

Obedience Training for Dogs

► Here are several basic concepts that a dog owner should know before beginning obedience training.

Introduction

New canine owners often assume that their new dog will automatically behave without formal training. They fail to realize that obedience training is what develops a dog into a compatible companion animal. Without obedience training, a dog may become a nuisance and a source of stress rather than a source of pride and comfort.

With a commitment of time and effort, a dog owner can train his or her dog to become more than a pet. Training will help make a dog well behaved and easy to control. It will also allow owner and dog to form a bond and learn to respect each other. Obedience training is what makes the difference. A commitment of 15 to 30 minutes a day, five days a week for about six weeks is generally required for fundamental obedience training. Both young and old dogs can be trained. The sooner the lessons begin the sooner the owner and dog can begin developing a bonding relationship of mutual respect. However, obedience training for puppies should begin when they are 12 weeks old. Before this, they are not sufficiently mentally, emotionally, or physically developed for obedience training.

Concept Development

Several basic concepts that a dog owner should know before beginning obedience training are as follows:

- Dogs respond best to positive methods of reinforcement, which involve using verbal praise and canine treats. When using verbal praise, learn to use an excited tone of voice, which gets the dog enthused. A dull monotone voice will not motivate a dog. If you use treats, break them into smaller pieces for quick consumption so that training can resume quickly.
- Dogs have short attention spans and puppies have even shorter ones so 15-30-minute daily sessions work best for young and adult dogs. With puppies, you may find it best to break the working times into several short sessions spaced throughout the day.
- Take breaks. Do not hesitate to take a short break if the session becomes stressful. If you become



Figure 1. Dog and owner ready to train. iStock image by damedeeso.

frustrated or the dog becomes confused, it is probably an appropriate time for a break. Don't give up because the dog may believe that when it misbehaves during sessions, it wins.

- Take time off. Obedience training should take place five days every week. You and your dog deserve a day or two away from the training. This serves as a form of reward for all the hard work.

Finally, group sessions are an important part of obedience training. They are beneficial for several reasons:

- They teach each dog socialization skills with other canines and new people.
- They teach each dog that distractions (noise and activities) are normal and should not be a deterrent.
- Working in groups allows opportunities for sharing ideas, experiences, and inspiration for each handler. Search the advertising section of your local phone book for a list of clubs or associations that conduct obedience training classes. You may find these listed under pets or kennels. Local pet shops are also good sources of information.



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