



We put a twinkle in your eye, a smile on your face, a song in your heart, skills in your hands, so that the time with your family dog will be some of the best times of your life.

cheerfuldogs chronicles

cheerful dogs, happy people

Issue 55

Living With Dogs: Solid Sits & Downs

Sit and *down* are usually the first behaviours we teach our dogs, but we often forget to create variety and challenge once our dogs develop a basic understanding. Here are some ways to do that. The rules of thumb are: have fun, practise lots (it takes hundreds of repetitions for dogs to truly know a behaviour), and always end on a successful note.

Inside: Practise until your dog sits or performs a down the first time he's asked consistently.

Then try: 1. Practising in every room of your home. 2. Practising while other people walk around in your home, distracting your dog with gentle noise or motion.



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Tips & Tools: How to Puppy Proof Your Home

Your house. Hide electrical cords. Hunt for and hide small objects your puppy can chew or choke on. Get guardrails for stairs, low windows, and balconies. Invest in mats or runners for slippery hallways. Place poisonous plants in high spots – or give them to dogless friends.

Your kitchen and bathroom. Put safety latches on any cupboard with cleaning supplies or poison. Keep plastic bags out of your puppy's reach, and secure your rubbish bin.

Your compound. Make sure your compound is escape-proof. Put a fence around your pool –or keep your puppy away from it. Make sure chemicals, fertilisers, and sharp garden tools are off-limits.

Always supervise. That's indoors and out. If you can't supervise, put your puppy in a confinement/safe area with enough enrichment options to occupy her, such as chews, puzzle- or food-toys .

cont.

...sits & downs

Outside: Once your dog is consistently getting it right inside (in a controlled setting), you're ready to work in the yard and beyond. Outside you may want to use higher-value treats (cheese, meat) at first to keep attention and motivation high. Keep practice times short and successful (2-5 minutes) and if your dog loses interest, go back indoors, have him perform the command once, and end on a good note. Begin inside next session before trying outside again.

Activities for new and expecting families: Practise while: 1. sitting holding a doll; 2. pushing stroller; 3. leaning back on the couch, holding a baby doll; 4. a CD with baby sounds plays; 5. kids play (with nothing that involves running).

Remember that anytime you change the environment or your body posture, it may take a bit more motivation and higher value treats to keep your dog interested and focused on the task. So, always go back to basics when you change something. Context changes the skill to the dog – to him the behaviour is new again until, through practice, he learns to "generalize," i.e., apply his learning to all situations.

Dog Sports Around the World: Treibball

Pronounced "try ball," this fun dog sport was born in Germany in the mid-2000s when a Dutch hunting and herding dog trainer, Jan Nijboer, wondered if he could teach high-energy dogs to play soccer. The game boils down to getting your dog (or a team of dogs) to push large exercise balls across a field into a goal. While herding-type dogs and dogs who love chase games are natural treibball contenders, dogs of any age and breed can take part. As with all dog sports, some foundational skills are important. For treibball, it's an advantage if your dog knows *sit*, *down*, *left*, *right*, and object targeting.

Playing the game is simple. Using cues like "centre" and "drive" you guide your dog to push exercise balls into a goal with her nose (no teeth allowed). Treibball Associations have sprung up in many countries, bringing with them formal competitions. But treibball can just as easily be played recreationally at home in your backyard. It provides terrific physical and mental stimulation for your dog – and a fun time for you.

Online classes, YouTube videos, and books like *Get the Ball Rolling* by Dianna L. Stearns (www.dogwise.com) are great resources to, well, get the treibball ball rolling with your dog!



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