps Fifteen and Sixteen while holding the leash in your hand.

Goal: You and your dog walk around the high-value temptation with a loose lead.

Continuing Training

When you are walking your dog on lead, always respond with Penalty Yards or Paper-clip Heeling whenever you feel your dog start to pull on the leash. Your dog's walking on leash is only as good as your response.

Sits

Note: If you intend to compete in obedience, get in the habit of tossing the treat ahead of your dog so that your dog has to spring up and forward to get the treat. This encourages a good straight tuck sit.

Step One

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot.

Wait *quietly* (Do NOT say "Sit.") and watch your dog. The vast majority of dogs get bored and sit. Click and treat! Toss the treat a little bit off to one side, or behind your dog, or ahead of your dog, so he has to get up to get the treat. This gets him ready for the next try.

Wait quietly again and click and treat when he sits. Your dog is learning to actively try doing things to please you, in order to make you click and treat.

Goal: Your dog sits 15 times while you wait.

Step Two

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. You will need a watch or stopwatch. Make note of the time when you start and the time when your dog has done the 15th sit.

Wait quietly for your dog to sit. Click and treat each sit. Remember to toss the treat a little off to one side or behind your dog so he has to get up to get the treat.

Goal: Record the overall time it takes your dog to offer 15 sits.

Step Three

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. You will need a watch or stopwatch. Make note of the time when you start and the time when your dog has done the 15th sit.

Wait quietly for your dog to sit. Click and treat each sit. Remember to toss the treat so he has to get up to get it.

Goal: Record the overall time it takes your dog to offer 15 sits. This time should be shorter than the time in the previous step; if it isn't, repeat this step in another training session.

Step Four

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. Watch your dog quietly. When you see him start to sit, say the word "Sit!" then click and treat.

Associate the behavior with the command 15 times, then test your dog to see if he has made the association by telling your dog to sit. If he responds, click and give him two or three treats, one at a time.

If he doesn't respond, repeat associating the behavior with the command 15 times, then try testing him again.

Goal: Your dog sits when you give the "sit" command.

Step Five

You need a stopwatch or timer for this step. Count out 15-50 treats.

See how long it takes to use up your treats. You start timing the first time you say sit and end timing when your dog sits for the last time. Click and treat for each sit.

Divide the number of seconds by the number of treats to discover your dog's average time.

Hint: It helps to throw the treat just barely beyond your dog's reach after each click. That way your dog has to get up to get the treat and is ready for the next "Sit" command but doesn't waste time taking steps.

Goal: Your dog's average time is less than 6 seconds per sit.

Step Six

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot.

Review Step Four with your dog by telling him to sit a few times (clicking and treating for each sit).

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Now move two feet away from your dog. Tell your dog to sit. If he sits, click and treat. If he doesn't sit, just move back next to him and tell him to sit again. Eventually your dog will anticipate that if he doesn't sit when you say the word the first time, you will move next to him and tell him to sit again.

You may want to make sure you are using an extra special treat for this! You want your dog to be really motivated to earn that treat.

Goal: Your dog sits on command 15 times when you are standing two feet away.

Step Seven

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. Review Step Five with your dog by standing two feet away and telling him to sit a few times.

Then start moving six inches farther away from your dog each time you tell him to sit. Look at your hand--the distance from the end of your middle finger to the base of your palm is about six inches! Don't try to add too much distance in any one try.

If your dog sits promptly, click, treat and then move six inches farther away. If your dog is hesitant or if you have to go back to your dog to get him to sit, stay at that same distance for another trial--don't increase distance until your dog is comfortable with the previous distance.

Goal: Your dog sits on command when you are standing up to six feet away.

Step Eight

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. Review Step Six with your dog by standing six feet away and telling him to sit a few times.

Then start increasing the distance between you and your dog when you tell him to sit. Increase the distance in very small increments--six inches at a time. If your dog is hesitant to sit the first time when you increase the distance, repeat the command at that distance a few times before increasing distance again.

Goal: Your dog sits on command when you are standing up to ten feet away.

Continuing Training

It never hurts to do speed trials (as in Step Five) to improve your dog's response to the "Sit" command. The faster your dog responds, the better! The more you practice and the more places you practice in, the better your dog will be.

Downs

Note: If you are planning to compete in obedience with your dog, you will probably want to teach your dog both a foldback or level drop and a down rolled over on one hip. The following instructions will teach your dog an “any old” down, which may not fit with your goals.

Step One

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. Make sure it gives him enough room to lie down without being too tight.

Wait quietly and see if it occurs to your dog to lie down. Click and treat! Give your dog one treat directly, then toss a second treat to get him up.

Some dogs might never lie down. Well, never is a long time and all dogs lie down. But if you are impatient to see progress, you can try luring the down. Use a treat as a magnet for his nose and move the treat down and between his front feet. You might have to experiment a little bit to find the right motion. Click when your dog lies down and give him the treat, then toss a treat to get him on his feet again.

If you try luring, lure the down 3-5 times in a row, then flash the treat at your dog and wait--see if it occurs to your dog to try lying down. Wait for at least a minute. If your dog doesn't get the idea, lure the down 3-5 times in a row, then flash the treat again.

Goal: Your dog lies down 15 times for a treat.

Step Two

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. You will need a watch or stopwatch. Make note of the time when you start and the time when your dog has done the 15th down.

If you lured the first step, you might try just waiting this time. If you continue to lure, cut down on the amount of luring you do--lure the down 2-3 times, then wait for your dog to try doing a down for you without the lure.

Goal: Your dog lies down 15 times for a treat while you record the overall time.

Step Three

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. You will need a watch or stopwatch. Make note of the time when you start and the time when your dog has done the 15th down. If you were luring downs, lure a down once or twice, then stop luring the down entirely.

Goal: Record the overall amount of time it takes for your dog to do 15 downs. If your time is slower than the previous time, try repeating this step in another training session.

Step Four

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. Watch your dog quietly. When he starts to lie down, give him the command "Down!"

Associate the behavior with the action 15 times, then test your dog to see if he understands the command by giving him the command before he actually starts to lie down. Click and treat if he lies down on command.

If he doesn't lie down, repeat associating the behavior with the command 15 more times, then test him again.

Goal: Your dog lies down as soon as you give the command.

Step Five

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move, or by putting it under your foot. You'll need a watch or stopwatch for this step. Count out 15-50 treats.

See how long it takes to use up your treats. You start timing the first time you say "Down" and end timing when your dog lies down for the last time. Click and treat for each down.

Divide the number of seconds by the number of treats to discover your dog's average time.

Hint: It helps to throw the treat just barely beyond your dog's reach after each click. That way your dog has to get up to get the treat and is ready for the next Down command but doesn't waste time taking steps.

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Goal: Your dog's average time is less than 8 seconds per down.

Step Six

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Review Downs with your dog by having him do five downs in a row (for clicks and treats each time).

Then stand about 2 feet away from your dog. Tell him to Down--if he lies down, click and give him a treat. If he doesn't lie down, walk over to him and tell him "Down" again. Review downs again with him by having him do five more downs with you standing right there.

Goal: Your dog lies down on command with you standing 2 feet away.

Step Seven

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Review downs with him by having him do three downs in a row.

Then move 2 feet away and tell him "Down". If he lies down immediately, click, treat and then move six inches farther away. Gradually move farther away from your dog; if he has trouble at one distance, have him do two or three downs at that distance before you increase distance again.

Goal: Your dog lies down on command with you standing up to 6 feet away.

Step Eight

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob, or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Review Step Six with your dog by standing 6 feet away and telling him to down a few times.

Then start increasing the distance between you and your dog when you tell him to Down. Increase the distance in very small increments--6 inches at a time. If your dog is hesitant to lie down the first time when you increase the distance, repeat the command at that distance a few times before increasing distance again.

Goal: Your dog lies down on command when you are standing up to 10 feet away.

Continuing Training

Speed trials (as in Step Five)! More speed trials! Do speed trials in as many places, at as many distances as you can. The more you practice, the better your dog will respond.

Stays

Stay is a very handy skill for a dog to know. To humans it seems simple--all the dog has to do is sit or lie there. It's not at all obvious to the dog. Why should he stay in one place? If you're going over there, why shouldn't he go there too?

It's pretty easy to teach a dog to stay--but it is also pretty easy to create stay problems that can be very difficult to fix. It really pays off to introduce stays gradually and carefully. Be ready to repeat any step where your dog shows difficulty in attaining the goal--don't go on until he's comfortable with the current step.

More than any of the other exercises in this guide, the stays are only an introduction. Your dog won't have any real skill with stays when you are done with these steps--but he will have a solid foundation for you to build on if you decide to go on with training.

Step One

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move.

Place a container of treats about 6 feet away from your dog.

Tell your dog to sit, then walk over to the treats, pick one up and return to your dog. If your dog stood up, tell him to sit, then give him the treat. Repeat 25 times.

The only rules are that your dog has to be sitting before you leave and has to sit before he gets his treat. If your dog gets up again, that's fine. Let your dog discover that the easiest way to speed things up is to remain sitting.

Goal: Your dog remains sitting while you walk back and forth to get treats.

Step Two

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Place a container of treats about 6 feet away from him. Tell your dog to sit, walk to the container of treats and turn to face your dog. If he got up, tell him to sit before you pick up a treat. Walk back to your dog and give him the treat. If he got up again, just tell him to sit before you give him the treat.

Goal: Your dog sits while you walk back and forth to get treats.

Step Three

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Place a container of treats about 8 feet away from him. Tell your dog to sit, walk to the container and turn to face your dog. If he got up, tell him to sit before picking up a treat. Walk back to your dog and give him the treat (make sure he is sitting first).

Goal: Your dog sits while you walk 8 feet away.

