

It's A Dog's World™

K - 9 A C A D E M Y

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PUPPY KINDERGARTEN WEEK 4

This week our goal is to teach your puppy to lay down on command and come when called. We will also discuss the importance of proper diet and exercise for your puppy and how to handle interaction between puppies and children.

DOWN

You are going to start out with your dog in the "sit" command. You may want to have two treats in your hand, one to give for the sit and one to give for the down. Once your dog is sitting, take your second treat and place it on the tip of your dog's nose. At the same time, you are going to be bent down on your dog's right side. Place your left hand, with the leash in it, gently upon the dog's withers (shoulder blades). Do not push down on the withers (shoulders). With the treat on the tip of the dog's nose, draw the treat straight down to the ground in between the dog's feet and give the command "down". It is important that the dog is following the treat. As the dog is following the treat, bring the treat straight out across the ground (you are making an "L" shape with the treat). It is important not to pull the treat straight out, as this will bring your dog into the stand position. Once your dog is lying down, release the treat while saying, "good down!" Before moving your hand away, give your release word.

The hand signal for down is a palm to the ground as if you are pushing the dog's head toward the ground. Take your hand all the way down to the ground. Start using the hand signal after the third or fourth day.

For the rest of the week, continue working on the down command in the same fashion as sit. Don't be disheartened if your dog appears to not want to perform "down" at first. This is the command that is least liked by some dogs, particularly if they are dominant, as it is a submissive posture.

COME

The most important thing about teaching your dog to come when called is to ALWAYS reward your dog when it comes to you. Don't ever call your puppy to you in a negative tone of voice or for the purpose of punishing it for inappropriate behavior. Doing so will only teach your puppy that coming to you is something negative. Remember to keep your voice playful and exciting so your puppy will think that coming to you is the best thing in the world.

With your dog at the end of the leash, run backwards while calling the dog's name. Have a treat in your right hand. When you come to a stop, have the dog sit in front of you and give the dog the treat, while saying, "Good come!" Before allowing your dog to get up, be sure to give him or her the release word. The hand signal for come is your right arm straight out away from your body, bend your arm at the elbow and bring your palm to your chest.

DIET

A healthy diet is essential to having a healthy dog. With dozens of products on the market, it is important to provide your dog with a premium quality food rich in meat protein and low on grain fillers. The more grain in your dog's food, the more food you will need to feed your dog in order to give him the same amount of nutrition he would get from a more expensive "premium" food. Better quality dog foods will also mean smaller bowel movements to clean up.

Generally, veterinarians recommend feeding your dog hard, dry food which helps minimize tartar buildup on your dog's teeth. However, if your dog is a picky eater, you may wish to mix a small amount of canned food in with the dry food to stimulate your dog's appetite.

Instead of "free-feeding" your dog with a huge bowl of food that he can nibble on all day, try feeding your dog regularly scheduled meals and picking up whatever food is left after about 15 minutes. Not only will this assist in housebreaking your dog, but it may reduce picky eating behavior because the dog learns that if he doesn't eat the food when it's put down, he will have to go hungry until the next meal. Avoid feeding your dog table scraps or too many treats. Most human food is too high in fat and preservatives and can lead to canine obesity.

EXERCISE

If you don't meet your dog's needs successfully, your dog may act out in an inappropriate or destructive manner. Keep in mind that dogs will use their paws or mouth to release boredom or frustration. If you meet your dog's needs successfully, your dog's frustration or boredom level will be eliminated:

Again, you may see destructive behaviors due to boredom. If your dog has an excess of pent up energy, he or she may release it by chewing up the hose or other objects, barking unnecessarily, or digging up your backyard. Most adult dogs need thirty minutes of structured cardiovascular exercise five times a week. Despite what most owners think, running around in the backyard during the day does not provide enough exercise for your dog. Younger puppies will probably not be ready for such long exercise periods, but it is important that they go on regular walks or have regular 10 to 15 minute exercise periods spread throughout the day.

Structured exercise consists of brisk walking, running or ball chasing. Some active dog breeds may require even longer exercise periods. As your puppy gets older gradually increase the walks to at least 20 to 30 minutes. Be aware, that until your puppy is at least 4 months old and has completed all of his/her series of vaccinations, it is important that you prevent your puppy from sniffing another dog's droppings or interacting with unknown dogs that may not be vaccinated.

HOMEWORK

This week, continue practicing all of the behaviors we have learned so far. Be sure to practice in a variety of locations and places, including the front and backyards, a park, school, etc. Do not use food lures, except for the "Down" & "Come" command. You should also try to introduce your puppy to as many new controlled environments and situations as possible. Remember to keep training sessions short – no more than 5 to 10 minutes. Try to do 3 to 4 training sessions a day. Remember to reward your puppy with verbal praise and affection for every correct response and keep your sessions positive and fun!