

Some dogs are active in such dog sports as Agility, Flyball, Tracking, etc, while others never venture beyond their front yard. The one thing that they all have in common is that they live in our homes. Dogs who know some basic manners are easier to live with. In teaching these behaviors, you are “installing” default actions designed to ensure good manners in specific situations.

Dogs that are unable to participate in other activities due to issues such as reactivity, fears, or even health problems would be able to achieve this badge. This is an ideal merit badge for troops to work on outside of camp. The training doesn't require anything special in terms of equipment. Troop members could elect to have a one-day “blitz” type activity at which members would train their dogs and be checked off on all exercises, or have check offs on an ongoing basis at meetings/outings. Certificates may be awarded to those dogs that had not yet achieved Dog Scout status. The end result will be that members will have a goal to work towards and be more inclined to train their dogs. The troop in general will benefit from the dogs' improved manners as well.

Note: This hand out describes how to train these behaviors using Operant Conditioning (clicker training) It assumes that you are familiar with the concepts of reward markers and reinforcement theory. The length of time/number of training sessions it will take for your dog to master each of these behaviors is dependent on many factors. Proceed at a pace appropriate for your dog.

THE BEHAVIORS:

I. GO TO PLACE

Behavior: go to a designated area such as a rug or towel and lie down and wait until given further instructions

This behavior is useful when you want to send your dog to a “safe” place, such as when a delivery person is at the door, or when you have visitors, or when you just want your dog to “take a break” away from you. It also teaches your dog to work at a distance away from you. The “place” is portable, so it can also be used away from home as a familiar and safe area to send your dog to in a new location such as a hotel room.

Training

Use a throw rug, towel or dog bed as the designated “place”. With this behavior, you are basically teaching your dog to “target” a location with its body. The rug is your dog's target.

Place the rug on the floor, stand beside it, and toss a few treats onto it. Give the cue “place” or “go to.... (your bed, blanket, etc)” When your dog steps on the rug to get the treats, mark/treat. Repeat this sequence several times. At this point your dog may be reluctant to step OFF the rug. After all, that's where the treats are! If that is the case, lure your dog towards you with a treat, feed them when they step off the rug, and wait for them to step back onto the rug, then mark/treat.

When your dog begins to rush towards the rug in anticipation of the mark/ treat, it's time to begin shaping the dog to lie on the rug. Using the treat as a lure, give the cue, “go to your

DOG MANNERS

place” and then guide the dog to step onto the rug and lure them into lying down, and mark/treat when they do so. Repeat the luring several times. Your dog should begin to lie down more quickly, and may even begin to offer the behavior without the luring.

If your dog isn't offering the behavior yet, no problem! Just continue guiding your dog into the desired position. He'll figure it out.

Once your dog is going to the rug and lying down on cue when you are standing close to it, begin to increase the distance between yourself and the rug, so that your dog has to go farther to get to the “place”. Also, move the rug to different locations so that your dog understands that is the rug itself that is the “place”, not a specific location in a room. Avoid rewarding your dog for “almost” doing the behavior, for example, lying down with only one or two feet on the rug, or only it's rear end on the rug. Hold out until your dog's whole body is on the rug or use your no-reward marker (“too bad”) to tell your dog to try again, he's not quite there.

It is important that your dog learn to wait at it's place until released, so once your dog has learned to “go to place” on cue, add a release word that tells your dog that they are free to leave the area. Some people use “okay” or “free”. To teach this cue, ask for the “place” behavior, mark /treat the behavior when it is offered, then say your release word and walk away and ignore your dog for several seconds. It will learn that the release word means that the opportunity for interaction and reinforcement for that behavior has passed.

While working on the “place” behavior, treats should be delivered to the dog only while he/she is lying on the rug. Keep in mind that dogs gravitate to where the rewards are. You are teaching your dog that the “place” is a great place to be, because that's where the goodies are!

II. SAY HI

Behavior: sit to greet someone

This behavior prevents your dog from jumping up on people by installing an alternative behavior that will become an automatic greeting behavior if practiced enough.

Training

Enlist a helper with lots of tasty treats. You will be holding your dog's leash. The helper will stand in one place while you and your dog walk towards them. You will cue your dog to “go say hi” and the helper will use the treats lure the dog into a sit (the helper will not ask the dog to sit), and give treats while the dog is sitting. The helper may also pet and praise the dog, but only when they are seated and remaining calm. If the dog jumps up on the helper or is over exuberant, the helper will turn their back and walk away, and you will turn and walk a few steps in the opposite direction with your dog. The helper will then stop and turn around to face you and your dog, and you can again approach them, giving your dog the cue to “go say hi” Your job as a handler is just to hold onto your dog, while the helper controls the opportunity for rewards. The key is that the dog is only allowed to interact with people when he is sitting calmly. This exercise will need to be repeated in different locations with different sizes, ages and numbers of people.