Step Four

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Place a container of treats about 10 feet away from him. Tell your dog to sit, walk to the container and turn to face your dog. If he got up, tell him to sit before picking up a treat. Walk back to your dog and give him the treat (make sure he is sitting first).

Goal: Your dog sits while you walk 10 feet away.

Step Five

Put your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Place a container of treats about 12 feet away from him. Tell your dog to sit, walk to the container and turn to face your dog. If he got up, tell him to sit before picking up a treat. Walk back to your dog and give him the treat (make sure he is sitting first).

Goal: Your dog sits while you walk 12 feet away.

Step Six

Do a review of the previous steps by putting your dog on leash and secure the leash by tying it to a doorknob or to something too heavy for your dog to move. Place a container of treats about 6 feet away from him. Tell your dog to sit, walk to the container and turn to face your dog. Walk back to your dog and give him the treat (make sure he is sitting first).

If your dog got up, re-visit the previous steps with him before continuing with this step.

After you've gone back and forth 2-4 times with your dog holding his sit the whole time, quietly untie the leash and leave it hanging from your dog's collar. Continue going back and forth to your container of treats (giving your dog a treat each time, of course). If your dog gets up out of his sit, just tell him to sit and continue going back and forth.

Goal: Your dog holds a sit without being tied while you walk 6 feet away.

Step Seven

Put your dog on lead. Place a container of treats on the floor, then sit your dog about 6 feet away. Leave the leash hanging from his collar.

After you've made 2-4 round trips, quietly unsnap the leash from your dog's collar and place it on the floor next to him. Try not to make a big deal out of this, just do it and then walk back to the container of treats to continue the exercise. If your dog gets up at any point, just tell him to sit again and continue.

Goal: Your dog holds a sit off lead while you walk 6 feet away.

Step Eight

Place a container of treats on the floor. Sit your dog about 6 feet away, without a leash.

If your dog is holding his sit comfortably after you've made 2-4 round trips, walk back to the container of treats and hesitate for a second ("one thousand one") before picking up the treat. If your dog holds his sit, pick up the treat and walk back to him. As you continue going back and forth, randomly mix up trips where you don't hesitate at the container of treats with times when you hesitate for 1 second.

If your dog gets up, tell him to sit again and continue. If your dog gets up more than once, go back and re-visit the previous steps.

Goal: Your dog holds his sit off lead while you walk up to 6 feet away and hesitate one 1 before returning.

Step Nine

Place a container of treats on the floor. Sit your dog about 8 feet away.

If your dog is holding his sit comfortably after you've made 2-4 round trips, walk back to the container of treats and hesitate for a second ("one thousand one") before

picking up the treat. If your dog holds his sit, pick up the treat and walk back to him. As you continue going back and forth, randomly mix up trips where you don't hesitate at the container of treats with times when you hesitate for 1 second.

If your dog gets up, tell him to sit again and continue. If your dog gets up more than once, go back and re-visit the previous steps.

Goal: Your dog holds his sit off lead while you walk up to 8 feet away and hesitate 1 second before returning.

Continuing Training

In future training sessions, gradually extend either the distance you walk or the amount of time you hesitate when you are at the container of treats--change only one variable per training session. Keep in mind that it's a lot easier to build stays with painstaking care than it is to try to fix stay problems.

The Waiting Game

Teaching your dog what the word “Wait” means can save your dog’s life. And it’s a fun game to play with your dog as well!

The treats you use in this exercise should be ones that are easy for you to throw and a color that contrasts with the flooring to make it easier for your dog to spot the treat. Treats that are heavy for their size, like cheese or dry dog food, are usually easiest to throw. Treats that are light for their size, like Cheerios™ or dried hot-dog bits, are often difficult to throw effectively.

Step One

This is armchair training! Find a seat with at least 8 feet of room in front of it. Place a marker on the floor 6 feet from the chair.

Sit down with a container of treats and toss one across the marker. Most dogs will just go and get the treat but if you have to encourage your dog to get the treat, that’s fine. After your dog has the first treat he is most likely to turn and move toward you. Toss a treat behind your dog. Your goal is to see how long you can keep your dog on the other side of the marker by tossing treats. Most dogs start to anticipate the next throw pretty quickly--they learn to stop and watch where you throw the treat when you move your hand.

Goal: Your dog hesitates when you move your hand to toss the next treat.

Step Two

Find your comfy seat and your container of treats. Start the same game as in Step One, tossing treats to keep your dog on the other side of the marker.

When your dog is markedly hesitating when you move your hand, start saying “Wait” just before you move your hand.

Goal: Your dog hesitates as soon as you say “Wait.”

Step Three

Again with the comfy chair and container of treats!

Start playing the game with your dog, saying "Wait" just before you toss each treat. Do 10 repetitions (saying "Wait", then tossing a treat) then test your dog by saying "Wait", then hesitating a split second before you toss the treat.

If your dog doesn't stop when you say "Wait", look away from him and give him a short (10-20 second) time out. Don't look at him, don't say anything, just sit there quietly and ignore him. Then ask him if he wants to play the game again, toss another treat, then do 10 more repetitions of saying "Wait" and then throwing the treat. Then test your dog again by saying "Wait" and hesitating before you toss the treat.

When your dog is hesitating when you say "Wait", mix up saying "Wait" and tossing the treat immediately with saying "Wait" and hesitating up to a second (count "one thousand one") before you toss the treat. Don't go on to the next step until your dog has comfortably attained the goal for this step.

Goal: Your dog will stop for as long as one second when you say "Wait".

Step Four

Find your comfy chair and container of treats. Review Step Three by tossing a treat to get your dog out there, then saying "Wait" and hesitating for a second before you toss the treat. Repeat 2-5 times.

Then say "Wait". When your dog hesitates, tell him to sit. If he sits promptly without coming closer, toss the treat. If he doesn't sit promptly, say "Ooops!" and turn your head. Don't wait to see if he sits or not--the point is that he has to sit promptly. Give him a 15-30 second time out, then ask him if he wants to play again. Do a short review of Steps Six and Seven of Sits to remind him how to sit when he's not right next to you, then try the Waiting Game again.

Mix up just tossing another treat after you say "Wait" with having him sit before you toss the treat.

Goal: Your dog obeys a command to sit after you say "Wait".

Step Five

For this step you need a fairly large space to train in, at least 15 feet by 15 feet. It can be indoors or outdoors (if outdoors, it should either be securely fenced or your dog should drag a long line for safety). Carry treats with you and, if your dog enjoys them, a toy or two.

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Use your treats or toys to get your dog running around the area away from you. When your dog is more than 8 feet away from you, facing away from you, say his name. If he turns to face you toss a treat behind him. If your dog does not immediately turn to face you, review Step Three of Name Response with him.

Continue walking around and playing the Waiting Game with your dog until you see him hesitating as soon as he sees your hand move. When he's consistently hesitating on your hand movement, start saying the word Wait before you toss the treat. As you keep playing the game, your dog will sometimes be more than 8 feet away, which is good!

Goal: Your dog immediately turns to face you when you say his name and hesitates when you say the word Wait.

Step Six

For this step you need a fairly large space to train in, at least 15 feet by 15 feet. It can be indoors or outdoors (if outdoors, it should either be securely fenced or your dog should drag a long line for safety). Carry treats with you and, if your dog enjoys them, a toy or two.

Use your treats or toys to get your dog running around the area away from you. When your dog is more than 8 feet away from you and facing away from you, say his name. When he turns to face you, say "Wait", then toss a treat behind him. Repeat this several times, then try saying "Wait" and hesitating for a second before you toss the treat behind your dog.

Mix up tossing his treat immediately with hesitating for a second before throwing the treat after you say Wait. As you keep playing the game, your dog will sometimes be more than eight feet away, which is good!

Goal: Your dog waits for a second after you say "Wait."

Step Seven

For this step you need a fairly large space to train in, at least 15 feet by 15 feet. It can be indoors or outdoors (if outdoors, it should either be securely fenced or your dog should drag a long line for safety). Carry treats with you and, if your dog enjoys them, a toy or two.

Use your treats or toys to get your dog running around the area away from you. When your dog is more than 8 feet away from you, facing away from you, say his name, then tell him to wait. Toss the treat after he hesitates. Repeat 3-5 times.

Tell your dog to wait and then sit. Toss the treat after he sits. If he doesn't sit, say "Ooops!" and give him a 15-30 second time-out (look away from him and ignore him). Review Steps Six and Seven of Sits with him, then try again.

Mix up telling your dog to sit with simply throwing the treat behind him after you say Wait.

Goal: Your dog sits promptly when you tell him to wait and sit.

Step Eight

You need a helper for this step. Warm your dog up by telling him to wait and tossing treats for him 3-5 times.

Then have your helper try to distract your dog away from you--start with mild distractions and build up to stronger distractions as your dog starts to figure out the game. When your dog is watching your helper, say your dog's name, then tell him to wait. If he doesn't turn to face you when you say his name, review Step Four of Name Response with him.

Goal: Your dog immediately turns to face you, then hesitates when you say "Wait" even with someone else distracting him.

Step Nine

You need a helper for this step. Warm your dog up by telling him to wait and tossing treats for him 3-5 times.

Then have your helper try to distract your dog away from you--start with mild distractions and build up to stronger distractions as your dog starts to figure out the game. When your dog is watching your helper, say your dog's name, then tell him to wait.

When your dog is giving you a good response, start telling him to sit after you tell him to wait. With someone there distracting him, this may be quite difficult for him. You may have to review Step Eight of Sits (sits at a distance) with your dog, adding in the presence of your helper.

Goal: Your dog waits and sits on command with someone distracting him.

Continuing Training

Gradually increase the amount of distance between you and your dog when you say “Wait” and increase the distraction level.

Practice the Waiting Game whenever and wherever you can. Once dogs catch on to the game, they usually love it. Playing it once or twice a week for life will keep your dog’s response sharp--which could someday save his life.

