Service Animals of Mississippi

inclusion, independence and quality of life

Training Basics – Part 1
September 14, 2010

Slide presentation contents.

New & un-mastered commands

- Train in short sessions of 15 – 20 minutes each, two or three times daily.
- Use a collar, leash and a treat.
- Give the command once – do not repeat commands.
- Do not give a command unless you are in a position to 'help the dog comply.'
- *Helping* the dog requires patience. Lure the dog into position using a treat.
- Helping the dog learn is fun, enjoy it!

Correcting behavior

- Keep in mind that a happy dog will cooperate more often than a fearful dog.
- All training is done with positive reinforcement – treats and/or verbal praise and/or petting the dog.
- If corrections become frequent, it's best to start over with instruction than to insist that the dog to comply. Practice for using duration and fewer distractions.

WATCH ME

The command used to get your dog to focus on you.

- Hold a treat in your right hand, show it to the dog then place it in front of your face - at eye level.
- As soon as the dog makes eye contact, say WATCH ME, GOOD Boy or GOOD Girl and give him/her the treat.
- Practice this command 5 or 6 times each session and periodically during the day.
- At first, do this only in 'non-distracting' settings. Later, practice in various settings.

WATCH ME

The command used to get your dog to focus on you.

- When the dog has mastered the WATCH ME command, begin increasing the 'watch time' to 3 or 4 seconds, then 5 – 8 seconds, increase up to 30 seconds.
- If the dog begins to regress, go back to shorter duration and fewer distractions.
- As soon as you give the treat, the dog may stop watching and/or wander off.
- Hold the leash/collar if necessary then release the dog with OKAY and let go of the leash/collar.

COME

The command used to get your dog to come to you.

- When you call your dog, he/she should respond like it is the best thing in the world.
- Call him/her with enthusiasm.
- Always use his/her name.
- The dog should never be called and then punished for improper behavior.
- Never call the dog to you to put him/her into a crate.
- Present the treat at your knee or side so the dog learns to come to you – not just to the area around you. Don't offer the treat at arm's length.

COME

The command used to get your dog to come to you.

- Call the dog's name and say COME.
- As soon as the dog comes to you, say GOOD Boy or GOOD Girl and give him/her the treat.
- The dog must come to you and not run off. It may be necessary to hold the collar when the dog comes, then give the treat.
- Hold the leash/collar if necessary then release the dog with OKAY and let go of the leash/collar.

COME

The command used to get your dog to come to you.

- The dog should be given a treat and/or heavily praised every time until he/she comes reliably - 100% of the time.
- Present the treat at your knee or side so the dog learns to come to you – not just to the area around you. Don't offer the treat at arm's length.
- Practice this command periodically during the day.

COME

The command used to get your dog to come to you.

- When the dog has mastered the come command (100% reliability on 1st ask), increase the difficulty by calling his/her name in various settings, at various times and when more distractions are present.
- If your dog begins to regress, go back to fewer distractions and familiar settings.

COME

The command used to get your dog to come to you.

- Cutting back on treats and using more verbal praise is fine but only if the dog has developed a consistent pattern of coming on the first ask.
- This means you call the dog one time (only) and he/she immediately comes to you.

SIT

The command used to get your dog to sit.

- Practice 5 or 6 times each session.
- Rehearse periodically during the day as the dog becomes more familiar with the command.
- In the beginning, do not expect your dog to stay seated for long.
- As soon as you give the treat, the dog will likely stand and/or move away from you.
- Hold the leash/collar if necessary then release the dog with OKAY and let go of the leash/collar.

SIT

The command used to get your dog to sit.

- Place a treat in your right hand.
- Show the treat to the dog – right in front of the dog's nose
- Move the treat slightly up and backwards.
- As the dog's head follows the treat, he/she will need to sit to maintain site of the treat.

SIT

The command used to get your dog to sit.

- Say SIT as soon as the dog's bottom touches the ground.
- Give the treat and praise him/her.
- If the dog is jumping for the treat, try lowering the treat.
- The dog should sit and be willing to stay in position for a short time.
- You must 'build-up' time.

DOWN

The command to teach the dog to lay down.

- The dog must be willing to lay down (in the correct place, without being pushed or pulled) in public and private settings.
- The dog should be out of the way of passersby so that the dog does not have to constantly worry about being stepped on (ie. in the walkway between tables at a restaurant).
- Some dogs will 'down' without sitting first, others want to sit first, then down.

DOWN

The command to teach the dog to lay down.

- Practice 5 or 6 times each session.
- Rehearse periodically during the day as the dog becomes more familiar with the command.
- In the beginning, do not expect your dog to stay in the down position for long.
- As soon as you give the treat, the dog will likely stand/move away from you.
- Hold the leash/collar if necessary then release the dog with OKAY and let go of the leash/collar.

DOWN

The command to teach the dog to lay down.

- Place a treat in your right hand.
- Get low to the ground – on the dog's level (squatting or kneeling) instead of bending over the dog which can be intimidating.
- It can sometimes be helpful to place one hand behind the dog to keep the dog's bottom from going up and back instead of laying down to get the treat.
- Show the treat to the dog.

DOWN

The command to teach the dog to lay down.

- Move your hand and position the treat in front of the dog's front feet.
- As the dog's head follows the treat to the ground, he/she will need to lay down to get the treat.
- Say DOWN as soon as the dog's body is on the ground.
- Give the treat and praise him/her.
- The dog should down and be willing to stay in position for a very short time.
- You must build-up time as the dog becomes more familiar with the command.

Additional lessons will be provided as needed. Please call or email if you have questions and/or comments.

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