

Basic Commands and Tasks

Teaching your dog is a critical part of their formation as a functioning part of your family. Learning how to do commands will give your dog a bigger sense of purpose, will affirm your status as the Alpha of the family, and most importantly will give you better control of your dogs in various situations. I highly recommend purchasing a booklet on teaching your dog basic and advanced commands. Continuing to further your dog's repertoire of commands will help prevent boredom and build a special bond between you and your four legged friend. Teaching your dog commands will prove to be fairly difficult at first—there's a learning curve for your dog to understand what your body language is trying to tell them and for you to refine your skills in communicating with your puppy. Your best friend throughout teaching your dog commands will be treats. Some great treats are cut up meat sticks or even cereal, like toasted oats. As you begin to teach your dog tricks and commands you'll want to have very specific phrases or words for the task as well as specific hand gesture. The hand gesture is very important as your dog can lose their hearing over time. Don't be discouraged by many failures; some dogs learn at slower paces than others. The key to cementing a command in your dog's mind is repetition. When your dog completes a command for the first time, don't stop there...keep repeating and practicing daily.

SIT

Sit is the foundational command that should be taught first and practiced often. Teaching your dog how to sit is fairly simple. Take a treat and simply hold the treat six inches directly over your dog's nose and begin to move the treat back over their head slowly and say "sit." Your dog's head should begin to tilt backwards. Naturally, as your dog's head tilts back their bottom will sit on the floor. When they do this, reward them! ***My personal notes: GOOD! GOOD Puppy GOOD SIT!*** Feel free to add a hand gesture with this command; an easy hand gesture that is often used for sit is to have your arm dangling loose at your side, and then bringing your hand up to your shoulder if you were lifting a dumbbell weight. As you practice having your dog sit, make sure it is in conjunction with whatever hand gesture you choose. ***We start all commands with hand gestures when teaching obedience. We swoop up with our hand and turn it so the palm faces up when we say sit. Usually for something like sit this has to start after you have lured them into a sit. Once they start getting it you can start the hand gestures. Eventually you can drop the word and just use hand gestures if you do this consistently.***

DOWN

Down is another great foundational command and is useful in many situations. First have your dog in a sit position. After your pup is seated, take your treat and have it six inches away from their nose, lower the treat to the ground in front of your dog and say "down." Naturally, your dog will lower their head and lay down to get a closer look at your treat. An easy gesture to associate with this is to point down to the ground. ***We do a downward swooping motion with our palm out flat to the ground. This is from doing formal obedience and training. With the dog in a heel sit position you pull down on their chain and say DOWN. Pulling their head to the ground. Once they fully lay down YEAH! GOOD JOB GOOD DOWN!! Treat.***

RELAX (LAYING WITH THEIR HIP ON THE GROUND)

Relax is another great command to have your dog learn to relax. Have your puppy in the down position. After your dog is down, hold your treat six inches in front of their nose and then move the treat to their back hip. As you move the treat to the back hip, your dog should turn their head to follow the treat and naturally their body will contort in such a way to sit their hip on the ground to see the treat that is on their hip. ***Not something we teach but I can see the merits of this.***

PAW/HIGH FIVE

Paw or high five is one of the simplest tricks to teach your dog that every toddler you meet will want your dog to know how to do. Have your dog in the sit position. From here simply place the treat in your fist and hold the treat on the side of your dog's nose. They will naturally try to paw your hand to knock the treat out of your hand or to place the treat back into their line of vision. ***We teach shake by picking up the paw, shaking it and letting it go. GOOD GOOD SHAKE GOOD GIRL. Treat. Repeat. Eventually they start doing it on their own. Note this can cause them to paw you to get rewards.***

SPIN

Have your dog in a standing position and start with the treat a few inches in front of your dog's nose and begin to move the treat towards their hindquarters and back around to where the head of their body originally was. As you practice this you'll want to start moving the treat slowly so that your dog can follow the treat and learn to spin.

