

## Chapter 1

# Recognizing Why Dog Training Is Important

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Recognizing a well-trained dog
  - ▶ Understanding the five basic commands
  - ▶ Figuring out who the trainer is — you or your dog
  - ▶ Knowing the YOU factor
  - ▶ Deciphering your dog's thoughts
  - ▶ Eyeing advanced training opportunities
  - ▶ Looking at dog's relationship with man
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**O**ver the course of the last 30 years, dog training has undergone enormous changes. When we started training dogs in the late 1960s, dogs were hauled around on choke chains and jerked every which way without any clue of what was expected of them. They did get trained, but it wasn't pretty.

We felt that there was an inherent unfairness in “correcting” a dog that had no idea why he was being corrected. There had to be a fairer way — a way in which the dog is systematically taught a command without the use of sheer brute force.

At that time, the use of food in training was considered anathema, and when we introduced food in the teaching process, the dog training community promptly labeled us heretics. Today, the use of food in training is considered *de rigueur*. As a result, training has become user-friendlier for you and your dog.

As a gift to yourself and your dog, as well as your family and your friends and neighbors, train your dog. Doing so means sanity for you, safety for your dog, and compliments from people you meet. Make him an ambassador of goodwill for all dogs. Your dog has a life expectancy of 8 to 16 years. Now is the time to ensure that these years are mutually rewarding for you and your dog. This book shows you how to teach him to be the well-trained dog you want him to be. Believe us, it's well worth the investment.

## *Identifying a Well-Trained Dog*

A well-trained dog is a joy to have around. He is welcome almost anywhere because he behaves around people and around other dogs. He knows how to stay, and he comes when called. He's a pleasure to take for a walk, and he can be let loose for a romp in the park. He can be taken on trips and family outings. He is a member of the family in every sense of the word.

The most important benefit for your dog is your safety, the safety of others, and his own safety. A dog that listens and does what he's told rarely gets into trouble. Instead of being a slave to a leash or a line, a trained dog is truly a free dog — he can be trusted to stay when told, not to jump on people, to come when called, and not to chase a cat across the road.

For more than 30 years, we have taught dog training classes, seminars, and weeklong training camps. We listen carefully when our students tell us what a well-trained dog should be. First and foremost, they say, he has to be house-trained (see Chapter 4). After that, in order of importance, a well-trained dog is one who

- ✔ Doesn't jump on people
- ✔ Doesn't beg at the table
- ✔ Doesn't bother guests
- ✔ Comes when called
- ✔ Doesn't pull on the leash

Note that these requirements, with one exception, are expressed in the negative — that is, *dog, don't do that*. For purposes of training, you need to express these requirements in the positive so that you can teach your dog exactly what you expect from him. (See Chapter 10.) Here is what the new list of requirements for a well-trained dog looks like:

- ✔ Sit when I tell you.
- ✔ Go somewhere and chill out.

- ✓ Lie down when I tell you and stay there.
- ✓ Come when called.
- ✓ Walk on a loose leash.

The “Sit” and “Down-Stay” commands are the building blocks for a well-trained dog; if Buddy knows nothing else, you can live with him. Of course, your Buddy might have some additional wrinkles that need ironing out, some of which are more matters of management than training (see Chapter 10). He may enjoy *landscaping*, as do our Dachshunds, who delight in digging holes in the backyard and can do so with amazing speed and vigor. Unless you’re willing to put up with what can become major excavation projects, the best defense is to expend this digging energy with plenty of exercise, training, and supervision. Another favorite pastime of some dogs is raiding the garbage. Prevention is the cure here: Put the garbage where your dog can’t get to it.



One of our Dachshunds learned to open the refrigerator by yanking on the towel we kept draped through the door handle and to help himself to anything he could reach. Prevention was the answer. We removed the towel.