Name Response

Before your dog can learn to come when called he has to learn a signal to pay attention to you. I like to use the dog's name as the signal to pay attention--that's a common way we human beings use names and it feels natural to me.

If you use your dog's name a lot and he ignores you a lot, you may have inadvertently trained him to ignore the sound of his own name. It may be more difficult to re-train him to pay attention to his own name than it would be to pick out a new word that means "look at me now."

Whether you decide to use your dog's name to get his attention or choose to teach a new command, it is important to make sure that your dog always pays attention to you when you use it. Don't use his name or the new command in conversation with other human beings and don't use it when you're idly talking to your dog. Only use this word when you want his attention and are prepared to get his attention if he ignores it.

Step One

Wait until your dog is in a neutral mood--not really doing anything in particular, not really showing a great deal of interest in anything. Say your dog's name in an animated voice. When your dog looks at you, click and treat. Then pretend to ignore your dog until he looks away from you, say his name, then click and treat when he looks at you.

Repeat until you get bored or until your dog won't look away from you!

Goal: Your dog immediately looks at you when you say his name.

Step Two

Let your dog see that you have a treat in one hand. Hold the treat out at arm's length to your side and say your dog's name. If your dog looks away from the treat to look at you, click and hand him the treat. If your dog doesn't look away from the treat, use your other hand to tickle your dog's ear, touch him on the shoulder, gently tap him on the top of his head, or whatever it takes to distract your dog's attention away from the treat and back to you. When he looks at you, click and treat.

Goal: Your dog immediately looks away from the treat and at you five times in a row when you say his name, without needing farther intervention.

Step Three

Use a favorite toy or a treat to tease your dog until he's excited about it. Then say your dog's name while moving the treat or toy around as an active distraction. If your dog looks away from the active distraction to look at your face, click and give him the treat or the toy. If your dog continues to be distracted, hold the distraction still, then use your other hand to tickle your dog to get him to look at you.

Goal: Your dog immediately looks away from the active distraction five times in a row when you say his name, without needing farther intervention.

Step Four

You need a helper for this step. Review Step Three several times with your dog by using a treat or a toy to distract him, then saying his name to get him to look at you.

Have your helper distract your dog for you. She can wave toys, treats, talk to your dog, or even touch your dog. She should *not* use your dog's name. Have her start with mild distractions and increase the distraction level as your dog figures out how to succeed.

If your dog is fixated on your helper, have her make it easier for your dog by pretending to ignore him or by lowering the level of the distraction. If you can outwait your dog, that's great! Let him discover that she's not going to give him anything good. Some dogs can be very fixated, though--you might have to help your dog by tickling his tail, his ear, his flank, blowing on his face, etc.

Goal: Your dog turns to look at you when you say his name even with someone actively trying to distract him.

Continuing Training

Dogs are context-specific learners. This means that if you teach your dog a command said in one way, your dog will understand it if said the same way--but may not even recognize that command if used in a different tone of voice or said in a different rhythm.

Review the first three steps here while saying your dog's name in different ways. Say it loudly, softly, in a hoarse voice, faster than usual, slower than usual, in a high-pitched voice--whatever ways it is likely to come out of your mouth in real life.

This practice doesn't have to be done in one long session and in fact it is better if it isn't. Whenever you have a minute, practice your dog's name a few times. It doesn't

have to be a big production. The more you practice this, the more places you practice it, and the more variety you use, the more reliable your dog's response will be.

Recalls

I've experimented with teaching recalls in many ways and the classically conditioned recall is the most effective and reliable method I've found. When I classically condition a recall, I'm training the part of the dog's brain that controls involuntary functions like salivation, heart rate, etc. I want my dogs to come when called without any conscious thought--I want their recalls to be a conditioned reflex.

Classical conditioning cannot fail--if done properly. It deals with a part of the brain that is below conscious thought, so the dog is not making any decision. It's just a reflex.

In classical conditioning, the name of the game is numbers. Classical conditioning depends on doing hundreds and thousands of repetitions--which makes it rather boring for the handler, but also makes it very effective.

This exercise is structured a little differently from the rest of the exercises. Each of the following steps should be repeated 5-7 times over the space of a week. The more times you repeat each step, the more effectively conditioned your dog will become.

Step One

Go to the most boring room in your house. In my house, it's the bathroom! Make sure you have your clicker and treats with you.

Decide on how you want to call your dog. I use my dog's name and the word "come" but I never use it at any other time. It's very important that the command you use be reserved for recalls only. If you've already taught your dog to ignore the word "come" then pick a different word. While you are doing this conditioning, don't use your Secret Signal (SS) unless you are actually training your dog.

If you are an organized sort of person, a whistle is more effective than a word because it always sounds the same.

Call your dog, click and give him a treat. It's a boring place, there's nothing else to do, your dog will come when called. Repeat 150 times. Your dog does not have to move away or even look away from you. He can be sitting right there in front of you and never move. You should be able to finish the reps within 5 minutes.

Repeat in each room of your house, starting with the most boring/least distracting.

Step Two

Put your dog on a 6-foot leash. Pick a place to train outside that is not extremely fascinating to your dog--your own yard is usually a good place to start.

Call your dog. When he moves to within arm's length of you, click and give him a treat. Repeat 150 times.

Repeat in other places outside. If you live in a house, your front yard, side yard, backyard and other side yard each count as a different place. Try to go to all the places you usually have your dog with you.

If the place you picked has something going on that fascinates your dog, keep moving away from that distraction until your dog can respond to you.

Step Three

Put your dog on a 6-foot leash and pick a place outside that has a moderate level of distractions. Good places to try are outside of schools at the end of the day, parks, soccer games, downtown streets, etc.

Call your dog, click and treat 150 times. It is fine if your dog takes peeks at the distractions but if your dog is so fascinated that he can't look away, move your dog farther away from the distraction.

If your dog has great difficulty with one location, keep returning to that location until he can handle it.

Step Four

You need a helper for this step. Put your dog on a 6-foot leash and pick a training place that is fairly neutral for your dog.

Start calling, clicking and treating your dog. Once your dog is locked onto you as the source of all goodies, have your helper walk around at a distance, making noises. It is fine if your dog takes a quick peek at your helper (after all, she is acting pretty weird!) but if he starts staring at her and ignoring you, have your helper go farther away or tone down the noises.

Over the next week, try to get as many different helpers as you can.

Step Five

Get or make a 15 foot long line for your dog. Cotton and nylon web long lines can be purchased from many different pet supply places or you can make your own with clothesline.

Take your dog to a fairly neutral place outside (your own yard is fine), and let your dog sniff around. When your dog is looking away from you, call him and back up. When he catches up to you, click and treat. Then let your dog go sniffing around again.

Repeat for 10 minutes (this should be about 40-60 repetitions). If you're not able to call your dog at least four times a minute because your dog is so fascinated with the outdoors, go back and review Steps Two and Three.

If you're not able to call your dog four times a minute because your dog doesn't want to leave your side, HOORAY! You're doing things right. Just walk around casually with your dog, then back up a few steps and call your dog.

Continuing Training

Gradually increase the level of distraction and the distance from which you call your dog. Do lots of repetitions! Do even more repetitions! If your dog is so distracted he doesn't respond, move farther away from that distraction until your dog can respond to you.

Place

Place is a service-dog skill that is handy for any dog to know. A service dog learns to stay in one spot; they can stand, sit, lie down or turn around but they stay in that one place and can be commanded to go to that place. It's easier to teach this skill in the beginning by giving your dog a big, obvious clue as to where his place is--a dog bed, mat or blanket.

Step One

Place your dog's mat near where you eat. When you sit down for a meal, put a small bowl with 15-30 treats in it on the table. As you eat, throw treats onto your dog's mat.

Goal: Your dog learns that the mat is where treats will appear when you are eating.

Step Two

Tell your dog "Place!", hesitate for a second, then toss a treat onto his mat. Repeat 15 times, then test your dog by waiting to see if he goes to his mat before you toss the treat. If he does, move a little farther away from his mat and repeat.

If your dog doesn't anticipate your treat toss, do 15 more repetitions, making sure to hesitate between saying "Place" and tossing the treat to his mat. Then test your dog again by saying "Place" and waiting until he's on his mat to toss the treat.

Goal: Your dog moves to his mat when you say "Place!"

Step Three

Place your dog's mat about 8 feet from an internal doorway (a doorway that leads into another room rather than the outside). Review Step Two by telling your dog "Place", then tossing him a treat when he's on his mat 3-5 times.

Now introduce the clicker by clicking after he goes to his mat, then walking over and giving him the treat directly. After you give your dog the treat, tell him "Okay!" and encourage him to walk away from the mat with you.

If your dog doesn't go to his mat, just walk over with him and point to his mat--don't repeat the command. You don't have to be stern about this, just firm. One way or another, he's going to go to his mat.

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Gradually move farther away from the mat until you are at the doorway to the room. Increase distance slowly--only 6 inches at a time. If your dog is hesitant to go to his mat at a certain distance, repeat sending him to his mat from that distance until he's comfortable with it.

Goal: You can send your dog to his mat from up to 8 feet away.

Step Four

Place a container of treats for your dog on the table when you eat and place his mat nearby. At the beginning of your meal, tell him "Place" and toss him a treat when he goes to his mat. If he doesn't go to his mat, walk over to it and point to it.

During your meal, keep tossing treats to your dog as he's on his mat. If he leaves his mat, tell him "Place" and toss him a treat when he returns. Try to give him treats before he actually leaves his mat--you don't want him to think that his leaving the mat is what reminds you to give him a treat!

Goal: Your dog stays on his mat throughout your whole meal.

Step Five

When you know you'll be in one place for 15-30 minutes (watching TV, working on the computer, reading a book or doing crafts, for example), place your dog's mat nearby. Keep a container of treats with you.

