

Visit Two: Training and Socialization



Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

Introduction to Obedience Training 15

- How often should I work on training my dog? 15
- Should I use rewards? 15
- Collars and Leads 15
- Basic Commands: Sit, Down, Stay, Come, and Heel 15

Puppy and Obedience Classes 18

- Why should I take my puppy to obedience classes? 18
- What are the different types of obedience classes? 18
- How do I choose a training facility? 19

Socializing your Puppy 20

- What is Socialization? 20
- Socialization with People 20
- Socialization with Other Animals 20
- Environmental Exploration 21

Preventing Aggressive Behavior 22

- Why are dogs aggressive? 22
- Suggestions to Decrease Dominant and Aggressive Behavior 22

Training your Puppy to Accept Examination and Restraint 23

- Home Health Care 23
- Training your Puppy to Stand for Examination 23
- Training your Puppy to Accept Restraint 23

Introduction to Obedience Training

Whether you work with your puppy on your own or take formal classes together, it is important that your puppy learns to obey basic commands. This will help you to keep your dog safe and to prevent your dog from being a problem to other people.

Teaching your dog good “manners” will also strengthen your bond with your pet. Remember that repetition is the key to teaching your dog new commands and to reinforcing commands he or she has already learned.

How often should I work on training my dog?

Work with your dog every day. A few minutes of training a couple times a day can make a big difference.

Should I use rewards?

The veterinarians at Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. recommend using food rewards and lots of praise when you begin training. Make sure to use only small pieces of treats, however, to keep your dog from getting a stomachache. Either buy treats that come as small pieces or break larger treats up. Pea-sized treats are best for training most dogs. Once your dog understands the command you are teaching, give treats less and less frequently, but continue to be generous with your praise.

Collars and Leads

Working with your dog on a six-foot lead is helpful for teaching basic commands. This helps you keep your dogs attention and guide your dog into the proper position.

If you are using a standard collar, be careful not to put too much pressure on your dog’s windpipe in his or her throat. Prong collars and head halters (such as Halti or Gentle Leader) can give you better control without the risk of damage to the windpipe. Whichever collar you decide to use, make sure it fits properly. If you are unsure about proper adjustment, please ask a staff member at Clermont Animal Hospital or your professional trainer to help you.

Shock collars for training, underground fencing or “bark collars” are not appropriate for young puppies, but they may be useful in training older puppies and adult dogs. It is very important to have professional guidance when using these as training tools. A 15 or 20 foot lead may be helpful for teaching “come” or “stay” commands.

Basic Commands: Sit, Down, Stay, Come, and Heel

Choose a hand signal and one-word voice command for every new action you are teaching your dog. Remember that all family members should use the same hand and voice commands every time they work with your dog. Below is a description of the basic commands and suggestions for teaching your dog.

“Sit”

This command was covered in the Puppy Health Handout that you received at your first visit. If you have not had a chance to teach your dog to sit yet, it is important that he or she masters this command before you try to teach other commands.

“Down”

- Start by instructing your dog to sit.
- Once he or she is in a sitting position, give the “down” command and hand signal.
- Gently pull your dog’s collar or leash downward or press firmly on his or her back, right between the shoulder blades. Remember, pressing in the middle of the back will cause unnecessary strain.
- Once your puppy is lying down, give him or her lots of praise and a small treat.
- Once your dog understands the command, you can practice using it when he or she is standing or walking (not sitting). The goal is to be able to get your dog to lie down from across the yard if he or she should be heading toward a dangerous situation.

“Stay”

Once your pet is good at the “sit” and/or “down” commands, start working on the stay command.

- Put your pet into either the sit or down position. It is usually easier for dogs to stay in the down

- position.
- Give your dog the “stay” voice command and hand signal.
- In the beginning, walk only a few feet away so that you can quickly correct your dog if he or she moves (i.e. move to the end of a six foot lead). Stay for 30-60 seconds at this distance.
- If your dog moves gently (don’t act mad) return her to the original position. If your dog continues to “pop up,” you may want to lay the leash on the floor and step firmly on the leash close to the collar. This will help hold your dog in the down position.
- Once your puppy has maintained the position for 30-60 seconds, return to his or her side, and give lots of praise and/or a treat.
- Release your dog from a stay with either “OK,” “Free,” or another release command.
- Once your dog stays consistently for one minute with you close by, start moving further back and extending the length of the expected stay. You can use a 15-20 foot lead to help control the dog from a larger distance.
- As your dog becomes more proficient, try using distractions to test him or her. Drag a toy close by, walk another dog close by or make an unexpected noise. If your dog moves, gently put him or her back into the original position. The goal is to get your dog to the point that he or she will stay even if there are any distractions.

