

# It's a Dog's World™

K - 9 A C A D E M Y

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## GROUP CLASS ORIENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

To have the dog of your dreams, there are three essential stages needed to develop a well-behaved pet. First, obedience training is the foundation. Without a solid foundation in obedience, your dog will not understand discipline, what you are trying to communicate to him or what is expected of him. Second, dogs are creatures of habit, so with constant and consistent repetition and reinforcement, your dog will develop an ingrained habit for each obedience behavior you introduce. Third, you must wait for nature to take its course and allow your dog to mature. If you have done the first two stages well, you will have a well-mannered pet in no time!

### PHILOSOPHY

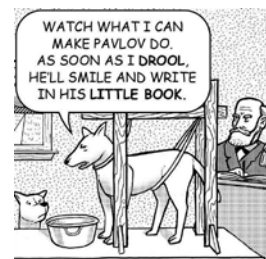
There are almost as many philosophies about dog training as there are dog trainers. Originally, training was patterned after the type of training that came out of World War II K9 training. This is typically known as “compulsion” training and involves more forceful techniques of training.

The training pendulum swung to the complete opposite side of the spectrum with the introduction of what is sometimes referenced as “pure positive” training. This involves the continued use of food rewards in perpetuity. There are no consequences if the dog does not perform the requested behavior. Instead, the handler continues to coax the desired behavior out of the dog with treat rewards. Eventually, a smart dog will learn to only perform an obedience command if you have a treat in your hands – in essence, a bribe for good behavior.

The style of training that we have found most effective falls somewhere in between the previous two training methods and is sometimes referred to as “luring”. About 90% of dogs are motivated by food. With luring, you will initially be using treats to teach your dog new behaviors by having your dog follow the treat with his or her nose into the desired position. There is no pushing, pulling or positioning on your part. This helps the dog problem-solve what it is you are asking him to do. Once your dog learns the behavior and starts offering the correct response to your verbal or visual cue, we will teach you how to wean your dog from the treats through the introduction of mild reinforcement techniques in order to obtain a consistent and reliable response.

### REWARDS

You're probably familiar with the term “Pavlov's dogs”. Basically, Dr. Pavlov taught dogs to salivate to the sound of a bell. He did this by ringing a bell and at the same time, showing the dog a piece of food. Eventually, he was able to remove the food from the equation so that the bell was enough to trigger the dog's response. That is essentially what we will be doing. The only difference is we will be teaching your dog obedience behaviors instead of drooling on cue.



It is important to understand that dogs live and learn “in the moment”. This means that any rewards or corrections be given almost immediately after you witness the behavior. Waiting even as short a period as a couple of seconds before you reward can make the difference between your dog understanding what you want or creating confusion and misunderstanding. It is also imperative that if you interrupt or correct a dog for unwanted behavior, you **MUST** demonstrate or provide your dog with the appropriate alternative behavior. If you don’t, your dog will just keep repeating the behaviors you don’t like because he or she doesn’t know any better.

Successful training requires you to develop a reward system for your dog. A reward could be tactile praise (touch), verbal praise, toys, or treats. The majority of dogs are motivated to work for food and food is the easiest method of luring your dog into doing certain behaviors (if your dog is not food motivated, try to see what else gets your dog excited - toys, verbal or physical praise, etc.). You may have to try a variety of treats to see what really motivates your dog. Treat rewards that work well for your dog in a low distraction environment, like your home, may not work as well in a higher distraction area, like a park or in training class. Keep in mind, too, that some dogs will get bored with one particular treat, so think about bringing a couple of types with you and “mix it up”.

The size of your treat should be about the size of your pinky fingernail. More palatable treats are ones that are usually of the soft/moist variety. In addition to the wide range of commercially produced “training treats” available in pet stores, other good examples of treats might be string cheese, turkey hot dogs, boiled or rinsed canned chicken, etc. You can even use pieces of raw fruit (apples, carrots) or veggies (green beans). A less desirable type of treat would be something like a hard, crunchy dog biscuit (unless it’s something your dog would do back flips for). Anything that takes too much time for your dog to chew is not recommended because you will lose your training momentum.

Also, it’s usually best if you try to avoid training your dog immediately after he eats a main meal. If your dog is hungry, he or she is obviously going to be more interested in the treats you are offering

## **RELEASE WORD**

Before starting, pick a word to use to release your dog from a command. It is similar to “at ease” for a soldier. Once you have given the release command, it signifies to your dog that he or she has completed the command to your satisfaction and is now free to get up out of the command. Don’t choose a release word that you use in your every day language. Examples of good release words are: break, release, free, etc. Stay clear of using the word, “ok”. Later in the training the only things that can release your dog from an obedience command is the Release Word, the Recall (come) command, and the “Heel” or “Let’s go” command.