For some dogs, the opportunity to interact with people is more rewarding than food. The reason for using treats is to get the dog into the sitting position. If the dog is offering the “sit”

DOG MANNERS

behavior from the beginning or if the treats get the dog too excited to sit still, you can eliminate them, and rely on the helper's attention as the reward. The key point is that the dog ONLY gets the opportunity to interact with the helper if he (the dog, NOT the helper!) has his butt parked on the floor.

III. SETTLE

Behavior: dog will lie on side on cue

This behavior facilitates physical exam, handling, grooming, nail clipping. Your veterinarian or groomer will thank you for it!

Training

Begin with your dog sitting. Use your food treat as a lure, placing it at your dog's nose and guiding him/her into the down position. When the dog's elbows touch the ground, keep the treat close to his nose, and bring it slowly back along his jaw line towards his ear. This will usually cause him to lean back slightly, changing his center of gravity so that he will tend to rock onto one hip or go onto his side. The key to getting the behavior is to move your hand very slowly. Sometimes changing your hand position slightly so it is aimed more towards the dog's shoulder or back will cause him to rock backwards more easily. You will need to experiment to see which hand position works best to get your dog to rock backwards.

Some dogs are reluctant to lie fully on their side, especially when someone is leaning over them. In that case you may have to "shape" the behavior in slow steps. First mark and treat for the dog lying on one hip, then mark/treat only when his shoulder is almost touching the floor, then only mark and treat when his shoulder is actually in contact with the floor.

Once your dog is going easily into the settle position with luring, you can begin to give the cue "settle" before you begin to lure him into position.

For dogs that are reluctant to lie on their side using luring, it is also possible to "capture" the behavior by anticipating the times when he is likely to lie on his side on his own, perhaps after a long walk or at bedtime. At those times, watch for your dog to lie on his side on his own, then mark the behavior with a clicker or verbal RM and giving him a treat. After a few times of capturing the behavior, he will begin to realize that he can earn rewards by offering it. Once he begins to offer the behavior, you can start using the cue to ask for the behavior when it is likely to occur, and again mark/treat.

When you have the dog offering the behavior on cue, wait a few seconds before marking/treating so that the dog learns that he must remain in the position in order to get the treat. Also, touch your dog on various parts of his body so that he gets comfortable with being handled while lying on his side. It's also a good time for quiet praise and a belly rub. Gradually increase the length of time you expect him to remain in that position, being generous with your rewards.

The settle can be a great "trick" if you add a cue like "naptime" or "go night-night"

DOG MANNERS

IV. STAND

Behavior: stand in place

This behavior makes it easier to groom your dog and for physical examination.

Training

Begin with your dog in a sit. With treats in your hand, lure the dog into the stand position by pulling the treats *slightly* away from his nose in a horizontal line. Your dog will lift his rear to get to the treat. (This is known as a “kick-back” stand. The goal is get the dog to lift his rear without moving his front legs. If the dog begins to move his front feet, decrease the distance you are moving your hand and/or place your foot directly in front of his front paws to prevent him from walking forward) As soon as your dog lifts his rear end, mark/treat. Repeat this several times, until he is standing up in anticipation of your hand movement. At this point, add the cue “stand” before moving your hand to lure him into position. Mark/treat when you get the behavior. When he is responding to the verbal cue, eliminate the treats in your hand. Place your closed fist at your dog’s nose, give the verbal cue, then open your hand and spread your fingers and move your hand *slightly* away from your dog’s nose. If he stands, mark the behavior, and deliver the treat from your bait bag or pocket. If he doesn’t respond to the verbal cue/hand signal, go back to verbal cue and luring a few more times.

When your dog is reliably offering the behavior on cue, vary the length of time he must wait before the mark/treat. This behavior will be used during grooming and physical exam, so begin to touch your dog, brush his coat, etc, briefly before you mark/treat. Vary the amount of handling he receives before the mark/treat so that he learns to accept the handling as part of the “stand” behavior.

V. TARGET HAND

Behavior: touch nose to trainer’s fist

This behavior provides a means for moving your dog from one location to another without having to physically control him by pulling on the leash/collar or manipulating his body. The goal is to train your dog to follow your hand on cue. This behavior comes in handy for the times when you need to get your dog to stand in a certain location, such as on the scale at the vet’s office.

Training

Place a small treat between the 2nd and 3rd fingers of your closed hand. Present your fist to the dog’s mouth, and allow him to take the treat by opening your fingers slightly. Repeat this several times, until he begins to move his muzzle towards your fist in anticipation of receiving a treat. Then present your treatless fist to his nose, give the cue “touch” and mark/treat if he touches his nose to your fist. If he doesn’t attempt to “bump” your fist with his nose, repeat the process with the treat between your fingers a few more times, until he is more interested in sniffing your fist.

