

# Basic Commands: Teaching Your Puppy

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Teaching your puppy basic commands - "Come," "Stay," "Sit," "Heel," and "Down" - is essential to your relationship and the safety of your pup. As you prepare to work with your dog on obedience training, it is important to remember a few basic rules to make the process an easy and effective one.

You may think you can do it on your own, but there's a right way and a wrong way to train. Starting out the right way is much easier than trying to retrain after bad habits are already formed.

**Teach the action first, then the command** - As you begin training, you really don't need to say much at all, because your voice commanding "Come" or "Sit" will just be confusing for the pup. In all training, a dog should know and understand the action demanded of a command before you ever add human language to it.

**Keep training sessions short** - Even though everything you do should be regarded as training in one way or another, structured command training should be done in short sessions - several repetitions is enough - at least three times a day. You want to keep your pup enthused about training and, like children, their attention span is short.

**Be consistent** - Each family member should use the exact same words each time. It should be "Come," not "Come here girl," and "Stay," not "Stay right there, don't move."

**Never get angry** - It will only increase the time necessary for training and will always affect the trust your puppy has for you. Remember, like dealing with your children, deep breaths, count to ten . . . .

**Praise each success** - Let them know they please you when they perform a command by gently rubbing or petting them over the back or shoulder. Keeping a small handful of [treats](#) is also a good way to slip your pup some positive reinforcement. Verbal praise is okay, like saying "good dog" - but be careful not to overdo it or you will lessen the effect of future praise.

**Praise or correct behavior immediately** - So they can associate their behavior with either the positive or negative reinforcement. Don't automatically discipline them if they don't follow a command. They may not understand what you want them to do, which could be the fault of the teacher, not the student.

**Patience, patience** - This is going to take time. The most common mistake is moving

too fast. Your puppy should know and respond to each command. "Good enough" is rarely good enough.

Many communities offer dog handling courses like Kindergarten Puppy Training and Obedience Classes, which are great resources for puppies and owners alike. Some even award successful doggie graduates with framed diplomas! There are also a number of excellent books available to help you find the right training methods.