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Chapter **1**

Dog Training: The Key to Your Dog's Safety and Your Sanity

So, you have a dog? You are so lucky. You want to train your dog, right? Lucky dog. There is nothing you can do to build a bond more quickly between you and your dog than training together, working as a team, and spending time productively. Lucky team.

You want your dog to want to be with you, work for you, and then do it all again — for a treat, for praise, for play, because it's worth your dog's while. This chapter serves as a jumping-off point as you begin to develop your relationship with your dog. Training can be fun for you and for your dog. The results are what make all the time you put into training your dog worthwhile, but the journey of training is what can be so much fun — spending time with the dog who will become your best friend.

Someone once wrote: “All owners think they have the best dog in the world, and luckily they are all right.” Hence, the role of the dog will be played by your dog, and we refer to them in this book as Buddy, your buddy. Please insert your dog partner’s name where necessary. We want your relationship with your dog to be a joy. No Dog; No Joy! Know Dog; Know Joy!

Understanding Why You’re Training Buddy: To Do Something or Not to Do Something

Your dog is learning from the moment you meet each other, so you want to make sure that you know what they’re learning from you. Are you a pushover, a litter-mate, or the leader of the pack? You want your dog to see you as the pack leader, the coach. That means you set the rules, what games to play, when to eat, when to sleep, when to exercise, and when to train. Dogs don’t know you’re training them. All they know is you are spending time together, which is magical.

The important question when training your dog is this: Are you training your dog to *do* something or to *not do* something? The answer really can be both. You’re teaching Buddy to be a good dog, to do this instead of doing that. To do something would be to sit here while you come in the door and greet your dog. To not do something would be not to jump up as you come in the door. Teaching your dog to sit while greeting you is so much more fun than teaching your dog not to jump up on you. As often as possible, you’re going to teach Buddy what you *want* them to do rather than what you don’t want them to do.

Identifying a Well-Trained Dog

A well-trained dog is a joy to have around. They’re welcome almost anywhere because they behave around people and other dogs. They know how to stay and come when called. They are a pleasure to take for a walk because they don’t pull and can be let loose for a romp in the park. They can be taken on trips and family outings. They’re a member of the family in every sense of the word. This is your goal for Buddy, to be a well-trained dog!



REMEMBER

The most important benefit of training your dog is safety: for you, for others, and for your dog's own safety. A dog that listens and does what they're told rarely gets into trouble. A trained dog is a free dog — they can be trusted to stay when told, not to jump on people, to come when called, and to walk nicely with you.

For decades, I (Mary Ann) have taught dog-training classes, private lessons, seminars, and weeklong training camps. Working closely with veterinarians allows me to spend a lot of time doing behavior counseling with their clients. I ask people to tell me what a well-trained dog should look like and what they want to successfully train their dogs to do. They want a dog to be housetrained (Chapter 8 can help you with that task). Sadly, more dogs are given up to shelters for failure to become house-trained than any other issue. After that, in order of importance, a well-trained dog is one who

- » Doesn't jump on people
- » Doesn't pull on the leash
- » Does come when called
- » Doesn't beg at the table
- » Doesn't bother guests

Note that these requirements, with one exception, are expressed in the negative — that is, “Dog, don't do that.” For purposes of training, we express these requirements in the positive — teach your dog exactly what you expect from them. Here's what the new list of requirements for a well-trained dog looks like:

- » Sit when I tell you. (Chapter 11 gives you the how-to.)
- » Walk on a loose leash. (Chapter 12 is your go-to.)
- » Come when called. (Chapter 10 explains how to teach the Come command.)
- » Go somewhere and chill out. (Head to Chapter 13 for more information.)
- » Lie down when I tell you and stay there. (Chapter 11 can help.)

The Sit and Down-Stay commands (see Figure 1-1) are the building blocks for a well-trained dog; if Buddy knows these commands and nothing else, you can still live with them. Of course, your Buddy may have some additional issues that need ironing out, some of which are more matters of management than training. (Chapter 11 discusses these essential commands in greater detail.)



FIGURE 1-1:
Well-trained dogs.

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For instance, a favorite pastime of some dogs is raiding the garbage. Prevention is the cure here: Put the garbage where your dog can't get to it. By moving the trashcan to a secured location, you're managing the environment that fixes the problem. By purchasing a trash container that can't be raided, again you're managing the environment and fixing Buddy's bad behavior. Management is much easier and more quickly successful than having to train an unwanted behavior out of your dog. Of course, teaching the Leave It command and giving Buddy other things to occupy his attention is also great training. Management and training work hand in hand and together result in the best possible dog you can live with and be most proud of.

