

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER**

## **PET BEHAVIOR AND TRAINING SERVICES, INC.**

### **TEACHING BEGINNING OBEDIENCE THE EASY WAY**

*Written by Pet Behavior and Training Services, Inc., for use by the Montgomery County Animal Shelter*

This training information was written to introduce you to a relaxing approach to teaching your pet simple obedience commands.

**EVERYBODY WINS WITH LURE/REWARD TRAINING TECHNIQUES. YOU CAN TEACH THE DOG QUICKLY AND LOVINGLY. DOGS ARE GRATIFIED BY EARNING PRAISE AND TREATS FOR DOING WHAT PLEASURES YOU.**

Lure/reward training is an excellent technique for teaching all ages of dogs to sit, lie down, stay, come, pay attention, and walk by your side. All learning takes time, your dog cannot start learning how to do things properly until he understands what you want. It is much easier for your dog to learn when he is not being pushed into a sitting position or pulled into a down position. Physical touch masks sound, so push/pull methods of teaching delays most owner's goal of having verbal control. When the pushing and pulling are gone, dogs can learn the meaning of hand signals and verbal commands very quickly and easily.

#### **LURE**

A lure is a promise of a reward. It is a piece of food or other item that entices the dog to do what you want. For instance, if the dog is hungry and you put a piece of hot dog in front of his nose, you can use it to lure him to follow you. Squeaky toys can be lures, an opened can of dog food can be a lure.

A lure is used to get the dog interested and to move him into the desired position.

#### **REWARD**

A reward (in the case of our training), is a positive reinforcement for doing desired behavior. When you give the dog a piece of hot dog for following you, you are rewarding him.

That little piece of food plays three roles in training:

1. used to get the dogs attention
2. to lure him into the desired position
3. to reward him when he does the desired behavior

## How to Teach the Exercises

- Practice luring the dog into the position you want. That will be the start of your hand signal.
- Once you are sure you can cause the behavior to happen, give it a name.
- Practice the behavior with the verbal and hand signals many times. During the learning phase, give food rewards and praise each time the dog does the desired behavior.
- Once the dog learns the behavior, gradually reduce the number of food treats.

Each command will be taught in several steps. You can teach more than one command in a session. The following commands have been broken down into steps. Each step will summarize what needs to be practiced and how to do it. How long it needs to be practiced will depend on the individual dog. Once the dog is responding well, go to the next step. The goal is to have the dog respond to commands anywhere with distractions. You will have to practice in several locations and under many conditions to achieve this.

### SIT

- Move your hand (with treat in it) close to and backward over the dog's head so that he "falls" backward into the sitting position. Praise and reward with the treat.
  - When you are sure you can cause him to sit by doing this, add the verbal command "SIT".
  - Practice many times until he sits instantly. Praise and reward him each time he sits.
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### SIT/STAY

- Using verbal and hand signals tell the dog to sit, but this time wait 1 or 2 seconds before you praise and reward with food treat.
- When you can get him to hold the sit for 2 or 3 seconds, add the command "STAY". The hand signal for stay is your open palm. Say, "SIT...STAY". Wait 1-3 seconds, then praise and reward with treat while releasing him with the word "
- Every exercise has a start and a finish. Your release word, "okay" is the signal that the exercise is finished and the dog can now move.

- Gradually increase the time the dog will stay while you are standing near him. Work up to 10-15 seconds. Don't make every SIT/STAY a long one.
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### **COME**

- With dog on leash or long line, hold your hand with the food treat at the dogs nose level. Quickly back up several steps and call "COME". Backing up takes advantage of the dog's instinct to chase and the food will help motivate him to "get to you". Praise and reward when he reaches you.
- Keep luring and backing up to get him to come. Each time praise lavishly and reward.

Once the dog is coming quickly, try standing still and calling come. A moment before he reaches you, signal him to SIT (with food lure and verbal command). Praise and reward when he does.

### **DROP IT**

This command is easy to teach.

- Begin by playing fetch with your dog.
- When he brings the object back, show him a treat and say "Drop It".
- He will have to drop the toy to eat the treat. When he does, pick up the toy, praise him and give him the treat.

Now that he knows how great it is to COME to you and knows the DROP IT means a treat for him, it will be easy to get almost anything from his mouth without chasing or yelling

### **WATCH ME**

- This is an easy exercise to teach. Start with the dog in front of you, take a piece of food and move it from the dog's nose up to the bridge of your nose. When his eyes follow the food up to your face, praise and treat.
- Add the command "WATCH ME" as soon as he looks at you by following the food to your face.

- Practice many times. Don't ask for more than 2-3 seconds of eye contact in the beginning.
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### **DOWN**

- Have the dog sit and you kneel beside him. Hold the treat near the dog's nose, then lower it in a straight line to the floor and slowly draw it out away from the dog. When he goes into the down position, praise and reward with the treat.
  - If the dog won't go into the down position by following the food, try sitting on the floor and luring him under your raised leg. When you are sure you can lure him into a down position, add the verbal command "DOWN".
  - Practice this until he goes down instantly.
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### **DOWN STAY**

- Do the same thing for the down/stay as you did for the sit/stay. When dog lies down, wait 1 to 2 seconds before praise and reward. Quickly release him with the word "okay". When you can get him to hold his "down" for several seconds, add the verbal command and hand signal "stay". Wait a few seconds, then praise and reward with a treat—release him with the command "okay".
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### **WALKING**

- Use food treats and a happy voice to encourage the dog to walk near you without pulling. The food and your praise will tell him in a positive way how you would like him to walk. When he starts to pull, say "Easy", pat your leg to get him near you and start walking. Stop if he pulls, repeat, start again.
- He will need lots of practice before you see a decrease in pulling.

If your dog is a hard puller you may want to use a head halter. The head halter looks and works like a halter on a horse. They move the dog's leverage point from his neck to his muzzle. They can give you lots of control, even with a seventy pound Golden or Labrador Retriever, and they don't cause any pain to your dog.

If you are interested in joining our training classes, you may call us at 937-293-5686. Classes are designed for those who would like their pets to be better behaved, both in and out of the home. If you live outside of the area ask your veterinarian or dog friends for referrals to classes that promote positive reinforcement training.

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*A non-profit organization specializing in the behavior of pets*

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