When your dog begins to offer “nose bumps” to your fist on cue, begin moving your fist slightly so that he has to take a step or two to reach your fist. Mark/treat any attempts at nose bumps. Gradually increase the distance he must travel to get to your fist and sometime require that he walk a considerable distance and/or turn in different directions to follow your hand.

DOG MANNERS

VI. WAIT

Behavior: remain in area; do not go beyond “threshold” until released
This behavior helps to prevent your dog from bolting through doorways, gates, jumping out of vehicle, etc.

Training

Use chairs or cones to create an opening wide enough for you and your dog to walk through. (See illustrations: X’s represent cones or chairs, dotted line represents the threshold the dog may not cross, paw prints represents dog, shoeprints represents handler)

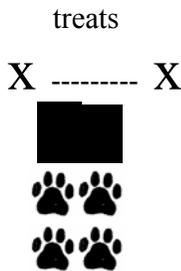


illustration #1



illustration #2

Stand with your dog on leash on one side of the cones/chairs with your body blocking the opening. (illustration #1) Begin by tossing treats onto the floor near your dog, and give him the cue to “get it”. After he has eaten a few treats, toss a treat through the opening and immediately say, “wait”. If your dog tries to go for the treat, stand in front of the opening so that you are using your body to prevent your dog from getting to the treat. (avoid using your leash to “steer” your dog, and do not give any verbal cues after you’ve told your dog to wait) You may need to take a step or two towards him to get him to back away from you. Keep the leash short enough so that your dog doesn’t try to go around the cones/chairs to get to the treat, he’ll probably try it at least once! Toss a few more treats on your dog’s side of the opening, and give him the cue to “get it”. Then, again toss a treat through the opening and give the cue “wait” and use your legs/body to block the opening again if necessary. You are teaching the dog that he is allowed to take the treats and move around freely on HIS side of the opening, but that he may not cross over the threshold to get to the treats on the other side

After a few trials, your dog should begin to back off from the opening when you give the “wait” cue. Once you see him making the choice not to go through the doorway, you can tell him “okay”, step aside, and allow him to go through the opening to get to the treat.

(illustration #2) Repeat this sequence a number of times, until he is consistently waiting when you cue him to do so.

At this point you are ready to begin to decrease the amount of blocking you are doing with your body when you toss the treat through the open space. Stand slightly to one side of the opening. When you toss the treat and say, “wait”, be prepared to step back into the space if necessary to prevent your dog from getting to the treat. Eventually you will be able to stand to the side of the open area, toss a treat, and tell your dog to wait, and he will wait until you

DOG MANNERS

release him to go through the opening to get the treats. You will need to practice this behavior at different locations so that your dog begins to generalize the “wait” behavior to gates, doorways, etc.

VII. EXCUSE ME

Behavior: Dog will step out of your way when asked to do so.

This behavior is convenient for those times when your dog is lying in the middle of a hallway and you are unable to get past without tripping over him, or when he’s crowding you in an effort to get your attention, treats, etc.

Training

An ideal place to begin this training is in a narrow hallway. Begin with the dog standing in front of you, say, “excuse me” and take a step or two towards the dog. You are not kicking, shoving or pushing your dog, but rather using your dog’s awareness of personal space to get him to move away from you. Some dogs are less sensitive to personal space issues, and you may need to actually “bump” your dog with your leg or knee to get them to move away from you. As soon as your dog exhibits body movement away from you, mark and treat. If your dog seems oblivious to your body movements, you may try holding a treat at his nose, pushing your hand towards his nose/face as you step towards him, and mark/treat when he shifts his body weight away from you. Repeat this sequence until your dog is clearly moving away from you when you give the cue. You will then need to help your dog to generalize this behavior by training in different locations. The ultimate behavior is that your dog will move away from you when you give the “excuse me” cue.

VIII. Off

Behavior: dog will get off the couch, bed, etc when cued to do so.

Training

Lure or cue your dog to jump up on a raised surface such as a couch or bed (if they’re not lounging there already!) Give the cue “off” and lure the dog onto the floor/ground. Mark and treat when his feet hit the floor. Continue the sequence several times, then try giving the verbal cue without the lure. When your dog jumps off the bed, mark/treat. He’s got it!

If your dog doesn’t respond to the verbal cue, try cueing and luring a few more times, then test again by giving only the verbal cue. As with any behavior, you’ll need to practice in different locations. Give a valuable reward and lots of praise for complying with your request.

The off cue can also be used to ask your dog to remove his front feet from a location such as the kitchen countertop, etc.