

Lesson 2: Teaching Your Dog to Sit



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Even if your dog already knows how to sit on verbal command, please don't skip this lesson. We promise she'll begin to learn something new!

The method you'll use to teach your dog to sit is known as the "lure and reward" method. You'll lure your dog into a sitting position, then immediately reward her. It's a popular method because it's effective, easy for you to do, and easy for your dog to learn.

A great "side-effect" of this method is that it allows a natural motion to become a visual cue... a form of sign language for your dog. This is so cool! Dogs are very visual and they often respond to body motions better than they do to sounds. (You'll need to keep this in mind as sometimes it can work against you: to your dog, your voice may be saying one thing while your body language is saying the opposite. In dog communication, body language trumps verbal language every time. We'll cover this in more detail later.) Imagine being able to use hand signals as commands for your dog when you're on the phone, or too far away for your dog to hear you. It's definitely something worth pursuing.

So let's get on with the lesson.

Lesson 2: Teaching Your Dog to Sit

Read this lesson first, and then practice it with your dog.

1. Load up your pocket (or a bag or pouch) with treats.
2. Take your dog to an area where there won't be a lot of distractions.
3. While your dog is standing, put a treat in your hand, and move your hand to within an inch or so of your dog's nose. Make sure she smells the treat hidden in your hand and is focusing her attention on it.
4. Move your hand slowly backward, about an inch over her head, between her ears, toward her tail. Keep your hand low over her head so she doesn't try to leap up to get the treat.
5. As your dog watches your hand with the treat move just above her head, she will raise her chin up—and her butt will plop down into a sitting position. When that happens, immediately give her the treat and say "Good!"
6. Now move a few steps away. Get your dog to stand and follow you.
7. Repeat Steps 3, 4 and 5.
8. Did you notice you haven't told her to "Sit" yet? Don't say that until you can get her to sit consistently by moving your treat-filled hand over her head, toward her tail. Once you're sure she's going to do this properly the next time you do that, say "Sit" a split second before you start moving your hand. When she sits, immediately reward her with the treat and "Good!"
9. Repeat this process five times, saying "Sit" just before she does so.

If your dog doesn't do what you want

If your dog backs up instead of sitting down as you move your treat-filled hand over her head and toward her tail, position her so that she's facing out of a corner and cannot back up without hitting the wall.

This Week's Homework

Practice this lesson two or three times each day during the week. Vary the time of day and location.

Do no more than five repetitions during each lesson. Reduce the number of repetitions as your dog learns... eventually asking her to sit just once, two or three times a day.

Dogs tend to learn to sit quickly, and repeating the lesson too often will only make them bored (remember, we don't want bored students).

After a few of days of successful "Sit" practice, start to focus a bit on your hand movement. As you move your treat-filled hand over your dog's head and toward her tail, begin to emphasize an upward sweep of your hand... less over her head, more in an upward curve toward your body. (Don't go too far with this just yet; we'll continue working on it in next week's lesson.)

In Addition to Practicing This Lesson...

- **Reinforce Lesson 1, Teaching Your Dog Her Name:** Continue teaching your dog her name (as you learned last week) at various times throughout the week. Use a training area that is slightly more distracting than last week. Remember to say your dog's name only once, and wait for her to respond before giving the rewards.
- **Have fun playing with your dog!** Don't focus all your time together on training. Spend lots of quality time just enjoying each other's company.

Coming up next week: Lesson 3, Teaching Your Dog to Come When Called.