Tell your dog "Place" and give him a treat when he goes to his mat. Toss him treats to reinforce him for staying on his mat. Toss the treats at random intervals of 5-30 seconds (it helps to have a clock or stopwatch running). Mix up the length of the interval--sometimes it is short, sometimes it is long. Keep your dog guessing!

Try to toss him a treat before he leaves his mat. If he leaves his mat, tell him "Place." If you have to, get up and walk him back to his mat. If he tries to leave his mat very often, shorten the intervals at which you give him treats.

Goal: Your dog stays on his mat for 15 to 30 minutes, with up to 30 seconds between treats.

Step Six

When you know you'll be in one place for 15-30 minutes (watching TV, working on the computer, reading a book or doing crafts, for example), place your dog's mat 6-8 feet away. Keep a container of treats with you.

Tell your dog "Place" and give him a treat when he goes to his mat. Toss him treats to reinforce him for staying on his mat. Give him treats at random intervals from 5-60 seconds.

Try to toss him a treat before he leaves his mat. If he leaves his mat, tell him "Place." If you have to, get up and walk him back to his mat. If he tries to leave his mat very often (more than once every 5 minutes), shorten the intervals at which you toss him treats.

Goal: Your dog stays on his mat located 6-8 feet away for 15 to 30 minutes, with up to 1 minute between treats.

Step Seven

When you know you'll be in one place for 15-30 minutes (watching TV, working on the computer, reading a book or doing crafts, for example), place your dog's mat 6-8 feet away. Keep a container of treats with you.

Tell your dog Place and give him a treat when he goes to his mat. Toss him treats to reinforce him for staying on his mat. Give him treats at random intervals from 5-90 seconds.

Try to toss him a treat before he leaves his mat. If he leaves his mat, tell him "Place." If you have to, get up and walk him back to his mat. If he tries to leave his mat very often (more than once every 5 minutes), shorten the intervals at which you toss him treats.

Goal: Your dog stays on his mat located 6-8 feet away for 15 to 30 minutes, with up to 90 seconds between treats.

Step Eight

You can always teach your dog a new command to supplement an old one. It's very easy--just give the new command first, then the old one. Very quickly your dog starts to anticipate that when he gets the new and unfamiliar command, the old and familiar command will follow.

A command doesn't have to be a word--it can be a gesture or even a sound.

You can use your dog's "Place" command to teach him to go to his mat when the doorbell rings or when someone knocks (for purposes of this lesson, I'll just assume you have a doorbell)--which is very handy, as it allows you to answer the door without tripping over your dog.

When you are ready to train, reach outside and ring your doorbell. If your dog has the habit of running to the door and acting like an idiot, you may end up standing there, ringing your own doorbell over and over until your dog calms down. When your dog is calm enough to listen to you, ring the doorbell and then tell your dog "Place." If he goes to his mat, click, walk over and give him a treat. If your dog doesn't go to his mat, just walk over there with him and point to his mat. Practice sending him to his mat 3-5 times without ringing the doorbell, then try again with the doorbell.

Repeat ringing the doorbell and following it with the command "Place." After 15 reps, test your dog by ringing the doorbell and pausing before you say "Place" to see if your dog goes to his mat on his own. If he doesn't go to his mat, tell him "Place", then do 15 more reps before testing him again.

Goal: Your dog goes to his mat when the doorbell rings before you say "Place."

Continuing Training

The next steps in teaching your dog Place when someone comes to the door is to have someone else ring the doorbell and then to start to open the door. Toss your dog treats while you open the door. If your dog gets off the mat, close the door again and tell him Place. Practice until your dog can stay on his mat while your helper comes into the room.

Over time, you can teach your dog to use other things as his Place. One nifty method is to use your leash--snap the clip of your leash to the handle to make a circle, then toss treats in that circle.

Accepting Restraint

It's very useful to have a dog that accepts restraint. When you groom your dog or when you take him to the vet's office, it's much easier to deal with a dog who calmly accepts being restrained. Additionally, it's a skill you can use to teach your dog to calm down when excited.

You don't need a clicker or food reward for most dogs for this exercise. The letting go is what tells your dog he did the right thing and the reward, all in one. If your dog struggles a great deal when in a familiar, quiet place, you may have to use a clicker and food treat to counteract his dislike of restraint.

Step One

Put your hands on your dog in whatever manner is comfortable for you and allows you to control his body. I usually put my right hand on the dog's chest and my left hand on my dog's left side over the ribs. Gently but firmly hold on until your dog relaxes a little bit, then let go.

Repeat two or three times.

Goal: Your dog relaxes a bit when you restrain him.

Step Two

Review the first step by putting your hands on your dog in whatever manner is comfortable for you and allows you to control his body. Gently but firmly hold on until your dog relaxes a little bit, then let go.

Now, deliberately get your dog excited. You can use a toy, treats, you can move around or jump up and down, whatever it is that gets your dog revved up.

Once he's revved up, gently restrain him until you feel him relax, then let him go and continue playing with him. Repeat 2-4 times.

Goal: Your dog calms down from a state of excitement when you restrain him.

Step Three

Gently lift your dog, hold him until he's calm, then place him on his side. Hold him on his side until he's calm, then let him go.

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Depending on the size of your dog, you may be able to just lift him bodily and place him on his side. If your dog is too large for you to handle this way, try putting one arm around his chest and the other arm around his rump. Hold him this way until he relaxes, then slide your hands down to take hold of the front and rear leg on the other side of his body. Gently pull those legs toward you, using your arms to control your dog's body so that he doesn't fall with a thump on his side. You want this to be a gentle process!

You can sit on the floor with your dog or have him up on the bed or sofa to do this step. Be careful of your back if you have a heavy dog!

Repeat once a day.

Goal: Your dog accepts being lifted and laid onto his side calmly.

Step Four

Take hold of your dog's foot and look at it. Really examine it--gently pull his pads apart so you can see between them, part his toes so you can see between them, examine every surface of his foot. When you let go of his foot, give him a treat, then examine the next foot.

If your dog struggles during this process, get out your clicker and treats and gradually click him into tolerating this examination. Start out by touching your dog's foot with your fingertips and clicking. If your dog moves his foot, imagine that your fingertips are glued to his foot and your fingers have to follow that foot wherever it goes. You're not trying to physically restrain that foot, you are just keeping your fingertips in physical contact with his foot. When he stops trying to move his foot, click, pull your hand away from his foot and give him a treat.

When your dog tolerates your fingertips on his foot without struggling, then start picking up his foot and holding it gently. Again, if he struggles, don't try to restrain him, just follow his movements with your hand. Keep your hand relaxed and let your dog use up his energy moving your hand around. In martial arts this concept is called the sticky blade. When he stops moving his foot, click and treat.

When your dog tolerates your holding his foot, gently part his toes, click, release the foot and treat.

Continuing Training

Repeat Step Two in as many situations as you can. The more often you practice it, the faster and more thoroughly your dog will relax. It only takes a few seconds to do and the more you do it, the more likely it is that you will be able to do it in a real-life emergency some day.

Practice Step Four until your dog readily accepts foot handling. Go on to teaching your dog to accept having his ears examined and his mouth examined in the same way. If your dog struggles during certain grooming procedures (often during nail clipping), introduce that equipment in the same way--slowly and in small increments. With nail clipping, click your dog into accepting the nail clippers near him, then touching his toenail, then clipping one single nail at a time (clicking and treating after each clip). Make progress slowly! Do one nail, click and treat, then let your dog get up and move around to dissipate the tension before doing the next nail.

Door Safety

Dogs that dart out of doors without permission are more than a nuisance, they are endangering their own lives. Many dogs don't appear to understand that if they run in front of a car, they could be run over by that car. Even dogs that have been hit by a car don't always learn there is a danger!

I strongly recommend that the default expectation be that your dog is never allowed to go through a closed door that you open for him without permission. What I mean by default expectation is that you never give your dog a command or a reminder to stay on the original side of the door--the only commands involved are one to give your dog permission to go through the door.

Another example of a default expectation is that you expect your housetrained dog to remember not to pee inside without being told or reminded. Most of us don't tell our dogs not to pee in the house when we leave--we just expect our dogs to hold it while we are gone.

This exercise works best with dogs that are bonded to you; if you and your dog don't have a strong relationship yet, work on building that relationship before doing this exercise.

The following exercise is based on an idea given to me by Margie English, who says she got it from Sylvia Bishop.

Step One

You will have to repeat this step at several doors before your dog understands that the rule is not to go through any door to the outside without permission. I recommend that you do this step at every exit in your home and anywhere else where your dog spends a significant amount of time off lead.

Put your dog on a 4-6 foot leash attached to a buckle or limited slip collar that you are sure your dog cannot escape from. If you know your dog is likely to chew a leash, buy one of those plastic-coated steel cable tie-out leads to use in this exercise. You will also need a stopwatch or a watch with a second hand for this exercise. And you might want to have a chair next to the door you plan to use.

If you are doing this exercise in hot weather, make sure that the door you are using is in the shade--you don't want to risk overheating your dog. If it's cold out, make sure it's not too cold for your dog.

When you are ready, silently open the door and let your dog dart through. Close the door on the leash, being careful not to catch your dog's tail. Keep an eye on your watch and leave your dog outside for 30 seconds. It's amazing how long 30 seconds can be, so use your timepiece to keep track of the time.

When your dog's 30 seconds are up, open the door, let your dog come in and make a big fuss over him. Make sure your dog knows he has been traumatized--ask him where he was, ask him if he was okay while he was gone, make your voice high-pitched and anxious-sounding. You want him to feel like he's had an unpleasant experience and you are sympathizing. Spend about 15-30 seconds fussing and let your dog calm down a little.

Then silently open the door again. If your dog darts out again, let him. Close the door behind him (watching for that tail!) and leave him outside for 1 minute. When you open the door again, repeat the big fuss.