## Identifying the Basic Five Commands

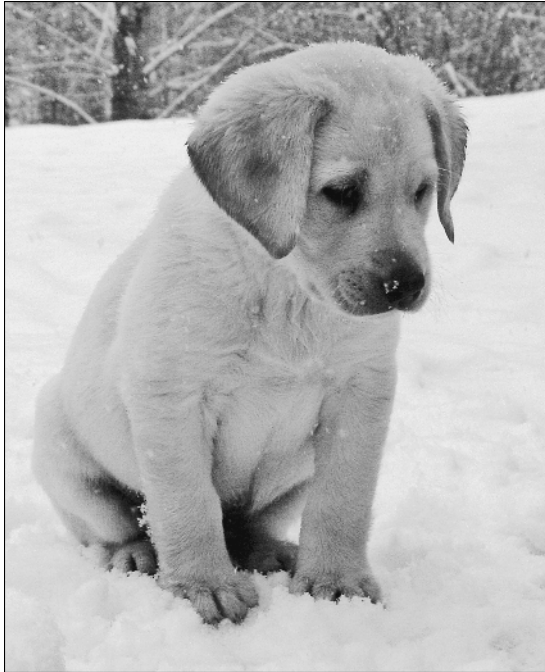
Every dog needs to know five basic commands: “Sit,” “Go Lie Down,” “Down,” “Come,” and “Easy.” You can look at these as safety and sanity commands — your dog’s safety and your sanity.

### The “Sit” command

You use the “Sit” command (check out Chapter 7) to teach your dog to sit politely for petting instead of jumping on people, to sit at the door instead of barging ahead of you, to sit when you put his food dish on the floor instead of trying to grab it out of your hand, and anytime you need him to control himself. See Figure 1-1.

### The “Go Lie Down” command

You use the “Go Lie Down” command (see Chapter 7) to send your dog to a particular place and stay there when you want to eat your meal in peace instead of having him beg at the table, or when you have company instead of having him pester your guests.



**Figure 1-1:**  
Dogs and  
puppies sit  
naturally,  
but training  
them to  
do so on  
command  
helps keep  
them well  
behaved.

*Photograph by Jane Kelso*

## *The “Down” command*

You use the “Down” command (see Chapters 7 and 16) when you want him to down in place and stay there until you release him.

## *The “Come” command*

You need to teach your dog the “Come” command (see Chapters 8 and 14) so you can call him when you take him for a hike or when he wants to chase a squirrel, or whatever.

## *The “Easy” command*

You want to teach your dog the “Easy” command (check out Chapter 8) so that you can walk him on leash without being pulled off your feet.

## What is an untrained dog?

The untrained dog has few privileges. When guests come, he is locked away because he is too unruly. When the family sits down to eat, he's locked up or put outside because he begs at the table. He's never allowed off leash because he runs away and stays out for hours at a time. Nobody wants to take him for a walk because he pulls, and he never gets to go on family outings because he's a nuisance.

Dogs are social animals, and one of the cruelest forms of punishment is to deprive them of the opportunity to interact with family members on a regular basis. Isolating a dog from contact with humans is inhumane. Spending quality time with your dog by training him will make him the beloved pet he deserves to be.

## Just Who Is Training Whom?

Training is a two-way street: Buddy is just as involved in training you as you are in trying to train him. The trouble is that Buddy is already a genius at training you, a skill with which he was born. Put another way, a dog comes into the world knowing what is to his advantage and what isn't, and he'll do whatever he can to get what he wants. You, on the other hand, have to discover the skills of training him, just as we had to. (See Chapter 2.)

One of these skills is figuring out how to recognize when you're inadvertently rewarding behaviors you may not want to reinforce. Begging at the dinner table is a good example. When Buddy begs at the table and you slip him some food, he is training you to feed him from the table. You need to ask yourself, "Is this a behavior I want to encourage?" If the answer is no, then stop doing it, no matter what. (And check out Chapter 7.)



Most dogs eventually ignore commands that don't lead to tangible consequences. When he responds to a command, reward him by praising him. If he chooses not to respond to a command he has been taught, correct him.

Now look at another situation: Buddy has taken himself for an unauthorized walk through the neighborhood. You're late for an appointment but don't want to leave with Buddy out on the streets. You frantically call and call. Finally, Buddy makes an appearance, happily sauntering up to you. You, on the other hand, are fit to be tied, and you let him know your displeasure in no uncertain terms by giving him a thorough scolding. You now need to ask yourself, "Is this the kind of greeting that will make Buddy want to come to me?" If the answer is no, then stop doing it, no matter what. (And check out Chapter 8.)

Here are two examples of how your dog is training you:

- ✓ Buddy drops his ball in your lap while you're watching television and you throw it for him.
- ✓ Buddy nudges or paws your elbow when you're sitting on the couch and you pet him.

Buddy has trained you well. Is there anything wrong with that? Not at all, *provided* you can tell him to go lie down when you don't feel like throwing the ball or petting him.