FETCH

Fetch is a fun game you can play with your dog to help release their energy. Grab a toy that your dog loves to play with and begin to play keep away with them. You almost want to tease them with a toy in front of their face; the goal is for them to be extremely interested in stealing that toy. Once the toy captures their attention, throw the toy. When they retrieve the toy have a treat or reward handy so that your dog will give the toy back. Often times fetch can go terribly wrong where the dog will get the toy and play keep away from you. If your dog doesn't come back to you when trying to place this game, try running in the opposite direction from you. They'll most likely chase after you in which case you can retrieve the toy. If you have a treat handy that your dog absolutely loves, they will gladly give over the toy in return for the treat that they love more. ***Most Siberians aren't great at fetch. They get bored with it easily; however if they do enjoy it it is a great way to get some of their energy out.***

DROP IT

You'll want to definitely teach your dog this command. There may be times when your dog has something in their mouth that is not a toy, like your shoe, something that could be a danger to them, or something valuable to you. To train your dog how to drop it or give, you'll want to have a toy and a treat. Give your dog the toy and command them to drop it. When you say this command, sometimes it's helpful to hold underneath their jaw with one hand as a gesture to reinforce the verbal command. When you command your dog to drop the toy, offer a treat with the hand that you're not holding their

jaw with. Your dog will instantaneously drop the toy in favor of your delicious treat. Keep practicing this over and over. Start to delay giving the treat, instead of instantaneous reward after successfully completing this task dozens of times, begin to demand the drop, after the drop then show the treat and reward. After much practice, this will become second nature for them.

WALK

The dog walk is one of the most significant tasks you can teach your pet. This is a fantastic outlet for your dog to exert that penned up energy and also makes socializing your pet all the more simple. Mastering the dog walk will be one of the most satisfying things about your relationship with your dog. You'll need a collar and leash, or a slip-lead (a rope leash that has a loop that self tightens), dog poop bags (exercise generally makes the dog's body want to eliminate) and a pocket full of treats. I recommend purchasing a small treat pouch that clips onto your belt; these can be found at any pet store. This keeps your clothes from getting crumbs and stains from treats and is helpful for those who do not have pockets.

Ensure that your dog's collar is at an appropriate tightness so that your dog cannot slip out of their collar while on a walk; if using your slip-lead, make sure to tighten the lead where your dog's head meets their neck just below the ears. Securing the slip-lead here prevents your dog from accessing all of their pulling power at the base of their shoulders.

Begin your walk by commanding your dog to sit. Your leash should be relaxed at this point, with some slack. There is no need to allow your leash to be extremely long when first training your dog to walk; I recommend wrapping your leash around your hand a few times or holding the leash further down from the grip. There's no reason for your dog to be walking more than two feet to the side behind or in front of you. The goal for the walk is for your dog to be at your side, with their nose floating around the side of your knee. ***This is called heel position. You will want to give them a command to stay at this place beside you. Any time they do it correctly...GOOD! GOOD Puppy GOOD HEEL! This position also helps to reinforce your Alpha status, as you are the LEADER. You are in charge of where they go. In front of you they cannot see where YOU want to go. They are leading you. Behind you they are lagging and unsure. Beside you, you can lead them where you want them and have better control.***

After they're sitting, begin your walk by using a verbal command like any other task. My family prefers to use, "let's go." When you use your verbal command, start walking slowly while holding the treat out for your dog around your knee. As your dog is walking and as you're walking, keep feeding your dog treats like clockwork. We want to create an extremely positive association with your dog walking with you. ***This is not personally how I teach this. I use a choke chain when they are old enough of a flat buckle for now and say heel, start walking and give short quick jerks to the chain/collar for corrections and say HEEL if they are not in position. When they are GOOD GOOD HEEL! If you do not know how to properly use a choke chain, please talk with a trainer on how to properly do this prior to using one.***

If you find that your dog is walking ahead of you, immediately walk in a different direction. What we want to communicate is that your dog needs to keep their attention on you because you are leading. You may have to do this fairly frequently in puppyhood, but eventually they will learn that you

command the walk. After sometime, your dog will understand that when the leash comes out we are going for a walk. There's no need to constantly reward at this point, but we do want to reward them for walking at an appropriate pace and distance with you sporadically so they know there's a reward for good behavior. ***Most of our rewards as you are going to see are GOOD GOOD Puppy GOOD (whatever the task is you have asked of them) This reinforces your command word and praise from you which should be their ultimate goal is to make you happy. Treats should be phased out slowly from anything you are using them in to train.***

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR YOUR DOG WALK

Remember your dog is a master of reading body language. When you are walking your dog, walk boldly and confidently; not meek and mild. You want to communicate to your canine that you are in complete control and that you trust your dog to walk with you. There shouldn't be any tension on your leash, tension on the leash creates a desire in your dog to want to pull against the tension.

Avoid ending your walk after your dog goes to the bathroom. Over time, your dog will associate that the sole purpose of the walk is for them to go to the bathroom and it ends when they eliminate. Your dog will begin to hold off on eliminating as long as possible because they'll want to walk and not go home yet.

