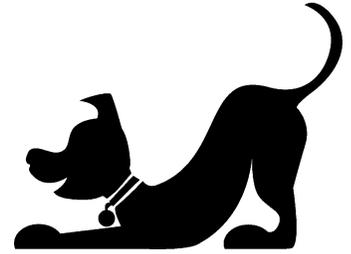




Paw Prints

Resource sheet: Prepare your dog for school

These instructions are designed to help you prepare your dog for group lessons and learn to use verbal and food rewards in training. Don't worry if you don't get through it all — we will cover these items in class, along with how to teach "Stay", "Come", "Give", polite leash behavior and other important elements of raising a well-trained, well-adjusted dog.



1. *Condition your dog to enjoy verbal praise*

Dogs don't immediately understand what "Good" or "Good dog" means. If you teach your dog that it means "Well done, you did something right", then the dog will learn to work for verbal praise just as hard as she works for food or toys. It's easy to teach: first pick a specific word or words that you will always use as verbal reinforcement. It should be something that you don't normally say a lot when your dog is around ("Good" or "Good dog" works well).

Then say the word regularly when the dog is already feeling good – eating dinner, being fed a few treats, getting a nice tummy rub, etc. If you associate the word with feeling good, it will condition the dog to actually start feeling good when s/he hears the word. Once the dog has made the association, start using the word only as a reinforcement for training – if you say it all the time, it will become background noise – and why should the dog work for something he hears all the time?

2. *Does your dog know his/her name?*

Say the dog's name. When s/he looks at you (you might have to use a toy, treat or sound to attract his/her attention the first few times), say "good" (or whatever verbal praise word you've chosen to use) and reward. This teaches your dog that his/her name means "pay attention to me".

3. *Teach your dog to look at you on cue*

The purpose of this exercise is to teach the dog to look at you when you say "Watch" or "Look." It's a great tool to have when things are chaotic because it helps your dog to focus. Hold a small food treat in front of the dog's nose, and then bring your hand straight up to your face. Your dog will probably follow the treat with his/her eyes, and then look at you for more information – say "Watch" or "Look" as this happens. Release your dog by saying "OK" and give him/her the food treat. Start out with a very short (one second) "Watch/Look" and work slowly toward a longer one.

4. *Help your dog learn to settle quickly after exciting events*

In a quiet environment, get your dog a little hyped up. Then stop the action and quietly sit and wait a few seconds for your dog to settle down a little. As s/he calms, gently stroke his/her sides or chest in a circular motion. Once the dog settles, give him/her a treat. Practice a few times a day. This will help your dog settle more easily in class. Even if your dog is reasonably relaxed at home, you may find that s/he will get excited in class because there are great smells, other dogs and people about.

5. *Practice training with food - teach sit*

Hold a small, smelly treat right in front of the dog's nose (not too high or s/he'll jump), and move your hand back toward his/her tail. Most dogs will follow the food with their nose and sit as the nose goes up. If s/he sits, pop the treat into his/her mouth. If the dog backs up, try it again more slowly. Don't say the word "sit" until the dog is sitting reliably to the food lure (generally about the third day). To add the word, say "Sit" exactly as the dog's bottom hits the ground. Practice often. (Try this technique to learn the method, even if your dog already knows "sit".)