

Teaching Your Dog Basic Commands

By Sherry Woodard

Teaching a dog to respond to basic commands, using small food treats as a lure, is easy, fun and gives fast results. Here's how to do it:



Teaching “Sit”

Hold a treat in front of the dog's nose, just out of the dog's reach. Raise the treat toward the top of the dog's head. When the dog's head follows the treat up, the dog's rear end will go down. When the dog's rear is solidly on the floor, give the dog the treat and praise her. If the dog jumps up rather than sits, you are holding the treat too high. If the dog backs up, try teaching the command with a wall behind the dog.



Teaching “Down”

Start with the dog sitting in front of you. Hold a treat near his face, then move the treat down toward the floor. Wait a moment, holding the treat close in to the dog's body, then move the treat slowly away from the dog. Be patient with this exercise – it may not work perfectly the first time. If the dog gets up instead of laying down, try again. Once the dog lays down, praise him and give him the treat.

Teaching “Stand”

Start with the dog sitting in front of you. Slowly move the treat toward your body and take one step back. As the dog follows the treat, she will stand up. Give her the treat as soon as she is standing.

Teaching “Sit” from “Down”

Start with the dog laying down. Hold a treat in front of the dog’s nose, keeping the treat close to his nose. Slowly raise the treat up over his head. As he follows the treat, he will move into a sit. Give him the treat as soon as he is sitting.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.

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