



## Training Tips

**Consistency** – In dog training, we must *be consistent*. We must provide the dog with an easily recognizable “pattern” in our behaviors before we can expect him to understand us. We must always react the same to his behavior. For example, if the rule is “no jumping up on people,” you must be sure no one is rewarding the dog by paying attention to him (petting him, talking to him, etc.) when he jumps up. Giving attention for this bad behavior is positive reinforcement and will make the dog more likely to jump in the future! You must consistently correct or ignore the dog when he jumps to effectively teach him not to jump.

**Daily Practice** – It is important to practice *each day*, even if it is only for a couple of minutes. It is recommended to practice 15-20 minutes a day, but break it up into short sessions (maybe 5 minutes each or so). And remember that if you are short on time, 2 minutes are better than no minutes! A dog makes progress if you practice just 2 minutes a day (sometimes surprising progress), but he goes downhill and forgets what he learned if you do not practice at all. To take advantage of any training course, you must practice in order to be proficient. Much of the success of any program depends on you.

**Keep it Positive** – Keep the training upbeat so that the dog is motivated. If he is bored, he will perform poorly. *Consider following each practice session with 5 minutes of playtime*. He will realize that if he does well, the playtime is soon to follow and eventually, the distinction between obedience practice and playtime will blur. He will begin to love obedience work as much as playtime!

**Know When To Quit** – If the dog or you are not enjoying the training, quit! You can always come back to it later. It is more important to keep the training positive than it is to “get results.”

**Reward The Right Behavior** – Pay attention to exactly *what* behavior you are rewarding. Never, never reward what you did not ask for! For example, if you are practicing sit stay and the dog stays, but drops “down,” there should be *no reward*. Remember, we are training obedience – we are teaching the dog to listen and obey. We did not ask for down, so do not reward it. This would be confusing to the dog and will undermine all your training efforts.

**Random Reinforcement** – Stop rewarding the dog with treats every time. Rather, reward based on her performance. If the dog executes the command poorly (i.e., slowly, poor effort, sloppy, etc.) then perhaps just a “good girl” will do. Only an above average attempt warrants a treat. And when the dog performs spectacularly, reward with the “jackpot” – several treats! This “pay for performance” approach will hone your dog’s skills, making her always seek improvement.

**Challenge The Dog** – Think of ways to test the dog’s abilities in new ways and new variations of the exercises. Dogs have a tendency to get into a “groove” where they are just responding because they know that particular exercise (vs. responding because they truly understand the command). Push the dog’s limits so that she may understand she needs to listen in *all* circumstances, not just during a familiar exercise.

By training your dog, you can help prevent tragedy and develop a better relationship with him. Keep in mind, however, that even an educated dog needs supervision, instruction and boundaries – sometimes even physical boundaries. Allowing your dog, no matter how educated he may be, to walk, run or roam outside of a fenced area or off of a leash, is putting him in danger.