



Three Key Training Exercises for a Well-Mannered Dog

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Just about everyone would like to have a polite, well mannered dog. Such dogs are a pleasure to take with you into the community, greet guests well and make their owners feel proud! Here are three key training exercises that you can practice with your dog to teach him to be more polite.

1. **Do something to get something.** Your dog should learn that he gets what he wants only when he does what you want. Teach your dog to sit or down before he can have access to ANYTHING. Here are some examples of rewards you can provide after your dog offers you a sit or a down: a toy being thrown, freedom from his crate, opening a baby gate, going through a door, receiving meals and treats, getting his leash put on to go for a walk, etc. Don't make him comply with your command (e.g., pushing his butt down to force him to sit.) Allow him to experience the consequence of what happens if he doesn't listen. The consequence for NOT complying with a command should be the loss of the thing he was expecting. This means that the door doesn't open, the toy doesn't get thrown, dinner is delayed, etc. Wait a minute or two and then try again.
2. **Wait for permission.** Your dog should learn to wait for your permission before doing things he wants. This is a variation of doing something to get something but instead of simply sitting he has to wait until you tell him it is OK to do it. This is more of an impulse control exercise and is a great way to create a well mannered dog. A great example is to require your dog to settle at your side and wait for your permission before greeting a person or another dog. In this example, the consequence is that he doesn't get to greet the person or the dog UNTIL he waits for your permission. This takes some training and patience. With your dog on his leash, gently but purposefully pull back on his leash to pull him into the position by your side. It doesn't matter if he is sitting, standing, downing, etc. He just needs to hang out at your side. Once he is by your side, loosen the tension on the leash; do not keep the leash tight. If he leaves that position, gently but purposefully pull him back into position and again release the leash tension. Continue doing that until he stays at your side with the leash loose. Don't tell him to stay or reprimand him for moving out of position. Just work the exercise by pulling him back and releasing the tension of the leash. When he is in this position by your side, you may tell him OK and take a step toward the person so he can greet. If he jumps up on the person – pull him back into a settled position and repeat the process until he is successful. He should learn that the quicker he waits for your permission – the quicker he gets to greet the dog or person.
3. **Attention isn't always available.** Let's face it – dogs make us feel good about ourselves. They are always happy to see us and they are often asking for affection or attention from us. Not much is better for the ego than an affectionate dog! Polite or well mannered dogs aren't demanding or overly pushy in asking for attention from humans. Try this training protocol. When your dog asks for attention you should respond RANDOMLY one of the following three ways:

- a. Ask him to sit or down before giving him attention. This is the same as in the first exercise – do something to get something. If he doesn't sit, he doesn't get your attention.
- b. Another way to respond is to go ahead and give him the attention, but be brief about it and then be dismissive when you are finished. When he asks for attention, give him some good love, but only for about 5 to 10 seconds. Then go back to what you were doing and do not give him any more attention.
- c. Finally, at times, you should just be too busy to give your dog the attention he wants. Simply ignore his requests as if it didn't even happen. He should not be able to predict what your response will be when he asks for attention, rather he should learn that he gets what you give him and being demanding or overly pushy *never* gets him what he wants.

By responding randomly, you are still providing your dog with affection, but are also teaching him there are times when being pushy doesn't get him what he wants.

These three exercises are very effective for teaching your dog to be polite and well mannered and to have better impulse control about getting what he wants. Please contact us for additional information in carrying out these exercises as well as for help when things don't work as well as they should. Sometimes training exercises need to be broken into smaller tasks to make your dog successful.