“Come”

This command can be introduced any time after the “sit” command is understood and even before. It does, however, help if your dog will stay when practicing this command. The most important thing to remember is to always use your dog’s name when giving the “come” command. This helps your puppy learn his or her name and gets his or her attention.

- With your puppy in the down, sit or stand position, back up 6-10 feet.
- Give the “come” command and hand signal. Your tone of voice is very important. Make it happy and encouraging. Try to use the same tone and inflections every time.
- Most puppies will naturally want to come to you if they have already established a bond with you. If you have a shy or stubborn dog, try using a 15-20 foot lead, and gently pull your puppy toward you (like you’re reeling in a fish). In either case, once your puppy reaches you, give a small treat and lots of praise.
- As your dog masters this command, make him or her sit in front of you before giving the treat. You can do this by holding the treat in your outstretched hand at waist level. As the dog gets close, pull your hand (and the treat) toward you and upward. This will cause most dogs to sit naturally. If your dog doesn’t sit, give the sit command and gently help your dog into sit position.
- Work with your dog until he or she will come consistently every time you call even when distractions are present.

“Heel”

When training your dog to heel, always work with your dog at your left. This is the usual side.

- Start with your dog on a loose 6 foot lead.
- Give your dog the “heel” command and hand signal and start walking forward in a straight line at a brisk pace, leading off with your left leg.
- Keep your dog’s shoulder at your left leg. If he or she walks ahead of you, say “get back” and pull on the leash until your dog is back in heel position. If he or she is lagging behind, do the same thing using the “get up” command. You can also use the commands “get in” when your puppy is too far from your side or “get out” or “get off” if your puppy is bumping into your leg.
- When your puppy returns to heel position, give lots of praise.
- When first starting to train your dog, it may help to hold a treat in the fist of your left hand just in front of your dog’s nose. Many dogs will pay very close attention to the hand with the treat and stay in the heel position.
- When you stop, slow down for a few steps before stopping.
- Stop with the right foot and bring your left foot up even with it. This helps your dog know when you are going to stop.
- As soon as you stop, immediately tell your dog to sit and give a treat and praise as soon as he or she is sitting. Eventually your dog will learn to always sit at the end of the heeling exercise and will sit automatically. Once he or she starts to sit occasionally without your command, only give a treat for when he or she does.
- Make sure your dog stays in the sit position until you give another command.

- Practice changing directions, jogging, walking slowly and turning around to walk in the opposite direction--both to the right (away from the dog) and to the left (into the dog). Your dog should stay by your left leg throughout the exercise.
- Use your get up/get back/get in/get off commands as needed to keep your dog in proper position.
- Stop at random times and reward your dog with a treat and praise for a proper sit.
- As your dog improves, you can loop the leash over your neck for the heeling exercises.
- Try using only verbal get up/get back/get in/get off commands, but grab the leash and tug your dog into place if he or she does not respond properly. At this point you may also start refining your dog, and demanding a straight sit by your side. Only give a treat when your dog sits in the desired position. If your dog sits out of position, gently reposition him or her. This aspect of training is only important if you want to eventually involve your dog in showing, agility, tracking, rally, etc.

Remember that it is much easier to train a dog properly the first time than to break bad habits later on.

Other Commands

You may also want to teach your dog other commands such as “quiet” to silence barking/howling dogs, “leave it” to keep your dog from picking up items off the ground, or “kennel” to get your dog to go into a crate or cage. Once your dog has mastered the basics, you may also want to teach him or her tricks such as “shake hands,” “roll over” or “take a bow.”

Puppy and Obedience Classes

Why should I take my puppy to obedience classes?

While the information in this packet will help you get started training your dog, most people have much better success with training if they attend obedience classes with their dog. These classes offer several advantages over training on your own:

- Most importantly they offer a qualified, experienced trainer who can point out areas that you and your dog need to work on and provide tips and suggestions for how to help your dog improve.
- Most people also find that by investing time and money into classes, they have more incentive to practice at home. After all, everyone wants their puppy to look good in class.
- Working in a class setting teaches your dog to follow your commands even when distractions are present. Your puppy may sit and heel perfectly at home, but can he or she give the same flawless performance when other dogs are around?

For these reasons, the doctors at Clermont Animal Hospital encourage obedience classes for all dogs. If you have never trained a dog before or are hoping to involve your dog in activities such as showing or agility, these classes are essential.

