

Critical First Lessons

A Cabin Fever Kick-Start Program

1. Attention
2. Recall
3. Manners

Can't attend dog class? No worries—
we'll get you started!



GOLD STAR
Dog Training



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Welcome!

Greetings,

Since the COVID-19 coronavirus has postponed dog classes, I put together this little program to get your dogs/puppies started on a few important basics.

Critical First Lessons covers:

1. **Getting your dog's attention**
2. **Preparing for a fabulous recall**
3. **Beginning manners training**

I've also included some extras:

- Puppy biting
- Housetraining
- Understanding how your dog communicates through body language
- How to build a great relationship with your pup or dog
- Recommended readings



Check out another Cabin Fever Kick-Start Program:

Pseudo-Socialization—Teaching critical socialization skills when you can't socialize

www.goldstardog.com

The Training Approach

When teaching a new skill or behavior, use 3 steps:

1. Give the cue (word or hand signal)
2. The **MOMENT** the dog does the desired behavior, verbally praise
3. Give a food treat

When you come to my class (and many instructors also use this approach), you'll learn a slightly more refined version of this training, incorporating markers (a special sound or a clicker). For now, the above steps will get you started. If you know how to use marker training, use the mark the instant your dog performs the behavior you ask, and follow with a treat.

What's a Cue?

- A cue (sometimes called a command) is a word, sound, or hand motion we use to ask a dog to perform a specific behavior.
- Your dog doesn't know the meaning of a cue until we use the training approach to help the dog pair the desired action with the cue (when the human says "sit", that means "put butt on floor").
- Each action/behavior you want your dog to perform should have its own cue ("Down" for lie down and "off" for get off the couch are two different actions, and the cues aren't interchangeable).
- Give the cue once, clearly, and calmly. ("Sitsitsitsitsit" will become your cue if you repeat "sit" over and over. Repeating the cue, or saying it louder, doesn't make your dog suddenly understand English.

Treat Basics

- Stinky, soft treats are better than dry biscuits (and are easier to cut up into small pieces)
- Size matters—treats should be TINY (think head of a pin or the size of an M&M candy quartered)
- Not all rewards are created equal
 - Rewards should be varied, and food treats have different values. *Carrots are cool, but bacon is best!*
 - Dogs have different reward preferences—understand what motivates *your* dog. *Some dogs go bonkers for beef, while others flip for a frisbee.*
 - Align the value of the reward to the task. A more difficult request should earn a bigger "paycheck". If my dog has tons of practice with sitting and does it easily, I'm not going to pull out a hotdog for that (verbal praise may be enough). If my dog does a recall away from another dog, I'm pulling out the steak!



Tips for Successful Training

1. Keep it short. Train daily, 5 minutes here and there. It won't feel like a burden, your dog will learn faster, and you'll be impressed with the results!

2. Keep it fun. Come to your sessions with joy and enthusiasm. No one wants to work with an ogre or cranky pants—including your dog. If frustration sets in, ask your dog to do something easy, praise him/her for it, and take a break.

3. Start in a quiet, distraction-free space. This gives your dog the best opportunity to learn. As your dog improves at a given skill or behavior, try doing it in different places (like on your walks) and with mild distractions (other dogs or people some distance away, when a car goes by, etc.).

4. Don't skip grades. When we learned to write, we started with letters, then words, sentences, and so on. Our writing assignments increased in difficulty step-by-step from first grade through college. What would happen if you asked a 4th grader to write a PhD dissertation? Well, it wouldn't happen—and we wouldn't expect it to. Dogs must have an opportunity to gradually master each level of a skill before moving to more advanced versions and situations. For example, learning to focus on you in a quiet home setting is 1st grade stuff. Asking your dog to do so in the middle of a Fourth of July parade is PhD level work—and you need to work up to it. *But we're getting ahead of ourselves with all this PhD talk—let's have fun with the basics for now!*



Training in the Day-to-Day

- Commercial breaks, waiting for the coffee to brew, on hold on phone call — great opportunities for a few minutes of training!
- Your dog is always learning—even when you're not in a training session. Be mindful of what you may be inadvertently rewarding (with vocal praise, attention, and giving in to what your dog wants)—and always praise behavior you want to continue.
- Any time your dog wants something is a training moment (more on this on page 7!).
- Fostering desired behavior means setting clear, consistent expectations and rules—every day, all the time. If the rules are different from person to person, or sometimes a behavior is discouraged but then rewarded another time, how will your dog decipher what's expected?