## *Understanding the YOU Factor*

Several factors influence how successful you'll be in turning your pet into a well-trained dog. Some of these are under your direct control, and others come with your dog.

The factors that are under your direct control are

- ✓ Your expectations
- ✓ Your attitude
- ✓ Your dog's environment
- ✓ Your dog's social needs
- ✓ Your dog's emotional needs
- ✓ Your dog's physical needs
- ✓ Your dog's nutritional needs

There is a direct relationship between your awareness and understanding of these factors and your success as your dog's teacher. This section focuses on the first two factors: your expectations and your attitudes. We deal with the other factors in Chapter 9.

### *Knowing your expectations*

Most people have varying ideas of what they expect from their companions. Some of these expectations are realistic; others aren't. You have heard people say, "My dog understands every word I say," and perhaps you think that your dog does. If it were as easy as that, you wouldn't need dog trainers or training books.

Sometimes your dog may seem to really understand what you say. However, if a dog understands every word his owner says, how come the dog doesn't do

what he is told? Still, enough truth does exist to perpetuate the myth. Although dogs don't understand the words you use, they do understand tone of voice, and sometimes even your intent.

### ***Are your expectations realistic?***

Do you believe your dog obeys commands because he

- ✓ Loves you
- ✓ Wants to please you
- ✓ Is grateful
- ✓ Has a sense of duty
- ✓ Feels a moral obligation

We suspect that you answered, “yes” to the first and second questions, became unsure at the third question, and then realized that we were leading you down a primrose path.



If your approach to training is based on moral ideas regarding punishment, reward, obedience, duty, and the like, you're bound to handle the dog in the wrong way. No doubt your dog loves you, but he won't obey commands for that reason. Does he want to please you? Not exactly, but it sometimes seems like he does. What he is really doing is pleasing himself.

Moreover, Buddy doesn't have the least bit of gratitude for anything you do for him and won't obey commands for that reason either. He's interested in only one thing: What's in it for me right now? Buddy certainly has no sense of duty or feelings of moral obligation. The sooner you discard beliefs like that, the quicker you'll come to terms with how to approach his education.

### ***Are your expectations too low?***

Do you believe your dog doesn't obey commands because he

- ✓ Is stubborn
- ✓ Is hardheaded
- ✓ Is stupid
- ✓ Lies awake at night thinking of ways to aggravate you

If you answered “yes” to any of these, you're guilty of *anthropomorphizing*, that is, attributing human characteristics and attributes to an animal. Making this characterization is easy to do, but it doesn't help in your training.

Dogs aren't stubborn or hardheaded. To the contrary, they're quite smart when it comes to figuring out how to get their way. And they don't lie awake at night thinking of ways to aggravate you — they sleep, just like everybody else.

### *What should your expectations be?*

So why does your dog obey your command? Usually for one of three reasons:

- ✓ He wants something.
- ✓ He thinks it's fun, like retrieving a ball.
- ✓ He has been trained to obey.

When he obeys for either the first or the second reason, he does it for himself; when he obeys for the third reason, he does it for you. This distinction is important because it deals with reliability and safety. Ask yourself this question: If Buddy obeys only because he wants something or because it's fun, will he obey when he doesn't want something or when it's no longer fun? The answer is obvious.



The well-trained dog obeys because he has been trained. This doesn't mean you and he can't have fun in the process, so long as the end result is clearly understood. When you say, "Come," there are no options, especially when the safety of others, or his own, is involved.

## *Knowing your attitude*

One of the most important aspects of training is your attitude toward your dog. During training, you want to maintain a friendly and positive attitude. For many people, maintaining this attitude can be enormously difficult because frequently they don't start to think about training until Buddy has become an uncontrollable nuisance. He's no longer cute and cuddly, he has become incredibly rambunctious, everything he does is wrong, and he certainly doesn't listen.



Don't train your dog when you're irritable or tired. You want training to be a positive experience for your dog. If you ever get frustrated during training, stop and come back to it at another time. When you're frustrated, your communications consist of "no," "bad dog," "how could you do this," and "get out and stay out." You're unhappy and Buddy is unhappy because you're unhappy.

A better approach is to train him with firm kindness so both of you can be happy. An unfriendly or hostile approach doesn't gain you your dog's cooperation and will needlessly prolong the training process. When you become frustrated or angry, the dog becomes anxious and nervous, and is unable to learn (see Chapter 9). When you feel that you're becoming a little irritable, stop training and come back to it in a better frame of mind. You want training to be a positive experience for Buddy (and you).