Keep silently opening the door and letting your dog out, doubling the amount of time you leave him outside each time. Be patient! Don't try to warn your dog to stay, don't try to prevent your dog from darting outside--let him discover for himself what happens when he does so.

The time will come when you open that door and your dog stays in the house. Close the door again and CELEBRATE! Tell him you're happy with him, give him terrific cookies, play with him, hug him and generally have a doggie party.

After the big party, give your dog a few minutes to calm down and then repeat the exercise with the same door. Most dogs refuse to go through the door without permission but a few (often dogs who have a door-darting habit) zip out again. Start the clock again at 30 seconds.

When you get to the point where your dog stands and looks out the open door without trying to dart through it, give your dog permission to go through. I use the word "okay" but any word is fine as long as you use the same word and intonation consistently. You may have to coax your dog through that door or actually go through it with him the first time. This is fine, this is what you want--it is much safer for your dog to be reluctant to go through a door than it is to have him constantly watching for an opportunity to slip through.

Goal: When you open the door, your dog stands inside and waits for permission to go through the door.

Step Two

You will have to repeat this step at several doors before your dog understands that the rule is not to go through any closed door that you have just opened without permission. I recommend that you do this step at every exit in your home and anywhere else where your dog spends a significant amount of time off lead.

Get or make a house line. A house line is an 8 to 10-foot length of cord knotted at one end. The other end is attached to your dog's collar by a snap or by tying it to his collar. Doesn't have to be fancy—plastic-coated clothesline makes a fine house line. If you think your dog might chew on it, see the section about chewing at the end of this guide.

If you know that your dog is much faster than you, make a longer house line--most dogs can cope with a house line as long as 25 feet.

Let your dog drag the house line around the house for a few days whenever you are there. Take the house line off whenever you aren't there to supervise him. Just treat it in a very matter-of-fact manner, don't make a big fuss about it. Act as if it's just another one of your silly whims (like the way you throw away all that luscious garbage!).

When your dog is used to the house line, repeat Step One with your dog dragging the house line. Don't pick the house line up with your hands, just step on it. You might want to do this with shoes on, rather than barefoot or wearing socks!

Goal: When you open the door, your dog stands inside and waits for permission to go through the door off lead (dragging the house line).

Step Three

For this step, you need a helper--someone to pretend to be a guest.

You will have to repeat this step at several doors and with at least a few different helpers before your dog understands that the rule is not to go through any door to the outside without permission. I recommend that you do this step at every exit in your home and anywhere else where your dog spends a significant amount of time off lead.

Give your dog a review of Step Two with your helper standing next to you.

After your dog shows he remembers Step Two, have your helper open the door and walk through it. Be ready! About half of all dogs follow the helper right out the

door. If your dog follows the helper, just step on the line as you shut the door. Start with a 30 second time out and double the time with each repetition (by this time, you probably won't have to do more than one time out with each helper).

Explain to your helper ahead of time that if your dog follows her out the door to keep on walking away from your dog and try to get out of sight as soon as possible, either by walking around a corner or by getting into a car. When your dog's time outside is over, signal your helper to come back so you can try again.

Goal: Your dog waits for permission to go through an exit, even if someone walks through the door ahead of him.

Clicking Fear Away

All normal dogs experience fear--it's a survival mechanism. Normal fear isn't a problem, it's a good thing!

When fear becomes a problem is when it interferes with your dog's ability to live a normal life with you. The most effective way to deal with most canine fears is via counterconditioning--identifying what triggers the fear, and then replacing the fear with pleasant associations.

Counterconditioning goes faster when it utilizes the classical conditioning aspect of clicker training. Classical conditioning is what Pavlov did in his famous experiments with dogs. He rang a bell at the same time he presented meals to the dogs in his experiments. Within a relatively short time, the dogs started salivating when they heard the bell--even if there was no food in sight or even if they had just eaten. They had heard the bell so often when their bodies were preparing to eat that their bodies started to involuntarily get ready to eat when they heard the bell.

An interesting thing about dogs (and humans) is that their bodies cannot get ready to eat when they are pumping adrenaline. And if their body is getting ready to eat, it shuts down adrenaline production. Adrenaline dissipates very quickly in the body, so if adrenaline production is stopped, the dog's fear level drops very quickly.

By pairing the clicker with food frequently, the dog's body gets ready to eat whenever he hears the click. This gives the handler a potent tool--a way to reach into her dog's body and shut off the adrenaline that is fueling fear.

Counterconditioning is accomplished more efficiently with a clicker because it allows the handler to help the dog calm down even in the presence of something that triggers fear.

When counterconditioning, it is important to come up with a training plan that breaks the goal behavior down into many tiny, easily achievable steps so that the dog gets clicked frequently. Lots of clicks means lots of treats which means the dog stays calmer. As much as possible let the dog control how quickly they approach the scary situation. Try not to force the dog to move closer or to move faster than they are willing to do or you risk destroying your dog's trust in you.

In an ideal situation, you never allow the dog to be exposed to the trigger unless you are ready to train. However, real life is often less than ideal and all you can do is help your dog cope as much as possible.

It's impossible for me to come up with a training plan for every sort of fear for every sort of dog. Following is a training plan I used with Orion, a Belgian Sheepdog puppy I am currently raising for a friend.

Orion was a bit afraid of doors and tight spaces. If I tried to call him into my office, he acted very conflicted--he paced in circles, he tried to approach, then he ducked away, then he tried to approach again. All the while, his ears were flat against his neck, his head was down and his back was hunched up.

I have no idea why Orion was so worried about doorways. I didn't have to know in order to help him fix it (although knowing sometimes suggests the most efficient plan of action). I did notice that he was less afraid of wide doorways or spaces than he was of narrow spaces. He was also less afraid if he could follow another dog, so while we were working on this, I made a habit out of sending Hunter (my Belgian Tervuren male who acted as Orion's "big brother") through doorways with Orion. Sometimes I'd have to send Hunter back and forth several times. It wasn't ideal but it let Orion live in a more or less normal manner until he was over his fear.

Step One

I stood in the hall with a bag of goodies in my hand. The other dogs were confined so that they couldn't get in the way and the cats were confined so they couldn't sit behind me and silently warn him away.

Every time Orion faced in my direction, I clicked and tossed him a cookie, making sure it landed far enough away from the hallway that he didn't feel any hesitation in eating the cookie.

Goal: Orion immediately turns to face me after diving on each treat.

Step Two

I did hand-to-paw combat with the cats to confine them while I trained Orion (they like to compete with the dogs when I throw treats). I stood in the doorway and clicked Orion every time he faced me.

After several clicks, I upped my criteria to clicking him when his feet were moving while he was looking at me. I didn't worry about whether he was coming closer or backing up, I just wanted him to move his feet while facing me.

Goal: Orion moves his feet while facing me.

Step Three

I bribed the cats into their bathroom with treats, then sneaked out. I stood in the hallway, clicking Orion for moving while facing me.

Most of the time, he was moving toward me. I stopped clicking for foot movements backward.

Goal: Orion moves toward me.

Step Four

I made my husband put the cats in the bathroom. I stood in the hall with my clicker and treats.

As soon as he saw me, Orion walked right up to me and sniffed me. I clicked and gave him treats. Then I started clicking and tossing the treats out into the living room so that he had to leave me to get his treat. He's fine once he's entered the hall--the scary part for him is entering the hall, so I set things up so he could practice that part.

Goal: Orion repeatedly walks into the hallway to get a click.

Step Five

I told my husband to use treats to get the cats into the bathroom. After he managed to confine them, he told me he doesn't handle cats (at least he does windows!).

Orion was merrily marching back and forth into the hallway and out again, so I decided to up the criteria by turning the cats loose. They rocketed out of the bathroom with great indignation, ran into the kitchen and were useless as distractions.

I decided to stand in the opening to the hallway so that my legs partially blocked the area. This caused a relapse of the pacing and darting-back-and-forth behavior but it was much less intense and it was over faster. By the end of the session, Orion was passing me, although somewhat hesitantly.

Step Six

I decided to switch to another doorway and use the bedroom doorway. Orion is obviously comfortable with that doorway (it goes from a rather narrow hallway into a wider space) so I then switched to my office doorway.

Orion hesitated a bit but went back and forth through the office door slowly. He tended to go through and then dart away from the door. After practice, the darting forward after going through the door improved although I'm not sure if it's because he's making progress or if it's just that there isn't much room to dart.

Goal: Orion walks in and out of any doorway in my home.

Step Seven

I went over to the training building and let Orion go in and out several times. He's much improved, no darting at all. I gave him clicks and treats, which he enjoys but it doesn't seem particularly necessary.

Continuing Training

The door problem may or may not be resolved. It seems to be resolved at home and at my training building. When the weather improves, we'll go out and look for other doorways to work with.

Tips for Solving Common Problems

Dogs That Bark Alone

Dogs that bark when you are gone are usually barking at a specific trigger (like the mailman or someone walking down the sidewalk), out of boredom or anxiety.

If your dog is barking at specific triggers, try to remove the triggers or prevent your dog from seeing/hearing them. I knew one dog who barked hysterically whenever the phone rang. The solution was easy, the owner just turned off the ringer on her phone when she left the house. If you can't remove the trigger, prevent the dog from witnessing it. Close the curtains, restrict your dog from the room where he can see or hear the trigger, or crate your dog while you are gone. It sometimes helps to leave the TV or radio playing while you are gone to help mask outside noises. If your dog barks at the same triggers when you are at home, see the next section about Dogs That Bark With You.

Dogs that bark out of boredom usually bark a few times, pause, bark a few times, pause, etc. If there's another boredom barker in the neighborhood, it often sounds like they are talking (barkBARKbarkBARK). If your neighbors are getting frustrated with you, you have to take fast action--it's just not fair to subject your neighbors to the constant commotion. When I worked the night shift for four years, I became very hostile about a neighbor's Shelties who alternated barking all day, each and every day. I never did anything about it but I understand the frustration and desperation that sometimes motivates someone to do something regrettable about an incessantly barking dog.