Lesson 1. Pay Attention Please (Focus)

WHAT: Asking your dog to look at your face when you ask

WHY:

- Bonding with your dog and building trust
- Getting your dog to focus on you (no training can happen without your dog paying attention)
- Refocusing your dog when s/he is distracted, or to redirect him/her from behavior you'd prefer s/he not do (barking, lunging, fixating, etc.)

HOW:

1. Give the cue (e.g., look, watch me, eyes)
2. Wait for your dog to look at your face (ignore looking around, looking at your pockets, etc.)
3. The second the dog looks at your face, give verbal praise
4. Give food treat

NOTES and TIPS:

- Give the cue and wait. Most dogs will look at your face simply because they are curious and don't know what else to do. If you praise the second your dog looks at your face, s/he will make the connection to do so when you ask.
- Be careful NOT to praise when your dog is looking at your pockets, hands, treat bag, etc.. Wait for the face!
- If your pup doesn't look at your face, make a little noise with your mouth to get him/her to look at you, or lure him/her to look up to your face with a treat in your hand, moving your hand slowly to your face. You can also try taking a step sideways or backwards, to get your dog to notice you.



~3 min

[CLICK HERE](#)

Lesson 2. Starting the Recall: Spontaneous On-Leash Recall

WHAT: Asking your dog to return to you when you ask

WHY: At its most basic, a good recall is about safety. And, it recall means not having to wait for your dog to return or chase him/her around.

HOW: SPONTANEOUS ON-LEASH RECALLS

1. With your dog on a 6-foot leash, walk about a bit, allowing your dog to wander at the end of the leash.
2. When s/he's not paying attention to you, say his/her name, give the recall cue (e.g., come, here), and run backward a few steps.
3. The second your dog spins around in your direction, use a happy voice to encourage him/her to run to you.
4. Give a food reward right near your legs, at your dog's nose level.
5. Let him/her go back to what s/he was doing and repeat the steps.



~ 5 min

[CLICK HERE](#)

Lesson 2. Starting the Recall:

Spontaneous On-Leash Recall (cont.)

NOTES and TIPS:

- The GOAL for this exercise is two-fold: Getting your dog to snap right around the second you give the recall cue, and for him/her to quickly and VIGOROUSLY run to you! When these two things are happening, you can practice recalls on a longer leash and/or in a slightly more distracting setting.
- Do not ask your dog to sit (or do any cue—introducing these things at this point can depress your dog’s recall response) when s/he returns to you.
- Use high-value treats.
- If your dog isn’t snapping right around when you call (s/he is distracted by other things and doesn’t seem interested in you at all), play the Find Me Game for a few days and see if that boosts your dog’s response. You can also shorten the leash length to 3 ft, and/or lure your dog’s nose with the treat (but s/he doesn’t GET that treat until s/he comes all the way to you).
- Be fun and energetic!

Start with the FIND ME! Game

This fun game involves you (or another human) hiding and your dog finding you (or that person). Playing the “find me” game provides a foundation for later recall work. As s/he plays the game, s/he is learning that returning to you is a super fun game with a wonderful outcome. I play this game with my dog for about a week and then move to the spontaneous on-leash recalls. Even as I work on recall, I keep playing the find me game as well (though they are two separate things, to be done separately—sometimes I’ll play find me during a training session, and sometimes I’ll do recall).

