



“SIT” and “DOWN”- The Basics

SIT

Use a treat at the dog’s nose to lure the head up and back. This is a simple lesson in quadruped physics – Keep food lure close to nose and the dog’s head goes up and back, the butt goes down. The dog may try to back up. If so, stand near a wall and shorten the distance your dog can back up. As soon as the dog’s butt hits the floor, verbally mark the behavior and give a small food reward. Once the dog has completed this 4 or 5 times, you can introduce the verbal cue, “Sit.” Eventually, you can switch hands so that you can use the hand signal for sit with your “lure” hand, and treat with the other hand.

Have your dog sit before leashing up and before going outside, then as soon as they are outside. Sit is one of the most basic and important things a dog can learn. The ultimate goal should be for the dog to default to a sit whenever he encounters people, preventing your dog from jumping on them to say hello. You can practice this by bringing the dog into a large room and have a few people stand in a large circle. Ignore the dog until he approaches and sits. Once he sits, reward! Be sure to have various treats for rewarding this behavior. This exercise helps the dog generalize the behavior. Generalize means that the dog learns to sit for everyone, not just you.

DOWN

Begin with your dog in the sit position. Put a treat to the dog’s nose and lure it down. Some dogs may need to have the treat brought down in front of them and then around towards their shoulder, making a C curve. The turning of the head is sometimes the trick to getting the dog into the down position. As soon as the dog is down, mark and treat. As with sit, let the dog complete the task 4 or 5 times and then introduce the verbal cue. Eventually switch hands and introduce the hand signal. Your goal is to get the dog in a down without bending over to lure into place. Ideally, teaching a down cue should be first taught in a location where the dog feels comfortable.

**** NOTE**** Many people insist that their dogs “know” these cues and are just being stubborn. In reality, dogs do not generalize behaviors. If they are not reliably offering a sit or down regardless of location, the cue has not been proofed yet