

## Why Train Your Dogs?

### Training:

- Helps you have good relationships with your dogs
- Reduces the frequency of problem behaviors (such as fear of strangers and jumping on people)
- Increases comfort during basic care (such as grooming and veterinary care)
- Prepares your dogs for life in a new home
- Gives dogs basic skills that can help them be good citizens and family members



**Training helps you communicate with your dog about what you want them to do, and makes interactions with your dog positive and less stressful.**

**Dogs with basic training will be easier to work with and care for.**

**Bonus - most dogs enjoy training!**

## Training methods

- We recommend positive reinforcement methods.
- Positive reinforcement training methods use rewards (such as treats, play, and praise) when dogs show desired behaviors. Rewarding (or “reinforcing”) these behaviors makes a dog more likely to do them in the future!
- Positive reinforcement-based training is effective and humane. It is less stressful than other training methods (such as those that use punishment).
- Punishment-based training (including the use of shock/electric collars, choke or prong collars, yelling, or using unpleasant odors or noise to stop behaviors) can lead to fear, anxiety, and problems outside of the training context.

## Getting started

- Identify treats that your dog really loves
- Decide what behavior(s) you’d like to train

## Basic Skills to Teach for Successful Rehoming

Some good skills that new families may appreciate:

- Taking treats from a hand
- Getting used to a leash, collar, and harness
- Focus on human
- Cooperative handling (such as offering a paw for nail trims)
- Behavior basics: sit, down, stay, recall/come



## How to train your dogs to sit

- While your dog is standing, hold a treat in front of their nose (about a foot away).
- Slowly move your hand with the treat over your dog's head. As the dog tracks your hand and the treat, they will move their head back. This encourages them to begin to squat and puts them into a sitting position. When they sit, give your dog praise, and deliver the treat!
- Tossing the treat gives your dog the chance to get out of the sit position and return to try again! Repeat this exercise a few times before giving your dog a break.
- As your dog gets more comfortable with this exercise, you can introduce the cue "sit" as they begin to sit. Eventually, your dog will sit for the verbal cue, without the gesture!



## Teach your dogs to come when called

- Start with a delicious treat. Show it to your dog.
- Step back a few feet away from your dog. Call their name and say "come."
- When your dog approaches you, give them the treat.
- Gradually increase how far you are from your dog. Work up to calling your dog to you from another area. Be sure to give your dog a treat every time they come!
- You can practice this exercise with two people in a room. Take turns calling the dog, so the dog goes back and forth between you. If the dog comes to the person calling them, be sure to give them a treat!
- When your dog will reliably come in a low distraction environment, you can start practicing outdoors or in a more distracting environment.
- Be sure to only use "come" for good things – such as when your dog will get a treat. Do not call them to you to do something they won't like. Associating "come" with a negative outcome will make them hesitant to come to you next time they hear the cue.



## When to train

- Offer training a few times a week in short sessions – five to ten minutes is great!
- It's great to start training when dogs are young! But training is important for all stages of life – it's not just for puppies.

## Resources

- See our handout on **How to find a behavior expert**
- [vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/using-reinforcement-and-rewards-to-train-your-pet](https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/using-reinforcement-and-rewards-to-train-your-pet)
- [avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf)
- [fearfreepets.com/training-as-enrichment-basic-skills/](https://fearfreepets.com/training-as-enrichment-basic-skills/)