A quick short-term solution is a bark collar. There are four main types of bark collars: ultrasonic, citronella, water spray and electric shock.

The ultrasonic bark collars are often ineffective. They surprise some dogs into silence temporarily but the vast majority of dogs learn to ignore them.

Citronella collars are becoming more and more popular. They spray a mist of citronella oil at your dog's face. Most dogs really hate the scent of citronella and stop barking to avoid it. I have reservations about them because I've seen some of the same problems I saw with older models of bark collars: dogs that have a strong negative reaction after each spray (for instance, screaming, pawing at their faces, trying to run away, etc) and dogs that develop superstitious behaviors associated with the spray (for instance, becoming reluctant to approach the place they were sprayed previously). I find the scent of citronella highly unpleasant myself; I can

only imagine how much more unpleasant it is for a species that has 20 times the scent receptors I have and that research shows can perceive odors in the parts per trillion that humans can only perceive in parts per thousand.

There are kennel bark-control systems that use a spray of water to keep the dogs quiet. There's a microphone that is mounted nearby and any time a dog barks, each kennel run is sprayed. I've witnessed kennels with this setup where one dog barks and then all the dogs scurry into their houses--which is sort of amusing. This is (obviously) not a solution for indoors or for places that experience hard freezes. I'm not sure how much these systems cost but I imagine the installation costs are considerable because they involve plumbing.

Electric shock bark collars sound horrid but are not that unpleasant, in my experience. I highly recommend the Tri-Tronics Bark Limiter collar. I don't sell them or receive any kickbacks for them--I have just witnessed that they work without upsetting the dog. Tri-Tronics has a slogan that says something about "tickling the dog into silence." On the lower settings, the shock as I have experienced it really is more like a tickle or buzz than a shock. On the highest setting, the shock is about like touching a doorknob in the winter after walking across a nylon carpet. Dogs that used older bark collar models often displayed a strong negative reaction or superstitious behaviors (as with citronella collars above). I have never seen a dog that displayed much reaction to the Tri-Tronics bark collar other than to stop barking.

A bark collar may keep you out of arbitration or court but it doesn't solve your long-term problem, which is that you have a dog who is bored. The bark collar won't get rid of the boredom! Look at your dog's life--is he getting enough physical and mental exercise? He needs to get enough of both physical and mental exercise that when you are gone, he's happy to lie down and nap most of the time.

You can enrich your dog's life by making sure he gets at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every other day, 30 minutes of training every day plus various games to play on his own.

Games to play on his own can include giving him most of his meals out of a Buster Cube or treat ball or hiding handfuls around the house or yard so he has to hunt out each mouthful. A variation on this is to sprinkle a handful of treats across the grass in your yard so your dog has to sniff around to hunt them out. You can make him stuffed Kong toys or stuffed bones to give him more chewing time.

Dogs that bark because of separation anxiety usually bark without pause. There's a hysterical edge to the bark, which is exactly how that dog feels. Using a bark collar with such dogs doesn't always work--they need the barking to release their stress more than they want to avoid whatever unpleasant sensation the collar employs. Even if the bark collar is effective, dogs with separation anxiety are highly likely to turn to some other form of stress relief--sometimes chewing, sometimes escape attempts, sometimes self-mutilation. Find a dog trainer experienced in working with dogs with separation anxiety and talk to your vet about using medication to alleviate the symptoms. This is more than a nuisance issue--dogs with separation anxiety are feeling terrible fear, which can be viewed as a form of pain. One thing that sometimes helps such dogs is a program such as the Mind Games section at the end of this guide.

Dogs Who Bark With You

Well, maybe you don't intend to be barking with your dog but there's a fairly good chance your dog thinks you are! Yelling at a barking dog is usually quite ineffective and many dogs seem to view it as you joining in the barkfest.

If your dog barks on lead, the easiest way to deal with it is by covering your dog's eyes. He can bark or he can look around, he just doesn't get to do both. If you also make an effort to click and treat your dog whenever he looks at you, he will rapidly become more attentive and less obnoxious on lead.

If your dog barks at specific things around the house, sometimes what works is to walk over to the window or the door, look out, bark a few times, then turn around and tell your dogs it's all over. Doesn't work with every dog or every pack but it's easy and won't hurt.

If your dog barks at specific triggers, it can help to teach him to avoid those triggers. One easy way to do this is to carry treats with you and randomly reinforce your dog for following you around. If he's following you, he can't be standing in the front window and barking.

The most effective thing to do is a variation on the "let's do it 'til it's not fun anymore" strategy. First teach your dog to bark on command, using the most luscious treats possible. When your dog really knows the command (will bark 3-5 times when given the command) then have your dog bark over and over and over whenever you hear an unauthorized bark. Have your dog bark until he gives you the "this isn't really fun" look. Then click and give one measly Cheerio (or similar minimal-value treat).

It's easy to teach a dog to bark with the clicker. Wave one of your luscious treats in his face until he makes some sound out of frustration--even a tiny whine counts. Click when he's making a noise and treat. Repeat until your dog catches on that you want him to bark. Many dogs seem rather amazed at this (so will your family and friends!). Add the command and work until your dog will give several enthusiastic barks on command, giving a luscious treat after each click.

When you do the "bark 'til you drop" thing, don't click and treat in the middle--just keep repeating the command to bark until your dog is sick of it. Then give him one single minimal value treat. Be cheerful the whole time--you're not doing this to be mean to your dog, you're not angry with your dog, it's just that somehow you've mysteriously turned into someone who wants to hear him bark longer than he really wants to bark!

At other times, continue training the bark by giving the command to bark and giving luscious treats.

The "bark 'til you drop" strategy only works if you are consistent with it--you must respond each and every time you hear your dog bark.

If your nerves can't stand listening to your dog bark for long, you can substitute puppy pushups (alternating sits and downs) in the same manner as with the "bark til you drop" strategy--luscious treats for every sit and down in training, no treats when you are doing it in response to unauthorized barking. It's very important to lavishly reinforce sits and downs at other times because it's possible to give your dog an aversion to them if you use them only in response to unauthorized barking.

Chewing

It is normal and healthy for puppies to chew--that's how they develop their jaw muscles, that's how they shed their baby teeth and that's how they explore the world. Your job is to teach your puppy what to chew and what not to chew.

Provide good chew toys. I personally like to give my dogs raw beef bones because they really enjoy them and the bones keep their teeth sparkling white. I use the raw ones that I get from the butcher--not the sterilized ones from pet stores, which are as hard as rocks. Other chew toys that I give my dogs include Kong toys and Bully Stix (dried bull penises). My dogs love rawhide too much to have it--they swallow big hunks that they sometimes bring up again--or make me worry that the rawhide will cause a blockage.

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I make sure that I spend a few minutes every few hours playing with my puppy with the chew toys. I want to make sure that these approved chewies are really important, high value objects to the puppy.

When I see one of my puppies chewing something too large for them to run off with, I gently remove them from the object. A while later, I'll make a point of providing an appropriate chew toy.

If I see my puppy with something he can carry off, I go get a treat and trade with the puppy. Once it's in the puppy's mouth, it's too late to teach him not to grab it. He's already got it, the most likely thing I could teach him by doing something unpleasant is not to let me see him carry something around.

I don't take the object out of my puppy's mouth--I just wave the treat around under his nose and wait for him to let go. I also try to practice object exchanges with approved chewies so that my puppy thinks it's a happy game.

Separately I teach my puppies Doggie Zen and then I use "Leave It" to teach them what they shouldn't touch.

Older dogs that chew are usually either bored or suffering from separation anxiety.

Chewing by bored dogs is usually aimed at stuff that's fun to chew (Note: Dogs that discover pulling the padding out from under carpets seem to become obsessed with it). The cure for boredom is a dog that is pleasantly tired in body and mind--he should be happy to lie down and nap most of the time you are gone. Crating your dog is a short-term solution to prevent chewing but it doesn't address the root problem.

Chewing caused by separation anxiety is usually focused on things that are heavily scented by the owners or focused on the exits (the dog is trying to escape). Dogs that chew human-scented objects usually start out by licking them and gradually pulling the object into their mouth, then grinding it up with the molars. Such objects are generally saturated with saliva when found. Consult with a dog trainer experienced in working with separation anxiety and with your veterinarian.

Housetraining

When dealing with puppies, housetraining starts out as people training and then, as the puppy physically matures, things shift toward the puppy being trained.

Puppies need to eliminate:

- *as soon as they wake up
- *after each meal
- *after every 5-10 minutes of active play (even if your puppy was playing outside, if he hasn't peed right before coming in the house, he'll need to pee again; puppies don't plan ahead)

Most healthy puppies can hold it for a period of hours equaling their age in months plus one--for example, a 3-month-old puppy can usually hold it for 4 hours. If your puppy seems to pee more frequently than you expect from a puppy his age, ask your vet to check him for a urinary tract infection. A particular tip off is a puppy that leaves a small puddle wherever he sleeps (in other words, is showing incontinence during sleep).

The key to housetraining is constant observation when the puppy is loose in the house, reinforcement when the puppy eliminates outside and confinement when the owner can't watch the puppy.

Keep an eye on that puppy! You can even put your puppy on leash and tie the leash to your belt if you are doing something that is likely to distract you. Baby gates are a very handy way of confining a puppy to the same room you are in. If you develop the habit of carrying treats with you and randomly giving your puppy a treat just for being near you, you'll encourage him to stick close to you.