## **HAND SIGNALS**

Despite what we may think, dogs actually communicate with each other through a complex form of body language. As a result, dogs frequently respond more quickly to visual cues than to our verbal commands. Visual cues are also helpful if your dog is sitting on the other side of a sliding glass door, in situations where you may not want to interrupt a conversation to verbalize a command, or in the event that your dog loses his or her hearing as they age.

We will be teaching a variety of AKC® recognized hand signals to go along with most of time you give the verbal cue. In no time, you should see that your dog is successfully responding to just the hand signal.

## TRAINING EQUIPMENT

In addition to a good supply of treats, there will be some equipment that you will need to provide and use throughout this course. This includes:

- ♦ A 6-foot leather or nylon leash (no chain, rope or retractable leashes, please)
- ♦ A Training collar - preferably a Gentle Leader® head collar or a Martingale/Check Choke. Training collars may be worn in addition to your dog's buckle/ID collar.



Gentle Leader™ Head Halter



Martingale/Check Choke

- ♦ A Treat pouch.
- ♦ A 15' to 30' Long Line leash (cotton or nylon webbed)
- ♦ Dog waste clean-up bags

You will also need to wear proper attire when working with your dog. We usually recommend comfortable clothing with tennis shoes. Based on weather conditions, you may want to wear layers.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

Most young dogs will start exhibiting bad behaviors such as digging, chewing, biting, barking or jumping by the age of four months. Don't encourage or let your dog get away with any of these bad behaviors for a second. They will get confused if you let them do it at 8-weeks of age, but suddenly two months later, it is no longer acceptable.

There are eight needs to be aware of when raising a dog. Keep in mind that dogs will use their paws or their mouths to seek attention or release pent-up energy, and to relieve boredom or frustration. If you meet all of your dog's needs successfully, your dog's destructive and unwanted behaviors will be extinguished. Your dog's needs consist of:

1. **Nutrition.** Feed your dog a healthy diet. Steer clear of "bargain-brand" dog foods. Most use grain fillers, consisting mostly of wheat, corn or rye that may not only trigger food-related allergies in your dog, but may also cause your dog to have larger and more frequent bowel movements. You can find a quality dog food in any pet store or feed store. If your dog is fed a nutritious diet, your dog will be more focused and alert. It is similar to sending your child to school without a good breakfast. They will not be attentive and do well in class. An added benefit to a healthy diet is your dog will have a healthier and shinier coat with less shedding.
2. **Leadership.** Provide your dog with strong and fair leadership. Dogs are pack animals. In the pack there is the alpha figure all the way down to the omega. If you do not establish rules and boundaries for your dog, your dog will feel the need to take the leadership position. This can cause stress and anxiety for most dogs. Your dog will be much happier and well-adjusted if you step up to the plate and take the leadership position!

3. **Health.** Good health speaks for itself. Your dog will have difficulties learning if he/she is experiencing health issues, such as an ear infection, flea and tick infestation or intestinal worms. Be sure to look into any inherited problems that run in your dog's breed and have your vet check for them. For example, large dogs are more likely to have hip and elbow dysplasia, while small dogs can have knee problems. Speak to your vet about products that repel & kill fleas, ticks and other parasites. Keep your dog up-to-date on vaccines. As part of class participation, your dog is required to be current on vaccinations for Rabies, Distemper and Parvo, as well as Bordetella. Boosters for most of these vaccines are typically required to be given annually. California state law requires that your dog receive a Rabies vaccine at four months of age. Their first rabies booster will be given a year later, then every 3 years afterwards. Talk to your vet about these vaccines.
4. **Exercise.** Again, you may see destructive behaviors due to boredom and excess, pent-up energy. If your dog does not get enough *focused* exercise, he or she may release it through destructive chewing, digging or nuisance barking. Most dogs need thirty minutes of cardiovascular exercise three to five times a week. By the way, running around loose in the backyard is NOT focused exercise and will do little to eliminate unwanted behaviors.
5. **Companionship.** As we said before, dogs are pack animals and see you as an extension of their pack. They need to be able to spend time with you as much as possible. A dog should not be your lawn ornament. If you are going to own a dog, he or she should be as much a part of the family as possible. And please don't use the excuse that your dog is too big to come into the house. Barring issues such as pet allergies, your pet should be able to come in and be part of the group, even if it's just for a few hours in the evening while you relax. The best way to fulfill some of your dog's companionship needs is to have your dog sleep inside at night. This will also prevent your dog from barking unnecessarily at night and keeping you and the neighbors awake. Also, the best protection is to have your dog in the house with you. If you hired a personal bodyguard, would you keep him outside in the backyard or outside your bedroom door? Which area of protection would make the most sense? Your dog will be much more effective as a protector and deterrent if he or she is in the house with you.
6. **Consistency.** As with children, learning is best when praise and correction is applied fairly and consistently. Dogs tend to be a creature of habit and love to have a schedule!
7. **Socialization.** You need to socialize your dog from a young age. Many cities now have off-leash dog parks where you can take your dog to socialize with other canines. It is important, though, that if you choose to take your dog to a dog park, you **MUST** stay with them and be ready to leave at the first sign of



Miss Millie High-Maintenance is just another one of the guys over on the Ballard Street hill.

trouble. Familiarize yourself with the basics of dog body language so that you will recognize inappropriate behavior from other dogs or your own. Keep in mind that some dogs really are "loners" and may not find group play fun.