WHAT IS AN UNTRAINED DOG?

The untrained dog has few privileges. When guests come to visit, they're locked away because they're too unruly. When the family sits down to eat, they're locked up or put outside because they beg at the table. They're never allowed off leash because they run away and stay out for hours at a time. Nobody wants to take them for a walk because they pull, and they never get to go on family outings because they're a nuisance.

Dogs are social animals, and one of the cruelest forms of punishment is to deprive them of the opportunity to interact with family members on a regular basis. Isolating a dog from contact with humans is inhumane. Spending quality time with your dog by training them will make them the beloved pet they deserve to be.

Selecting a Training Model

You have many ways to train a dog, ranging from rather primitive to fairly sophisticated. Even technology has had its impact on dog training. For example, rather than fenced yards, people often now have invisible fences, which contain dogs within their confines by means of an electrical shock or tone.

Our approach to training is for people who like their dogs and have them first and foremost as pets and companions or for people who want to like their dogs. Either way, we like your dog and want them to be the best possible dog and you to be the best possible trainer for your dog.

The training involves three phases:

- » **The teaching phase:** In the *teaching phase*, the dog is taught specific commands in an area free of distractions so they can focus on you and be successful.
- » **The practicing phase:** When the dog reliably responds to the commands they have learned, distractions are introduced (we explain distractions in more detail in Chapter 10). As the dog progresses in this practice phase, the distractions become increasingly more difficult to simulate real-life situations.
- » **The testing phase:** In the *testing phase*, the dog is expected to demonstrate that they're a well-mannered pet around other dogs and people.



REMEMBER

The ultimate object of any training is to have your dog respond reliably to your commands. Ideally, they respond to your first command. Telling your dog to do something only to have them ignore you is frustrating. Think of Buddy's response in terms of choices. Do you want to teach Buddy to think they have a choice of responding to you? You want a dog that understands — after you have taught them — that they must do what you tell them, no matter what is happening around them. A truly trained dog listens for your voice above all distractions.

Distractions do cause Buddy to struggle to hear your voice above other things, as does the genetic influence of those things that Buddy was bred to do instinctively, that which is in harmony with Buddy's basic nature. Are all dogs the same to train or does the breed or mixture of breeds make a difference? Like people, dogs are individuals and have individual needs. Understanding breed characteristics and different teaching models helps to make the job of training that much easier.

First things first: Considering your dog's breed

Before you embark on your training program, consider what you want your dog to master, and then compare your answer to the task for which the breed was originally bred. Many people typically select their dogs based on appearance and without regard to breed-specific functions and behaviors. Whatever trait is in harmony with the breed of your dog is easier to teach or harder to break. For example, a Beagle uses their nose everywhere they go. Teaching a Beagle to track or follow a scent is much easier than teaching a Greyhound to track. Greyhounds are bred to visualize movement rather than to sniff out prey.

Although most dogs can be trained to obey basic obedience commands, breed-specific traits determine the ease or difficulty with which they can be trained and lived with. You also need to consider other traits, such as energy levels and grooming needs. High-energy dogs must have outlets for all that energy. Chapter 20 discusses problems that occur if your dog doesn't get the exercise they need. After all, a tired dog is a happy dog, and a tired dog has a happy owner. Grooming, brushing, bathing, and clipping of hair coats is time consuming and expensive if you hire a professional. For a dog to be healthy, the coat and skin need to be cared for regularly. Chapter 6 discusses grooming.



REMEMBER

Do some research: How much exercise and type of yard does Buddy need? Does this fit your lifestyle? How much grooming is needed, and will this fit your budget? Is this breed a good fit with kids if you have a family? Doing the research before you get your dog can save you heartache and headache later.

Training a dog or untraining them: What are you really doing?

When training a dog, you're either teaching them to do something (build a behavior) or not to do something (abstain from a behavior). For example, consider the Stay command. Are you teaching your dog to remain where they are or not to move from where they are? You can look at any command and ask this question. When training a dog, you're usually building a behavior. Look at Figure 1-2 to help understand.

In the figure, the first column lists how to build a behavior. The second column lists how to abstain from a behavior. When talking about behavior in proper training terminology, *positive* means adding something, indicated with the plus sign (+), and *negative* means removing something, indicated with the minus sign (-). These two terms don't mean good and bad, which is so often associated with positive and negative.

FIGURE 1-2:
The difference
between training
to do something
and training to
stop an unwanted
behavior.