If your puppy has an accident in the house, there's no point in yelling at him. What puppies often learn from being yelled at is to go and hide when they need to pee. If your puppy is in the act and small enough to pick up, just scoop him up and take him outside--most puppies will stop urinating for a few seconds out of surprise. If you don't catch him in the act, remind yourself to be more observant and clean up the mess. Use a cleaner especially formulated to eliminate the odor--puppies are often triggered to eliminate where they smell pee or poop. If you suspect that there are old pee spots in your carpet, buy or rent a black light to reveal them (old urine stains fluoresce under black light even if they are invisible in normal light).

If you have Oriental carpets, you might consider picking them up until your puppy is grown. High-quality carpets use yarns that are dyed with ammonia, which smells enough like old urine to trigger many puppies to pee on them. The blue yarns in older Oriental carpets were dyed with indigo--which was mixed into a solution using stale urine! In fact, dealers used to sniff carpets for the telltale odor as one of the indicators of quality. Even though ammonia is now readily available, there are some very high-quality carpets that use urine-vat dyed indigo yarns because they produce a deeper, clearer, more vibrant shade of blue that is highly prized.

When your puppy needs to eliminate, go outside with your puppy so that you can observe and reinforce. When you see your puppy start to pee or poop, praise quietly (you don't want to distract them). When he's finished, praise exuberantly and pass out treats and hugs. Make sure your puppy knows you are soooo impressed with him!

When you take your puppy outside, resist the temptation to play with your puppy before he eliminates. Teach him that the fun and games happen after he pees or poops. Try to spend a few minutes outside with him after he eliminates, so that he doesn't learn to hold it in order to prolong the fun of being outdoors.

You can use this same observation time to teach your puppy to eliminate on cue. This is done via classical conditioning--whenever your puppy is peeing or pooping outside, give your puppy the verbal cue to eliminate. I use "go potty!" In my experience, it doesn't matter that I use the same cue for both urination and defecation. I just say the cue once when I see my puppy squat and over time, with many repetitions, the puppy associates the cue with the need to eliminate.

When you are raising a puppy, it is greatly to your advantage to teach him to eliminate on many different surfaces--grass, sand, concrete, asphalt, dirt, cedar shavings, gravel, etc. If you have a bitch puppy, it is particularly important to teach her she can eliminate away from home--bitches that aren't taught to eliminate away from home can get to the point where they will hold it desperately to avoid eliminating anywhere else. This is very inconvenient when you are 300 miles away from home!

I recommend using a crate to confine puppies until they have developed a reliable communication system with their owners. It's not necessary to crate your puppy for months or even years--I've been able to leave puppies as young as 14 weeks loose all night. My rule of thumb is to crate a puppy for at least two weeks after the puppy has developed a way to communicate the need to eliminate to me and has also stopped chewing on inappropriate objects.

I usually recommend putting the crate right next to the bed. Up until the age of six months or so, puppies are generally quite emotionally immature and seem to do better with the reassurance of sleeping next to their person. This also means that my puppies never cry at night--I would no sooner let a puppy cry itself to sleep than I would let a baby cry itself to sleep. Once the puppy is more mature, it is then pretty easy to teach them to sleep in a crate in some other part of the house if desired.

Most puppies sleep quietly from the very beginning if they are in your bedroom next to you. The only time they usually fuss is if they need to go outside. If your puppy starts to fuss and you're pretty sure he doesn't need to go out, try sticking your fingers into the crate to remind him you are there. You can also whisper to your puppy or try imitating the deep, contented sigh that dogs give when they are relaxing into sleep.

It is quite easy to teach a puppy to ring a bell as a signal that they need to go out. I recommend teaching the puppy to ring the bell standing near the door and then gradually moving the bells farther and farther away from the door. That way you can carry the bell or station the bell in whichever room you are in. It is greatly to your advantage to have a dog that learns to come notify you when he needs to go out!

To teach a dog to ring a bell, use your clicker and click whatever your dog does with the bell. The vast majority of dogs will nose anything you put in front of them, which gives you a predictable thing to click. Click your dog for looking at the bell, nosing the bell, licking the bell, bumping the bell, pawing the bell, etc. As your dog gets more proficient in playing with the bell, gradually stop clicking for looks, then stop clicking for licks, etc, until finally the only thing you click is when you actually hear the bell ring.

Then stand near the door, wait for your dog to ring the bell, open the door and toss the treat out in the yard. Your dog will catch on very quickly that ringing the bell inspires you to open the door and toss the treat outside.

Many people teach their dogs not to eliminate in the owner's house but fail to give their dog enough experience to understand that they shouldn't eliminate inside any building. If you get an older dog, treat him like a puppy until you are sure he is housetrained in your house, too.

If you have a male dog who marks (lifts a hind leg and sprays a few drops of urine on various surfaces), this is a different issue from elimination. Some bitches also mark but seem to confine it to the great outdoors more than males do. Constant observation is the key to getting rid of this habit--distract him whenever you see him sniffing a vertical object (almost all dogs sniff before they mark).

If a dog is difficult to catch in the act of marking, putting shorts on him might do the trick. Get boy's Jockey-style shorts and put them on backward, so his tail goes through the fly. As soon as he soils the shorts, change them. Often the sensation of wetness is enough to teach the dog to stop marking indoors.

If you have an intact male over 5 years old and you start smelling urine around the house, have your vet check your dog for a prostate infection. One of the symptoms of a prostate infection is involuntary dripping of urine or a mixture of urine and blood.

If you have an older spayed bitch, particularly a bitch whose tail has been docked, who leaves puddles when she sleeps, this is a common form of incontinence. There are two different types of medication available to help this--consult with your vet.

If you are going to get your bitch spayed, there is some evidence that waiting until she's midway between seasons is less likely to lead to problems with incontinence later in life. If she has only had one season, three months is probably halfway between cycles for her.

Jumping Up on People

This is easy! Dogs usually jump up on people to get attention. All you have to do is teach your dog that the only way he gets attention is with all four feet on the floor.

When your dog jumps up, have that person turn away, cross their arms over their chest and stare up at the ceiling. As soon as your dog's feet hit the floor, have the person turn back around, bend over your dog and give him attention.

If your dog jumps up on backs, arrange training meetings to take place next to a door. If he jumps on someone's back, have them go through the door and shut it. Wait for 5-30 seconds (long enough for your dog to calm down) and then come back in to try again.

If, like me, you want your dogs to jump up sometimes, it makes the whole process easier. Teach your dog a signal for when it is okay to jump up. My signal is patting my upper chest with one hand while saying "Up!" My dogs learn not to jump up unless they get both the hand gesture and the word--that way, they don't jump up when someone says the word "up" in conversation. When I do give them the signal I give them lots of attention, petting and praise. If they jump up at other times, I turn my back and ignore them.

Mind Games (Leadership Program)

Playing for Confidence and Compliance

I do not believe that dogs view human beings as if they were other dogs. However, I am convinced that when humans act in specific ways that dogs usually react in a predictable manner. A handler can use these specific reactions to modify a dog's behavior--to help a fearful dog feel more confident and to influence an uncooperative dog into becoming more biddable.

If your dog shows one or more of the following symptoms, take him to your vet and ask about doing a six function plus TSH thyroid test, before you start the Mind Games. This test usually costs in the neighborhood of \$35-40 plus whatever your vet charges for an office visit and blood draw. In Iowa, vets usually send this blood off to the University of Michigan or to Hemovet in California. If your dog is hypothyroid, problem behaviors can disappear or become much less pronounced with treatment. Symptoms of hypothyroidism can include:

- inexplicable and persistent weight gain
- inexplicable weight loss
- unusually heavy or thick coat
- unusually sparse coat
- unusually greasy coat
- areas that have been clipped down grow back very slowly or not at all
- generalized all over itchiness
- generally crabby or crotchety attitude
- spaced out some or all of the time
- lethargy or reluctance to exercise
- seems cold most of the time or seeks out warm places
- suddenly fearful of things that weren't a problem previously
- softening of muscle tone even with regular exercise, particularly noticeable in the face

There are a number of leadership programs around, some of them more detailed than others. The following is what has worked for me and for students of mine but it's not written in stone. If any part of the following is too difficult to carry out or might get you bitten, don't do it! You don't have to play all the Mind Games with

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your dog to get some benefit from the program. The more Mind Games you play, the faster and more dramatic your results will be.

If you are having serious problems with your dog, consult a dog trainer or behaviorist experienced in working with difficult dogs before changing any of your dog's routines.

Note: A house line is a 6-8 foot length of cord attached to your dog's buckle or limited-slip collar for your dog to drag around the house. Spray it with Bitter Apple (or other anti-chewing product) to keep your dog from removing it.

If this is the first time you've used an anti-chewing product, make sure your dog doesn't accustom himself to the taste by giving him the "shock" treatment with it. Apply some to a cotton ball or tissue. Then go to your dog and gently pop it into his mouth. He'll go YUCK! and spit it out--praise like crazy, that's exactly the reaction you want. You should only have to do this once. Again, if this is likely to get you bitten, don't do it--consult an experienced trainer or behaviorist as soon as possible.

Mind Game #1: No More Kibble From Heaven!

Free feeding is the equivalent of kibble from heaven--some dogs seem to imagine that they own their bowl and that the food appears whenever they want it.

Feed your adult dog twice a day (puppies may need 2-6 meals per day depending on age and health status). Before you put the bowl down, have your dog do a sit. If your dog tries to dive on the bowl before you give him permission to eat, pick up the bowl and start over. When your dog stops eating and walks away from the bowl, pick up any remaining food and dispose of it.

Mind Game #2: No Free Lunches!

Dogs that never have to do anything to earn their living (their food) can become very spoiled. They see no reason to obey their owner at any time because they can get what they want (food) without any conditions at all.

At least four times a week feed your dog his entire meal from your hand. Divide your dog's meal up into 15-25 parts (depending on the size of your dog, this might be anything from individual kibbles to small handfuls). Have your dog perform a simple command for every part of his meal. It doesn't have to be complex--it can be sits, downs, stand, shake hands, salute, roll over, etc. This can be a good time to work on the Recall or Name Response lessons, too!