You will find that it is near impossible for you to walk your dog without your dog's attention being stolen from you by cars, squirrels, cats, etc. If you see a potential distraction that could rob your dog's attention from you, get your dog's attention before this distraction does. There are some situations that you just want to avoid; If you know your dog will begin barking at no end when they see a cat or will chase down every squirrel they see, you'll want to master the art of regaining your dog's attention. Some ways you can do this is to keep their mind busy by giving them commands like sit, down or others to reinforce with treats. You can also simply change the direction you are walking. Another helpful tip is to tap them on their side or gently nudge them with your foot. ***I don't personally recommend avoiding the situation. I recommend you take hold of the situation and master it. You may have to do so slowly. If you know a cat or a certain place will cause distraction start getting close to it and get to the closest point you can still keep your dogs attention. Then do the above things. Sit, down, catch, heel in circles, whatever you would like to do until they are totally solid with that. Then the next time move closer to the distraction. Once they have mastered that move closer, etc until it is mastered and no longer causes a problem for you. This also works for fearful dogs to desensitize them to whatever it may be that they are fearful of. Start slow get their attention, and continue to move into or close to whatever they are fearful of.***

Ultimately, you will find your dog pulling away from you at some point in your dog walking journey. This can be a scary situation with fast cars, other huge dogs, or other dangerous situations. What we want to avoid is panicking – stay calm! Remember, your dog is a master of reading body language and sensing your emotions. When your dog begins to pull, try to refrain from pulling back like you're in a game of tug of war. Try pulling up on the leash by taking their front legs off the ground, this can immobilize them. My preferred method is to step further to the side of your dog and pull causing your dog to

stumble sideways-this tends to snap them out of their heightened state of excitement. After you give them the side pull, try and regain their attention through giving them commands or walking in a different direction.

Remember to give commands along with praise reinforcing the behavior. GOOD GOOD PUPPY GOOD SIT (DOWN, HEEL, OFF, etc) Phase out your treats as the puppy becomes more adept at the activities. I also teach off. Very important for me. OFF of me OFF of furniture etc. A knee up if they are jumping and saying off. You may need a leash that you can step on if it becomes a persistent problem. This will keep them from jumping up.

OFF Of the furniture. Any time you remove them from it physically you say OFF. GOOD GOOD PUPPY GOOD OFF. Then you can eventually just command them OFF.

I also recommend NILF Nothing in Life is Free. If you want to do more research online you are welcome to. There is a lot of training that goes on for a puppy. To help reinforce your Alpha roll you are the giver of all things. You give training, you give structure, you give affection, you give exercise, you give food, their whole life is pretty much you. When you train try training with their kibble, ie their meal. Instead of them being able to eat it on their own you use it during training and as you giving their food to them by hand. If when you are done with training you would like for them to go ahead and finish off their food by all means do, but if you need their whole meal throughout the day to train then use it. This keeps them from being finicky eaters as well, as knowing that you are their sole source of life. They must work and please you for everything they get.

Also at the end of any training session remember to end on a positive note. Finish with something they are good at. If they have mastered sit and you are working on fetch for example finish with a sit. That way they feel like they have done well. Lots of praise. End your training with a command word such as "OK" that way they know that they are complete and free to do as they wish.

If you are playing with a toy, make sure you always end up with the toy in the end. You end the play. They don't get to run off and take it from you. If this presents a problem have a leash on so you can prevent them from running away. Step on the leash and say no drop it. Dogs under the alpha always drop things and surrender it to the alpha. You need to be able to take things out of their mouth. If you want something take it. They have no right to it. They are your toys, your chewy, your food, etc you allow them to play with, eat, chew on etc. If they grumble grab that is Unacceptable. They must have a correction.

All of these things and more give your puppy much needed stimulation and learning. You don't want a bored Siberian. You want one that is challenged that keeps its mind active and learning constantly throughout its life. You can always up the ante for their learning. They've mastered the sit, then let's make it a sit stay. They have mastered a short sit stay let's make it longer, and then let's make it through us cooking dinner. It takes a few min to put them on a stay and they can be working the entire time, without much effort to you. They mess up it takes a min or two to correct and put them back to that position you originally put them in. Remember not to push them past their limits. As they get better slowly increase the difficulty and time frame. Short 10-15 min sessions at a time two

maybe three times a day is a good training session. End with play time! You both did good, enjoy some puppy snuggles and fun!