	Action	Abstention
	Build behavior	Eliminate behavior
+	Pos. reinforcement (add good)	Pos. punishment (add bad)
–	Neg. reinforcement (avoid bad)	Neg. punishment (remove good)

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We need to define two other words in terms of behavior:

- » *Reinforcement* is used in the building of a behavior.
- » *Punishment* is used in the abstaining of a behavior.

An easy way to remember this distinction is that reinforcement of something makes it stronger or builds it, and punishment tends to stop something or abstains from something. These two sections examine reinforcement and punishment in more detail.

Reinforcement: Building a behavior

When training a dog, you want the dog to do something new and different. To do that, you need to motivate them by either giving them something they want for doing the new task or getting them to avoid something they don't want for not doing it. Consider the following:

- » *Positive reinforcement* (+) is adding something the dog wants to encourage them to do something they wouldn't do on their own. For example, you want the dog to go upstairs, so you put a tiny treat on each step to induce the dog to go upstairs.
- » *Negative reinforcement* (–) is eliciting a behavior the dog wouldn't do on their own by making them avoid discomfort. The dog does what is wanted because they want to avoid the reinforcement from happening to him. For example, you want the dog to go upstairs, so someone gooses the dog's behind to get them to go upstairs to avoid the discomfort of the pinch. At the top of the stairs, you praise them because they went upstairs.

Which approach works best? It may depend on how hungry the dog is, how much they like the treat being used, and whether something more interesting isn't going on around the corner, such as a cookout. In the negative reinforcement approach, it may depend on how hard of a pinch you use and if they don't mind the pinch versus the effort it takes to climb the stairs.

Training comes with so many variables. The cookout is a distraction, which is why it's best to do early training when no distractions are around. The ability to climb the stairs or the difficulty of the task you're teaching plays a big part on how willing your dog is. Buddy may suffer the consequences instead of climbing the stairs or jumping into a pool if water is too scary or if Buddy really likes people and wants to join in the party next door. Make sure you break the task you're teaching into small parts to make it more easily understood and achievable.

Later, you can add distractions to the training after Buddy has learned the command. Distractions make the task more difficult for Buddy. When working with distractions, your dog needs to choose doing the task over being distracted. The objective of distraction training is to train until your dog does the task no matter what is going on around them simply because you asked them to do so.

Punishment: Eliminating an unwanted behavior

When training a dog to stop doing an unwanted behavior, there should be a consequence. The consequence can be either adding something the dog doesn't want or removing something they do want. Consider the following:

- » **Positive punishment:** *Positive punishment* adds an unwanted consequence (+) at the start of the bad behavior just as it begins. For example, as soon as a counter-surfing dog sniffs the edge of the counter, you can shake a bottle half-filled with pennies at the dog as an unpleasant consequence. (**Oops:** If the dog is already on the counter or eating off the counter, using the bottle with pennies is too late. The dog has been rewarded by getting the food off the counter. Because the Oops happened, the dog has learned to counter-surf, which is why it's an Oops.) To eliminate the bad behavior, you must add something that the dog doesn't want so they avoid the counter because of the penny shaker. When the bad behavior stops, you don't offer praise; you never want them to counter-surf, so don't praise them for wishing they could still get up on the counter to eat.
- » **Negative punishment:** *Negative punishment* removes something (-) that the dog wanted because the dog behaved badly. For example, if a dog is jumping up on you when you come into the house, turn your back to the dog for a split second, removing your attention that was wanted because they jumped up. Turn back toward them once more, and if they jump again, turn back around so that they no longer have your attention and can't see your expression. Then, praise them for being *off* you and having four feet on the ground. Remember, they get praised for being off, which is the behavior you want.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR DOG RING-WISE BY ACCIDENT!

The term *ring-wise* refers to a dog who won't perform in a show ring or in front of an audience or for friends. The dog becomes ring-wise because when a dog is performing in an obedience ring, the owner isn't permitted to use food to aid the dog to perform. Therefore, the dog won't perform in a ring after they have learned something because doing so isn't worth their while. Ring-wise is an unwanted label because dogs should perform whether there is food present or not.

Adding rewards or removing rewards, praising or not praising, adding an unpleasant consequence, or stopping an unwanted consequence all make the difference in the dog's learning. Let me explain:

When you use food all the time while training or practicing a behavior you're building, you're using positive reinforcements; that is, adding something the dog wants. When you stop using the food you normally use all the time, you're using negative punishment because you're taking away what the dog wants. The dog unlearns the trick or stops giving you the behavior under these conditions in front of an audience. In other words, they'll become ring-wise.

To avoid this problem, randomly use food. As they learn a behavior, you need to diminish their reliance on food. Instead of giving a treat every time, give it only every other or third time; skip a time occasionally and make it random. Buddy learns to try harder to get the treat; they try to do the best for you and remain focused on you as you continue to work. They learn that food comes if they keep trying. Keep it fun by praising and smiling, and Buddy will work always, even in front of an audience.

