



# The WoofGang Wag Rag



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Free

## ***New Year's Resolution – A Healthier Dog***

With the holidays behind us, we've all packed on a few extra pounds, even our beloved canine family members. So, as you determine your own New Year's resolutions, make sure that you consider making some healthy resolutions for him as well. Fortunately some of our everyday tricks make for a great workout and, given the cold and inclement weather outside, you'll be happy to hear that there's plenty you can do inside!

### **Indoor Activities**

**“Take a Bow” or “Downward Dog” (a “doga” pose):** The bow (front legs on the floor, standing on back legs) is a natural stretch, one that dogs will often do when they first rise from a nap. It's a great way to start out an exercise session. Some dogs will easily go into a bow position by luring as if for a “down” but doing it from a stand rather than from a sit. Other dogs go directly to the down, whether from sit or stand. If this is the case, then you'll have to shape the behavior. Starting from a stand, take the lure just a few inches below your dog's nose level, so that he has to tuck his neck down a bit to follow the lure. Say “Yes!” and treat. When this is repeatable, try moving your hand a few inches lower but still not entirely



*Trista does doga*

to the ground. Again your dog will hopefully tuck his head even lower but remain standing. If he flops down to the floor, then go back to your previous stage and inch down the hand signal more gradually. At each stage where he's tucking his head, maybe even bending the front legs, but remain on his back legs, say “Yes!” and give a treat. Even jackpot him for each new criteria he achieves. Before you know it, your dog will be bowing pretty as can be!

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## ***\$25 Intro Training Offer***

Get a 30-minute introductory basic training session for \$25 or apply it towards a 4-session package and get the 30-minute session FREE! (Offer details based on location.) Call WoofGang at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

## ***Did you know...***

Every interaction you have with your dog results in his learning something, whether you intentionally meant to train him *or not*? In a young dog, this is especially significant, since he has less of a history with you and so each interaction has a greater impact.

Call WoofGang at **646.345.5116** for help teaching your pup the *right stuff*!

## ***Growing the Bonds***

Our pets have become members of the family, working, playing, eating, and sleeping at our sides.

WoofGang can help you strengthen the bond with your canine family member. Call **646.345.5116** today!

## ***About the Trainer***

Dog trainer Laura Garber, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).

## ***Separation Distress***

Even when you're at home, it's important that your pup spends some time away from you. Otherwise she can develop separation distress when she's left alone.

WoofGang can guide you in helping your dog get more comfortable when she's without you. Get more info about building separation tolerance on [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com)

## A Healthier Dog (cont.)

### Variations on "Shake"

**"SHAKE":** Shake is more than just a trick. It helps your dog get more comfortable with people touching his paws. It's also a great strengthening exercise for your dog's shoulders. With your dog in a sit, hold a treat above his head and off to one side. By rocking him to the side, often he will pick up the opposite front paw to reach for it. Mark it with a "yes!", grab the paw with your other hand, and open the treat hand to reveal the treat. After he is consistently offering a paw, say the verbal command "shake" or "give paw" in front of it. By switching sides, you can train a "left paw" and "right paw" behavior.

**Strength training:** Once your dog has gained fluency, give the hand cue from higher up so that he has to lift his paw higher. Start with 5 repetitions each side and gradually increase to 20 repetitions, cuing from both the front and the side. Do this exercise every other day, with the day off in between to allow the muscles to mend.

**"HIGH 5":** Just change the position of your hand so that it's ready to receive a "high 5" when your dog does the "shake" behavior.

**"WAVE":** Now give the cue for "shake" but instead of keeping your hand stationary to receive your dog's paw, move it horizontally in front of him. This will cause him to lift his paw a little longer and perhaps even make another swipe to meet your hand. Especially reinforce the extra jabs in the air.

**Back Up:** Backing up is a great workout for the core and hind leg muscles. The easiest way to shape the back-up behavior is to hold a treat at the level of your dog's chest with you facing him and then walk towards him. Let him nibble the treat along the way to keep him interested and playing the game. As he becomes more fluent, you can reduce the physical cueing necessary to effect the behavior.

**Sit-Stand-Sit:** The rear legs are often the first to weaken as your dog ages, so it's important that you keep them strong. Moving your dog between a sit and stand can accomplish this. By holding a treat above your dog's nose and moving it back over his head, you effectively push his butt down into the sit position. Now put the treat at nose level and pull it forward just enough to lure your dog to a stand in a single step. You want him to be pushing off with his rear legs for maximum benefit and *not* pulling himself forward with his front legs. *Note:* If your dog uses more than a single step to rise to a stand, it's likely that he's used his front legs rather than his hind legs.

For a greater workout, do this while facing uphill. Alternatively, face sideways on the hill, first one way, then the other, to target each side individually. Start with 3 to 5 repetitions, then gradually increase to 10 or 20 repetitions. Do this exercise every other day, with the day off in between to allow the muscles to mend.

**Rollover:** For the benefit of working your dog's core muscles, do this exercise in both directions. Once in a "down" position, notice which hip your dog is settled on. Lure his nose around the opposite shoulder and, as he twists his neck, he will roll first flat, then on his back, and then onto the other side. If he has trouble doing the whole movement right away, reinforce approximations. For greater challenge, do several rollovers in one direction, then back in the other direction, or do the rollover up an incline.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## Ask Woofie...

*Woofie, we've been trying to walk our pup Grizzly but often he just sits there and looks at us. He won't move – any suggestions? We don't want to drag him along, and we want the walk to be fun. When he finally gets moving he loves it but initially he's not impressed... Thanks! Lynn*

**Hiya, Lynn!** The most common mistake people make when trying to tempt a stalled dog is to lure the dog forward with a treat – but that's bribery! In fact, it is only reinforcing more stalling behavior. Instead, first try to use happy, repetitive noises and thigh slaps to excite some forward movement. If this doesn't work, then use a time-out, stepping on the leash and turning your back on Grizzly. After 15 seconds or so, say, "OK, let's go!" and start forward. Some dogs will forget why they stopped in the first place. Once Grizzly starts to move forward, use happy chatter and highly rewarding treats to encourage and reinforce walking behavior. Gradually you'll be able to fade the reinforcements, as you will have built good walking habit, but when you first start out, be generous!

\* *Note:* Try not to pull on leash, especially from the front – this often causes the stalling behavior for a dog not used to the feel of the leash yet.

*Hope that helps! Happy training!*

Woofie



*Dre is for Dashing, Red Nose (this is what some breed fanciers would call him), and Energy. This handsome boy is on the larger side of medium and loves regular exercise and obedience training. He's at the Liberty Humane Society waiting for his forever family.*