If your dog is overly rough about how he takes food, work on his eating-from-your-hand skills with his first meal fed this way. If he tries to grab the food roughly from you, pull your hand away, give him a short time out, then offer the food again. If your dog refuses to carry out known commands, quietly put his food away until the next regularly scheduled meal. It's completely up to him whether he eats or not--don't try to convince him. Let him discover where his own best interests lie!

Mind Game #3: No More "Pee-Mail"!

Dogs sometimes use urination and defecation to mark their own territories. Some males are particularly persistent about urine marking as many places as possible (some bitches do this as well). I call this "pee-mail"--dogs send social messages to other dogs with their urine. Dogs do not need to assert their ownership over a large territory; some dogs who mark the same places on a regular basis become quite territorial.

Urine marking is different from regular urination--the dog sniffs something (often a vertical object or a place where another dog has peed), then moves forward a little and sprinkles that place with a few drops of urine.

If your dog is in the habit of marking during walks on lead, take control of his pee-mail. Give him (or her) two chances to urinate at home and then insist that your dog keep up with you during your walk. You may have to use a head halter to give you control over your dog's nose.

Mind Game #4: Patience!

Dogs that are overly pushy and dogs that are too fearful share one important personality trait: they tend to be impatient. They move, act and make decisions too quickly. Having your dog do a thirty minute down stay every day helps teach your dog how to be patient and just relax.

First teach your dog to do a down. Then put him on leash, have him do a down and run the leash under your own foot. Leave your dog enough slack to lie comfortably but not enough to be comfortable sitting or standing.

If your dog gets up, just stay quiet and keep pressure on the leash. Let your dog discover how to be comfortable. Your dog will eventually relax and just hang out.

If you do this regularly, your dog will start to relax sooner and sooner.

Mind Game #5: Learning His Place!

Controlling the best spots to sleep are one of the games dogs play with each other to establish authority. As almost every dog could tell you, the best spots to sleep in any house are the furniture and human beds.

If you are playing Mind Games because your dog lacks respect for you, prohibit your dog from getting up on the furniture and on your bed. If he doesn't respect your "Off!" command, attach a house line to move him when he doesn't feel like moving. Don't be harsh, just firm and matter of fact.

If your dog has a favorite place to sleep (a particular corner or dog bed), make sure to take control of that place at least once a day by making your dog move out of it and then sitting or standing in it yourself for a few minutes.

If your dog sneaks up on the bed with you after you fall asleep, put him in a crate or shut him out of the bedroom.

If you are playing Mind Games because your dog is fearful or anxious, it is important to get your dog out of the bedroom. British trainer John Rogerson has noted that he has never seen a case of separation anxiety in a dog that routinely sleeps outside the bedroom. I have seen a few cases of separation anxiety in dogs that didn't sleep in the owner's bedroom but *did* sleep with one or more other dogs. Removing the other dogs did trigger anxiety, so make sure your dog is sleeping in a room alone.

Mind Game #6: Taking Back Your Space!

Dogs can take control of a space by lying in the middle of the traffic pattern or by lying in the doorway. Anxious dogs are trying to prevent their owner from leaving, dogs with leadership ambitions are trying to control their owner's movement. In dog society, the lesser-ranked dogs have to move around the higher-ranked dogs.

If your dog is lying in your way, shuffle your feet and shuffle right through him. You don't want to hurt him (that's why you're shuffling) but you do want him to move for you.

Don't ask your dog to move or warn your dog that you are about to make him move. Make it your dog's responsibility to keep an eye on you and to move as needed to accommodate you.

If you think your dog might bite you, consult a trainer or behaviorist with experience dealing with aggressive dogs ASAP! In the meantime, put a buckle or limited-slip collar on your dog and attach a house line. Use the house line to move your dog.

Mind Game #7: Follow the Leader!

Teaching your dog to follow you teaches your dog to keep an eye on you and to accommodate your movements. You're an important person in your dog's life and if he doesn't know it, it's time for him to learn it.

Tie your dog's leash to your belt or around your waist for at least 1 hour each day. Go about your everyday business without paying particular attention to your dog. Don't warn your dog you are about to move; don't pay attention to your dog; don't coax him to come with you. Make it his responsibility to follow his leader (you!) around.

It's inconvenient to do--but the more often you can do this, the faster you will see a change in your dog's behavior.

Mind Game #8: Take Control Of Your Dog's Body!

Dogs prefer to be touched on their own terms. Some dogs want to be petted constantly and some dogs would prefer only to be handled by invitation only.

If your dog solicits petting constantly, stop all free petting. Insist that your dog earn each petting session by performing one or more commands and keep each petting session short in duration.

If your dog doesn't enjoy being handled, make sure that you handle your dog all over every day. Make sure you can touch and examine every part of your dog's body, including his ears and between his pads.

If it gives you more confidence in handling, wear gloves until you feel safe handling your dog. If you think there is a high probability that your dog will bite you, seek professional help!

Mind Game #9: S/he Who Owns the Most Toys Wins!

In dog society, the dog able to control the most resources is usually the highest ranked. Giving a dog lots of toys that no one else touches can give that dog a mistaken impression of his own rank in the world. Overly confident dogs can

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become aggressive resource-guarders and overly fearful dogs feel stressed by the enormity of their responsibilities.

Pick up and put out of your dog's reach all of the toys, including chew toys. Hold one play session per day with your dog where you bring out one toy and use it to play with your dog for 10-15 minutes.

If your dog declines to play with you, put the toy away without comment.

Mind Game #10: Daily Chores!

Remind your dog that he works for his living by holding two short daily obedience sessions. For 5-10 minutes in each session, run through all the commands your dog knows or teach him new ones.

These can be combined with hand-feeding sessions.

Mind Game #11: A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body!

Dogs need physical exercise to stay physically and mentally healthy. Make sure your dog is getting 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every other day. Aerobic exercise is any exercise that makes your dog pant steadily. Depending on your dog's size and fitness level, this can be on-lead walking, jogging, road work, treadmill, retrieve games, swimming or pulling.

It's difficult for many people to walk fast enough to give a medium or large dog aerobic exercise (any dog over about 25 pounds). If on-lead walking is the only option, you can increase the oomph factor by teaching your dog to pull a drag from a nonrestrictive harness. I start small with loops of rope and work up to motorcycle tires (depending on the size and condition of the dog). This has an added advantage for conformation people of building the dog's rear.

Avoid retrieve games if your dog doesn't play nicely. Playing nicely means respecting your space when you have possession of the object (in other words, not leaping on you to rip it out of your hands), bringing the object directly back to you and allowing you to take the object out of his mouth.

Make sure your dog is getting a high-quality diet with moderate amounts of protein and fat. I believe that a homemade diet based on raw ingredients (meats and veggies) is healthiest for dogs. There are high-quality kibbles on the market for those who prefer to feed a commercial diet. Money saved on cheap kibble often gets spent at the vet, so there's no point in trying to economize with cheap dog food.

Mind Game #12: Rewards From Daily Life!

All dogs have things that they enjoy doing. Earning these daily pleasures can help your dog learn confidence and compliance.

It might include things like going out in the yard, going for a walk, being fed, going for a ride in the car, being groomed, being petted, getting scratched in that spot that is always itchy, etc. Before you let your dog have any of the things on that list, have your dog perform a known command, then reward him with the intended activity. If he refuses to do the behavior, don't comment, just walk away, wait for 5-10 minutes and try again.

Play as many of the Mind Games as you can for at least a month. If your dog's attitude has improved, slowly start dropping some of the games. I recommend that you keep the first game (No More Kibble From Heaven!) and the last game (Rewards From Daily Life!) for life. You may decide to keep playing more or all of the games. If your dog's attitude starts to get worse again, re-institute the game you most recently dropped for at least another month.

Mind Games Checklist

- Medical exam, including thyroid check

- Mind Game #1: No More Kibble From Heaven!

- Mind Game #2: No Free Lunches!

- Mind Game #3: No More “Pee-Mail”!

- Mind Game #4: Patience!

- Mind Game #5 Learning His Place!

- Mind Game #6 Taking Back Your Space!

- Mind Game #7 Follow the Leader!

- Mind Game #8 Take Control Of Your Dog’s Body!

- Mind Game #9 S/he Who Owns the Most Toys Wins!

- Mind Game #10 Daily Chores!

- Mind Game #11 A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body!

- Mind Game #12 Rewards From Daily Life!

About the Author

Originally from Iowa City, Iowa, M. Shirley Chong has been training dogs since 1982 and started using clicker training in 1992. Clicker training is based on the principles of operant conditioning and uses positive reinforcement to help the dog learn behaviors.

The Clicker Cookbook begins a new series of general obedience and training guides Shirley plans to write. She has also written "Just Plain Clicker Sense" and is working on a third book detailing her training method for competitive obedience. She has produced two dog-training videos.

Shirley also specializes in analyzing dog behavior and correcting problem behaviors, using customized approaches based on the specific dog. She has owned German Shepherds, Belgian Tervuren, Belgian Sheepdogs and Borzoi. She currently shares her home with two Belgian Tervuren, three Belgian Sheepdogs, one German Shepherd, and four cats; oh, and one husband (a rescue). She has rescued and re-homed over 60 dogs of many breeds.

Shirley is co-owner and administrator of two Internet mailing lists - Clicktrain, for those interested in clicker training and all aspects of operant conditioning, and K-9 Cuisine, for discussions of dog diets. She has a Web site - www.shirleychong.com -- loaded with training tips, archives of the best Clicktrain posts, and training photos.

Want to learn more?

Check out Shirley's Web site for lots of training tips, and archives of some of the best Clicktrain posts:

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