Identifying Six Basic Commands Every Dog Needs to Know

Every dog needs to know six basic commands: Sit, Down, Stay, Come, Heel, and Leave It. You can look at these as safety and sanity commands — your dog's safety and your sanity. Here's a look at each of these commands:

» **The Sit command:** You use the Sit command (see Chapter 11) anytime you need your dog to control themselves. You can use the command to teach your dog to do the following:

- Sit politely for petting instead of jumping on people
- Sit politely to allow the collar and leash to be put on your dog

- Sit at the door instead of barging ahead of you
- Sit when you put his food dish on the floor instead of trying to grab it out of your hand
- » **The Down command:** You use the Down command (check out Chapter 11) when you want your dog to stay in one place for prolonged periods, such as when you're eating dinner or at the vet's office.
- » **The Come command:** You need to teach your dog the Come command (flip to Chapter 10) so you can call them when you take them for a hike, when they'd rather chase a squirrel, or when it's time to come inside.
- » **The Stay command:** When you want to teach your dog to remain in place without moving, you teach them the Stay command (see Chapter 11).
- » **The Heel command:** Also known as the Let's Go command, depending on what you want, the Heel command is when you want your dog to walk politely and not pull you on the leash (see Chapter 12).
- » **The Leave It command:** You teach your dog the Leave It command (head to Chapter 9), so they leave stuff alone when you don't want them to have it or grab it or chase it.

Recognizing Factors That Influence Success

Of the many factors that influence success, you are the most important one. You're the one who decides how to approach training and what you want your dog to learn. Your dog is your responsibility and whatever your dog does — good or bad — is under your control. Remember, you get the dog you train, so train for the dog you want.

Having a good relationship with your dog

The goal of training is to create a mutually rewarding relationship — you're happy and your dog is happy. To foster such a relationship, become aware of how many times you use your dog's name to change or control his behavior. Your dog's name isn't a command and certainly isn't a reprimand. Their name is used to get their attention and is then followed by a command. See Chapter 9 for how to train Buddy to recognize their name.



REMEMBER

Stop nagging and learn to communicate with your dog through training. Focus on teaching Buddy what you want them to do rather than on what you don't want them to do. Above all, limit negative verbal communications, such as "No," to emergencies. Repeatedly yelling "No" isn't the way to foster a good relationship. Instead of using "No," use a command that you've taught and means something. Too many people use "No" for everything and therefore it means nothing. Use Come or Leave It instead.

A good relationship also requires spending quality time together. You can spend time with your dog by training, going for walks, playing ball, doing tricks, and so on. Chapter 17 provides some great ideas for things you can do with Buddy.

Owning a healthy dog

Your dog's health has an enormous influence on their training success. A dog who doesn't feel well won't learn well either. First and foremost, their health depends on what you feed them. You need to feed them a high-quality food that provides the nutrients they need (see Chapter 4).

Your dog also needs an annual checkup by your veterinarian, preferably with bloodwork. Regular bathing and grooming are similarly important. If you live in an area where there are ticks, check their skin regularly. Deer ticks spread Lyme disease, which can have debilitating effects on your dog. Ticks, heartworms, and internal and external parasites need to be diagnosed and treated by your veterinarian.

Making training time a priority

One of the most common complaints for not training is: "I just don't have the time to train my dog!" First, look at training as a fun game — something you and your dog enjoy doing together. It shouldn't be a chore. Then identify the times during the day when you interact most with your dog.



REMEMBER

Here are some times when you can take advantage of training opportunities:

- » **Feeding time:** If your dog is still a puppy, you feed them four, three, and eventually two times a day. Each meal is a training opportunity — teach them to Sit and Stay before you put the dish down. Make them wait for a second or two and then let them eat. You'll be surprised how quickly they catch on to this routine. You also can put the dish down first and follow the same procedure.

- » **When exiting and entering buildings:** If you have more than one dog, door manners are an absolute must. They're equally important for the single-dog household. It usually takes about 30 seconds for the dog to catch on that they're supposed to wait before you tell them it's okay to exit (or enter). It's a matter of consistency on your part until the behavior becomes automatic. Chapter 14 discusses door manners.
- » **While relaxing with your pooch:** You can teach the Leave It command while you're watching TV. Take a few treats to your favorite chair and have fun teaching the progressions to the exercise (see Chapter 9).
- » **During walks:** Every time you take your dog for a walk is a training opportunity to teach them to sit at the curb, to heel when passing other dogs, and to walk on a loose leash when walking beside you as you say, "Let's go" and "Heel" (head to Chapter 12.)