Socialization doesn't just include other dogs. Try to expose your dog to a variety of situations as soon and frequently as possible. Take your dog with you on your next visit to the beach, outdoor shopping area, or to food establishments that welcome dogs in their outdoor patio areas. Allow people to

pet your dog. This will help your dog to be more predictable and well-adjusted in new and different situations.

8. **Altering.** With pet overpopulation an ever-continuing problem, please give every consideration to spaying or neutering your pets. By altering your dog, you may eliminate potential health problems. A male dog up to 5 miles away can smell a bitch in season, without wind. By altering your male, you will prevent the need for him to escape from the yard. Spaying or neutering does not make dogs fat, overfeeding does. But, if you feel the need to breed your dog, please make sure that your pet goes through the suggested genetic tests to prevent producing dogs with inherited diseases. If you are going to breed, make it a point to better the breed. Breed for temperament, health, and conformation. And, be prepared for the expense of breeding your dog, including maternity veterinary care, potential c-sections, as well as early puppy care and vaccinations. Please do not breed your dog with the intention of making money.

## CONFINEMENT CONDITIONING

Confinement conditioning is a way to manage your dog's behavior until you are satisfied that you can safely leave him unsupervised in the house or yard when you are busy or gone. Just like you wouldn't let your toddler have unsupervised free run of your house, young, untrained dogs don't have the maturity to be left alone and unsupervised, either.

Confinement conditioning begins with the use of a crate, dog run and/or puppy-proofed room. The crate is usually used in the house or car and a dog run is used in the back yard. Again, both are for the dog to be in when you cannot provide supervision. Your dog is not to be crated or confined 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The idea behind confinement conditioning is that, in order for a dog to learn, he must receive either praise or correction immediately after a behavior or act is committed. But, if you are at work all day and your dog is left alone in the back yard to chew up the hose, air conditioning wires or to dig holes to China, there will be no way to correct him (unless you use booby traps) and thereby teach him that a certain behavior is wrong.

That's when a crate, kennel or dog run comes in handy. Instead of allowing your dog total access to the back yard or inside your house, you give him a small space that is his. Slowly but surely, with training, praise and reinforcement, he will earn the right for unattended freedom. Ultimately, you will find yourself using the crate and dog run for convenience rather than necessity. Remember, you are setting your dog up for success!



Keep in mind that it takes time to develop a dog that will behave properly unattended. It does not happen overnight. Actually, you are waiting for maturity to kick in to see the final results of a mature, well behaved dog!

***Before you say this just isn't for me***, take a look at the advantages of each:

**CRATES, X-PENS & PLAY YARDS:**

- Housebreaking
- Travel bed for in the car, hotel room, dog shows, camping, etc.
- When used in the house, you will find that shedding or dirt stays in one spot.
- When company comes over, you can use the crate to keep the two separate from each other.
- A safe place for your pet to recuperate from surgery or illness.
- If it is 110° outside or pouring rain, your dog can stay in the house comfortably.
- When you are busy and cannot directly supervise your puppy from chewing up your plants and shoes, you can keep him in the crate in the house with you.
- Contrary to what you may believe, dogs are den animals and grow to love it!

**DOG RUNS:**

- Allow you to keep the dog away from objects that he may destroy or hurt himself on while you are away.
- Provides your dog with a cement surface to go potty on, making it easy to clean and keeps the brown spots from ruining your beautifully manicured lawn.
- Cement runs provide a clean surface which helps to keep your dog from getting muddy or dirty during the day, thereby making it more enjoyable to allow him to live in the house.
- Give you peace of mind knowing that he has not escaped or been stolen out of your back yard.
- Allow your gardeners, pool man, gasman, or construction workers access to your yard without you having to worry if they secured the gate properly before leaving the yard.
- Allow you to separate your dog from guests or children when you have a party, etc.

**CONCLUSION**

Obedience training, along with consistent behavior management will help your dog understand the rules and expectations of your household. It also creates a strong, devoted bond between you and your dog. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Most dogs want only to please you, and with patience and repetition you can have the dog of your dreams!