What are the different types of obedience classes?

There are several basic categories of obedience classes. It is important to note that the program at each training facility is slightly different. The following is a general overview, but it is not intended to be a description of any specific class. Please check with the individual training facilities to determine what is covered by specific classes.

Puppy Class/Puppy Kindergarten

These classes generally concentrate on socializing your puppy, which helps him or her become more comfortable with people, other dogs, and the environment. They also help you work on basic aspects of training such as walking on a lead and basic obedience commands. Other aspects of puppy care including housebreaking are often covered in these classes as well.

The puppy kindergarten classes are usually very low-key and encourage a lot of play and interaction among all puppies and handlers in the class. Each program has different age specifications, so be sure to check with each facility to see if your puppy is the right age. Most puppy classes are for puppies 2 - 5 months old. These classes provide an excellent opportunity to get to know your new puppy, start the training basics, and provide the socialization that your puppy craves now that he or she is no longer

training basics, and provide the socialization that your puppy craves now that he or she is no longer with the rest of the litter. If you are considering starting a puppy class with your puppy, please let us know so that we can be sure to give the Bordetella vaccination to protect against kennel cough.

Beginner Obedience/Obedience I

These classes are designed for older puppies and adult dogs who have not had formal obedience training. Exercises in classes at this level concentrate on the fundamentals of obedience (“Sit,” “Down,” “Stay,” “Come,” “Heel”). Instructors help break down these commands into progressive lessons so that you and your dog can make steady improvements in these areas of training. Some beginner classes also introduce jumps to challenge your dog.

Whether you want a well-behaved family pet or an award-winning show dog, beginner obedience will greatly benefit both you and your dog.

Further Obedience Training

Each facility offers different training programs beyond the basics; however, all of the more advanced classes offer a chance to refine skills introduced in the beginner class. Some of these classes focus on preparing your dog for showing and/or agility training, while other classes are more focused on working toward the AKC Canine Good Citizen Certification, a recognition that is awarded when your dog passes a test of basic obedience, friendly behavior, and good manners.

How do I choose a training facility?

Many people choose a training facility based on location or cost. Days and times programs are offered also are often used to choose a training facility. While these must be considered, it is also important to find out about the curriculum of the program, the experience of the trainer, and the facilities. Here are some suggestions to help find the right program for you and your dog:

- ❑ If possible, talk to other people who have attended classes through the program(s) you are considering.
- ❑ Most facilities will also allow you to observe a class before signing up. This allows you to see the facilities and observe how the trainer teaches his or her classes and interacts with the participants. Training styles vary widely, and it is important to find one that will work for you and your dog. We recommend a balanced approach with both praise and corrections.
- ❑ If you are planning to do more than one training program with your puppy, it is important to find out about what options are offered for more advanced training at that facility.
- ❑ You should also be sure to check into program policies for required vaccinations; making up missed classes; and discounts for rescue dogs, multiple dog families, or taking multiple classes.

While the staff at Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. is not familiar with every training program in the area, we are happy to share our experiences and pass on comments from other clients regarding various training facilities and programs. Brochures for several local programs are available in our waiting room display area. Information for select area programs is listed below. You can also look under “Dog & Cat Training” in the yellow pages for additional facilities and programs.

Cincinnati Canine Companion Centers

Shopper’s Haven
529 Loveland Madeira Rd.
Loveland, OH 45140
513-738-7260 www.cincinnati-canine.com

Clermont County Dog Training Club, Inc.

6058 Kells Ln.
Milford, OH 45150
513-625-4337 www.ccdtc.org

Blue Ribbon Dog Training Academy

3548 Jackson Pike
Williamsburg, OH 45176
513-724-7297 www.BlueRibbonDogTraining.com

Socializing your Puppy

What is Socialization?

When young puppies are with their mother and their brothers and sisters, they interact with each other and learn behavioral limitations through play and help from their mother. Now that your puppy is with your family and not with his or her litter, you must take over the role of teaching and interacting with your puppy.

There are three main components to socialization:

- Socialization with people
- Socialization with other animals
- Environmental exploration (exploration of places and surroundings)

Studies show that how a dog responds to his environment, to people, and to other animals, is very dependent on his or her experiences early in life. For this reason, it is important to introduce your puppy to new people and experiences as young as possible. It is also important to make every experience as positive as possible as they will make a lasting impression on your dog.

The following sections discuss each of the three aspects of socialization in more detail. You will also find a checklist on the back of this handout that incorporates all three categories. Try to expose your puppy to as many of the items on the checklist as possible in a positive, controlled manner.