All of these commands teach your dog to focus on you and look to you for direction — and they all happen as a part of your daily routine.

Oh, the Places You and Your Pooch Can Go: Beyond the Basics

Performance events: The purpose of obedience trials, as stated in the American Kennel Club (AKC) Obedience Regulations, is to "demonstrate the dog's ability to follow specified routines in the obedience ring and emphasize the usefulness of the purebred dog as a companion of man." Now, AKC allows mixed-breed dogs in all of their performance events; having a purebred isn't required to compete in AKC events. Following are some of the options you can explore if you want to take training to the next level. For all the following, visit www.akc.org.

The Canine Good Citizen Certificate

In 1989, the AKC developed the popular Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test, a program for both purebred dogs and mixed breeds. The CGC test uses a series of exercises that demonstrate the dog's ability to behave in an acceptable manner in public. Its purpose is to show that the dog, as a companion for all people, can be a respected member of the community and can be trained and conditioned to always behave in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs in a manner that reflects credit on the dog.

Now AKC has expanded the CGC to include the Urban and Farm and Advanced CGC tests. Your dog also can earn a Temperament Testing. AKC is just one of the national dog clubs, though it is the largest and most well-known.



TIP

In many areas, you can find classes to help you train your dog and prepare the two of you for the CGC.

AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy program

The goal of the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy program is similar to the Canine Good Citizen program, except that it's aimed at puppies. Just like the CGC program, the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy program includes a Responsible Dog Owner Pledge as well as a basic training program in which puppies up to 1 year of age are eligible to participate. After you attend a basic training class locally, your puppy must take a test. Look online for information on dog training in your area. When the puppy passes the test, they receive a certificate and a medal.

AKC tricks titles

AKC offers multiple titles for your dog as they learn and perform different levels of tricks — from Novice to Performer and Elite Performer and several in between. There is no limit to getting your dog to become a star and earn a title to prove it.

More than training: Understanding how dogs help people

People and dogs have been together for a long time. It didn't take people long to recognize the dog's potential as a valuable helper. Originally, the dog's main jobs were guarding, hauling, herding, and hunting. Over time, more jobs were added to the canine's resume; now dogs perform an amazing variety of tasks. These tasks fall into four broad categories: service dogs, detection dogs, assistance dogs, and companion dogs.

For more information, visit the websites for these organizations: Canine Companions (canine.org), Canine Assistants (www.canineassistants.org), Dogs for Better Lives (dogsforbetterlives.org), Assistance Dogs International (assistedogsinternational.org), and Guiding Eyes for the Blind (www.guidingeyes.org).

An Exercise to Get You and Your Pooch Started

Eager to get started with some training? We hope so! We begin with an exercise that shows you how to train your dog while you're feeding them. We chose this exercise because you're going to feed your dog two times a day (and even more frequently if they're a puppy), and each time you do it is a training opportunity. It's also a good exercise because the dog quickly figures out what is to their advantage — namely, they stay, and they get to eat. They also learn leadership while you work this exercise. Leadership means that you own the food, and you give it to them, but only when you release them to the bowl. Leadership means you're the leader of the pack, the coach of the team, and your dog is the player.



TIP

If your dog is enthusiastic and bouncy, you'll have more success with this exercise when they're leashed rather than loose.

Follow these steps to successfully train your pooch to Sit and Stay before eating:

- 1. Prepare the meal as you normally do.**
- 2. While your dog is wearing the leash and collar, pick up the leash with your left hand and hold it as close to the collar as is comfortable for you, but without any tension on your dog's collar.**
- 3. Pick up the dish with your right hand, say, "Stay," and then put the dish on the floor.**

When they make a dive for the bowl, pull up and back on the leash and pick up the dish. They don't have to sit; they just aren't allowed to dive for the dish.
- 4. Repeat Step 3 until they hold their position when you put the dish on the floor; see Figure 1-3.**
- 5. After they're successful at maintaining their position, say, "Okay," and let them eat in peace.**

Okay is a release term to tell the dog they're now free to move. If you don't like *Okay*, you can choose a term of your own liking, such as "You're free."

FIGURE 1-3:
Teaching your
dog the Stay
command as a
part of
feeding them.



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REMEMBER

As a general rule, it takes about three to five repetitions on the first try for the dog to get the message. *Avoid* the temptation to use negative communications, such as “No” or “Ah-Ah.” Instead, use the leash to gently yet authoritatively control your dog. After several sessions, they’ll more than likely sit on their own in anticipation of getting their meal.

