



Paw Pals

By Laura Garber

Dogs have a language all their own - communicating with each other and with us through body language. A verbal language like ours is foreign to them. So it's important for our relationship with them, that we understand what they are trying to communicate to us through their body language, and that we teach them what we are trying to communicate to them. This is why training is so important!

Our dogs have become full-fledged members of our families, snuggling in our beds and accompanying us on vacations. So, just like our human family members, we expect love and respect from our dogs, not rude, demanding behavior. Training is what shapes our canine companions into well-behaved family members. Further, training helps to decrease the frustrations that can occur due to poor communication of expectations and needs, for everyone involved! For shy, uncertain dogs, training can build confidence by making life more predictable. And finally, training is a great way to provide mental stimulation to our dogs. After all, it's hard work to learn new things!



Celebrate Learning through Training!

Just training a few key foundation skills will shape your dogs into a polite companion...



First, consider a sit to be your dog's way of saying "please". Before approaching him in his crate or inviting him onto the couch, before virtually anything your dog likes, wait for a sit. Soon he'll be offering it all the time!



The best part of spending time with a best friend is sharing quiet time together. So, definitely teach your dog to lie quietly beside you as you're seated in a chair, on the couch, or on a bench in the park.



A recall (come) is not only inspired by a highly prized reward, such as wonderful treats or a fun game of tug, but also by a genuine desire to be with his human partner. That said, there is no greater measure of the depth of a relationship than the strength of your dog's recall. So make training this one a high priority.



Regard loose-leash walking to be like holding hands - neither partner is tugging or pulling on the other. Though training this behavior takes patience and consistency, it is definitely worth the effort!



Finally, teach your dog patience through impulse control exercises. Have him remain seated when visitors approach, when he's getting leashed up or as his meal is delivered to him. Think of the many situations you might use a wait with your dog: when crossing the street, when going out the door... the possibilities are limitless!

For the complete article, go to http://mywoofgang.com/handouts/YPC/YPC_0408.pdf.



A behavior specialist and trainer living in southern NJ, Laura Garber, CPDT-KA, CC, FFCE, CBC, led behavior departments in animal shelters for over a decade. Her company, WoofGang, LLC (www.myWoofGang.com), is committed to deepening the bonds between dogs and their people through positive training and behavior modification techniques, and it is these same topics that inspire her writing.

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