Socialization with People

It is important for your puppy to meet as many people as possible early in life. This will help ensure that he or she is not overly shy or fearful of new people. It will also help your dog learn what behavior is appropriate when interacting with people and help prevent aggressive behavior toward strangers.

Children: If you don't have children in the family, it is very important to introduce your puppy to children in a controlled setting. Your puppy needs to learn that these smaller people need to be respected just as much as the larger ones, or he or she may try to intimidate or dominate (overpower) children. Puppies also need to learn to respond appropriately to running, squealing, crying and other behaviors typical of children.

Friends and Strangers: It is also very important that your dog meet as many friends, neighbors, delivery persons and other people that he or she may interact with as early as possible. Each time your puppy meets a new person, give the person a small treat to offer to the puppy. Encourage each person to pet, talk to or play with your puppy for a few minutes. Be sure to be near by to reassure your puppy if he or she seems scared or uncomfortable. Be sure to keep interactions as positive as possible.

Socialization with Other Animals

Now that your puppy no longer has brothers and sisters to play with, it is important that he or she has the opportunity to meet other animals. Until your puppy finishes his or her series of vaccinations (shots), it is not a good idea to go to the park, the pet store or anywhere that you are not sure if the other animals are vaccinated. This doesn't mean you should isolate your puppy, however. Here are some suggestions for introducing your puppy to other vaccinated animals:

- Puppy daycares play groups or classes almost always require proof of vaccination and provide great opportunities for supervised interactions.
- You can organize playtimes with your friends' or neighbors' animals if you know they are vaccinated.

- If you already have other animals in your household, you may not need to look elsewhere for playmates for your puppy; however, be sure that play is supervised until you are 100 percent sure that neither animal will act in an aggressive manner. Dog fights and cat scratches can result in serious injury and a fearful puppy.

Environmental Exploration

An important part of puppy socialization is exposing him or her to as many objects and situations as possible. Below are some tips to help make your puppy comfortable with them.

- Noisy things are particularly scary for many puppies. Expose your puppy to vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, whistles, thunder and other loud noises in a controlled setting.
- Act in a relaxed manner, stroke your puppy soothingly, and offer gentle words to help calm your puppy.
- Once your puppy is calm and relaxed, give praise and a treat.
- Reprimand barking, growling or other aggressive behavior directed at the noise or object.
- Expose your puppy to strollers, crutches, bikes, rollerblades and other such objects. If these are part of your puppy's environment from an early age, he or she will learn to accept them without fear.
- Take your puppy for rides in the car. If you only put your dog in the car to take him or her for grooming and vet visits, he or she will learn to fear the car.
- Once your puppy has completed his or her shots and knows obedience basics, take him or her everywhere you can. The more experiences and opportunities you provide for your dog during the first year of life, the better.

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Why are dogs aggressive?

Aggressive behavior is when your dog acts mean, hostile or violent. It is important to understand that there are many reasons why a dog might show aggression. In many cases, dogs will become aggressive when they are afraid or when something or someone hurts them. Dogs may also be aggressive when asserting their dominance (trying to control someone or something), protecting food or territory or defending members of their human family.

In the wild, dogs establish a dominance hierarchy through aggression (nipping, biting, growling, lunging, etc.). The dominant dog in the pack is known as the “alpha dog” and gets the best food, sleeping places, etc. Dogs with dominant tendencies will try to assert themselves over their human “pack” by showing aggressive behavior toward humans. These dogs will also show aggression to other dogs in the household or neighborhood who challenge their status.