Instructions: [Click here](#)

Or go to:
www.goldstardog.com→Library→Just for Fun→Find Me Game



Extra: *When is my dog ready to go off-leash?* [Click here](#)

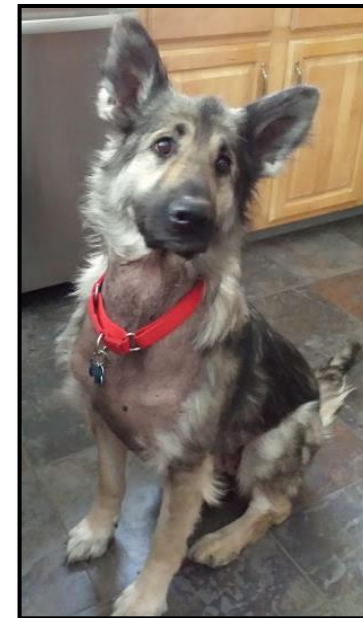
Or go to: www.goldstardog.com→Library→Training Tips→Recall Safety

Lesson 3. Manners Groundwork: Sit for Stuff (Say “Please”)

WHAT/WHY: This is about teaching dogs to have manners in situations where they may be excited or want something: going out a door, going for a walk, getting out of the car, eating, getting a toy, greeting a new person, etc.. The dog learns to wait briefly and calmly before getting what s/he wants. In a way, we are asking our dogs to say “please” as part of the transaction of wanting something and receiving it, much like we teach children to do so. Since our dogs cannot SAY please, we ask them to sit.

HOW:

- Every time (EVERY time) your dog wants something from you, ask him/her to sit. Pause for a second, and then grant the request.
- Apply it every time your dog wants something:
 - Before dinner/treats
 - Before getting a ball thrown
 - Before getting a toy or bone
 - Before going outside
 - ...you get the idea! The more you practice it, the better your dog's manners will become, and the more control s/he will have in all sorts of situations.



NOTES and TIPS:

- Incorporate this everyday life with your dog and for everything your dog wants from you (when we teach children to say “please,” we remind them until they get in the habit of doing it on their own—same with your dog!). And, we don't give in to rude behavior.
- When you begin this work, give your dog a few minutes to figure it out—say sit (once) and wait—most dogs will catch on that the sooner they sit, the sooner they will get what they want.
- This only applies to things your dog WANTS (asking him/her to sit for things s/he don't want is like me asking you to say “please” in response to me offering you something unpleasant like a root canal!).

Tip Sheets

- Puppy biting/mouthing: [click here](#)
- Housetraining: [click here](#)
- Deb's list of attitude-adjusters and relationship builders: [click here](#)
- Understanding your dog through his body language (dog Body Language Primer): [click here](#)

CORONAVIRUS-RELATED:

- Working From Home: Helping Your Dog Stay Busy (and Quiet): [Click here](#)
- Preventing Separation Anxiety When You Work From Home: [Click here](#)



The “Something New!” Game

Stuck At Home? Need to Burn Off Your Dog's Energy?

Dogs need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies. This game helps your dog use his brain by becoming engaged in the training process, thinking up behaviors to offer—as opposed to being instructed what to do. This game can burn a lot of your dog's energy. Most of all, it's pretty darn fun!

Game instructions: [Click HERE](#)

(Or go to: www.goldstardog.com→Library→Just for Fun→Something New Game)

Video of German Shepherd Mya playing the game:



Click [HERE](#)

~ 2min



Additional Resources

The Gold Star Library

- Contains many short articles covering a wide range of topics from helping your dog with weather-related fears to assessing when your dog is ready to be off-leash. Bookmark the page as I'm always adding new material!
- <https://www.goldstardog.com/visit-the-library/>

Gold Star's Product Picks

- Links to recommended books, harnesses, leashes, treats, games for your dog, and more (scroll to the bottom of the page to see these!). Bookmark the page as I'm always adding new recommendations.
- <https://www.goldstardog.com/visit-the-library/>

Gold Star Dog Training Videos

- My growing library of dog training and for-fun videos. Become a subscriber to get notification of new videos!
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSnIuzts6LLGGz43LGJI8yg/playlists>

Gold Star Dog Training on Facebook

- Follow the page to be in-the-know on all events, training opportunities, tips, tricks, new programs, and more!
- <https://www.facebook.com/goldstardogtraining>

Generally, these sources and authors have excellent advice on a wide range of topics:

- Jean Donaldson
- Karen Pryor
- Association of Professional Dog Trainers
- Pet Professional Guild
- Patricia McConnell
- Doggone Safe
- Dr. Sophia Yin
- Victoria Stillwell