Suggestions to Decrease Dominant and Aggressive Behavior

1. Make sure your puppy is well socialized and trained in obedience. Training and socialization will help puppies know how to respond appropriately to their environment, decreases fear and provides opportunities to correct any inappropriate behavior in a setting you can control.
2. Earn your puppy’s trust. NEVER cause him or her pain (beating, kicking) as punishment, no matter how mad you are. This will cause your dog to fear you and use aggression as a defensive behavior. To help earn your puppy’s trust, you can:
 - Cradle your puppy on his or her back (a submissive position). Talk gently and soothingly, but do not let your puppy up until he or she relaxes.
 - Hold your puppy in a variety of positions (high in the air, out in front of you at arms length, tight in a hug, etc.) to help him or her learn to trust you. Give lots of praise if your puppy relaxes and shows trust.
3. Never play roughly with your puppy or allow him or her to play roughly with you. Games such as tug-of-war or wrestling may seem like fun, but they teach your puppy to be too aggressive or violent. While your dog might not hurt you in this rough play, he or she could easily harm a child or an elderly person if he or she plays in this manner.
4. Never allow your puppy to mouth or chew your hands, ankles, etc. While this is a natural way for puppies to play with each other, they must learn that it is not acceptable with their human family. Gently scold inappropriate chewing by firmly holding your puppy’s mouth shut and giving a firm “NO.” If this behavior occurs mostly during play sessions, try yelping like a hurt puppy and ignoring your puppy for 30 - 60 seconds. Your puppy will soon learn not to play so rough.
5. Never allow your dog to jump up on you or on other people. If your puppy jumps up, give a firm “OFF,” and pull/push your puppy firmly down. Never pet or give attention to a puppy who is jumping up on you. Always wait until your puppy is sitting or standing appropriately before greeting him or her.
6. Teach your puppy to accept all grooming, treatment and care (see next section). There are times when you may be forced to inflict mild pain or discomfort in order to treat your pet’s illness or medical conditions. It is extremely important that your dog learns to accept this at a young age so that he or she does not try to fight or bite when you are providing necessary care later in life.

Training your Puppy to Accept Examination and Restraint

Home Health Care

When you adopted your new puppy, you became responsible for all of his or her basic care. This includes bathing, grooming, toenail trims, brushing/checking teeth, routine examination and treating illness or injury. At your next visit, you will receive a handout with detailed information about these topics.

At this point in your puppy’s training, it is important to start working with him or her on being comfortable with being examined by you or the veterinarian. By training your puppy now to accept basic care, you will have a much easier time meeting his or her future needs.

Training your Puppy to Stand for Examination

It is important to examine your dog at least once a week for any signs or illness or injury. When starting with a young puppy, make this part of your daily routine. By examining your pet every day, he or she learns that this is just part of life. Below are some tips to help:

- Do not give up if your pet wiggles or tries to get away. Be firm but gentle.
- When your puppy stands still and allows examination, give plenty of praise.
- Give a treat at the very end of the examination.
- Start out slowly, with just a quick examination. Look in the ears, lift the lips and run your hands over his or her body.
- As your puppy becomes accustomed to being examined, perform a more thorough examination:
 - Look in the eyes for any signs of redness or discharge.
 - Examine the ears for any sign of wax or bad smells.
 - Open the mouth and look at the teeth and gums for signs of tartar and gingivitis.
 - Rub your fingers along the gums so that your dog starts to get used to dental care. (This will be covered in the handout at your next visit). Feel the abdomen (stomach) for any lumps or signs of discomfort.
 - Run your hands over all parts of the body feeling for lumps or signs of injury.
 - Look for any signs of fleas or dry skin.
 - Pick up each foot and examine the footpads and nails (this helps prepare your dog for toenail trims).

Each time you examine your puppy, follow the same routine. This makes it easier for your puppy to accept and allows you to perform a quick thorough examination. Routine examinations at home will help you identify any medical problems early, when they are easiest to treat. They will also decrease the stress of veterinary visits, as your pet will be used to being examined. Finally, it will make it easier for you to examine injuries and other problems when they occur.

Training your Puppy to Accept Restraint

There will be times in your dog's life when it will be necessary to restrain or hold back your puppy for examination or treatment. Some dogs are very tolerant of restraint, while others resist and fight it.

You should restrain your dog frequently in the two common restraint positions so that your dog becomes accustomed to it and accepts it.

The most common restraint needed is the “**bear hug**.”

- With your dog standing or sitting, put one arm around his or her neck with your hand on the back of your dog's neck, and with his or her head in the crook (bend) of your arm.
- Place your other arm along the length of the dog's body and pull him or her close against you.

For some treatments or examinations, your dog will need to be on his or her side. To properly restrain your dog in this manner:

- Get your dog to lie on his or her side with the back toward you and the legs out away from you.
- Place one elbow on your dog's neck and hold the front leg that is closest to the ground with that hand.
- Place your other elbow on your dog's flank (just in front of the back leg) and hold the back leg that is closest to the ground with this hand. By holding both down legs, your dog cannot get the leverage needed to sit up.

Put your puppy in both of these restraints on a routine basis. Hold him or her until he or she relaxes, then give plenty of praise and set him or her free. Once your dog learns to relax while restrained, gradually increase the amount of time of restraint. Start out with about 10 seconds and work up to two minutes. During this time, talk soothingly and reassure your dog. These exercises will make it much easier for you to treat your dog at home and will make vet visits much less stressful.

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