## Training and your dog's age

From birth until maturity, your dog goes through physical and mental developmental periods. What happens during these stages can, and often does, have a lasting effect on your dog. His outlook on life will be shaped during these periods, as will his behavior.

The age at which a puppy is separated from its mother and littermates has a profound influence on his behavior as an adult. Taking a pup away from the mother too soon may have a negative effect on his ability to handle training. For example, housetraining may be more difficult under these circumstances. A pup's ability to learn is important to becoming a well-trained dog. It will also affect his dealings with people and other

dogs. So what is the ideal time for your puppy to make the transition to its new home? All the behavioral studies that have been done recommend the 49th day, give or take a day or two.

These studies have also shown that dogs begin to learn at 3 weeks of age. At 7 weeks old, their brains are neurologically complete, and all the circuits are wired. Their mind is a blank page, and all you have to do is fill it with the right information. They won't forget what they learn in the next few weeks. If you wait until your dog is older, he'll probably have picked up several bad habits, which means you have to erase the page and start all over, a much more tedious job than starting when he's a puppy.

## Figuring Out How Your Dog Thinks

Does your dog think? Certainly. He just thinks like a dog, and to anyone who has been around dogs, sometimes it's uncanny! It's almost as though he can read your mind. But is it your mind he is reading, or has he simply memorized your behavior patterns?



Using your powers of observation, you too can discover what goes through Buddy's mind. The direction of his eyes, his body posture, his tail position, the position of his ears, up or down, and the direction of his whiskers, pointed forward or pulled close to his muzzle, are all indicators of what he is thinking at the moment. The more the two of you interact, the better you'll become at knowing what Buddy thinks.

### *"Reading" your dog*

Just as your dog takes his cues from watching you, so can you figure out how to interpret what's on his mind by watching him. For instance, you know Buddy has the propensity to jump on the counter to see whether he can find any food to steal. Because he has done this a number of times before, you begin to recognize his intentions by the look on his face — for example, head and ears are up, whiskers pointed forward, intent stare — and the way he moves in the direction of the counter — with deliberate tail wagging.

What do you need to do? You interrupt Buddy's thought process by derauling the train. Say "just a minute, young man, not so fast," in a stern tone of voice. You can also whistle or clap your hands, anything to distract him. After that, tell him to go lie down and to forget about stealing the food.

What if he has already started the objectionable behavior? He has his paws firmly planted on the counter and is just about to snatch the steak. Use the same words to stop the thought process, physically remove him from the counter by his collar, and take him to his corner and tell him to lie down. For more on "reading" your dog, see Chapter 5.

## *When you don't read your dog in time*

What should you do if your dog has already managed to achieve the objectionable behavior? Absolutely nothing! Discipline after the fact is useless and inhumane. Your dog can't make the connection. The time to intervene is when your dog is thinking about what you don't want him to do.



Don't attempt any discipline after the offending deed has been accomplished. Your dog can't make the connection between the discipline and his actions. Your dog may look guilty, but not because he understands what he has done; he looks guilty because he understands you're upset.

Visualize yourself preparing a piece of meat for dinner. You leave the counter to answer the phone and after you return, the meat is gone. You know Buddy ate it. Your first reaction is anger. Immediately, Buddy looks guilty, and you assume he's guilty because he knows he has done wrong. However, Buddy knows no such thing. He's reacting to your anger and wonders why you're mad and, perhaps based on prior experience, expects to be the target of your wrath.



Your dog is already an expert at reading you. With a little time and practice, you, too, will be able to tell what's on his mind and read him like a book. His behavior is just as predictable as yours.

Look at it from Buddy's viewpoint. He thoroughly enjoyed the meat. Unfortunately, it's gone, and you can't bring it back. Nor can you make him un-enjoy it. If you discipline Buddy now, he won't understand why because he can't make the connection between the discipline and the meat he just ate. He can only make the connection between your anger and being disciplined.

If you don't believe us, try this experiment. Without Buddy's seeing you, drop a crumpled up piece of paper on the floor. Call Buddy to you and point accusingly at the paper and say in your most blaming voice, "What have you done, bad dog!" He will reward you with his most guilty look without having a clue what it's all about.



Moral of the story: Don't leave your valued belongings such as shoes, socks, or anything else near and dear to your heart lying about, where your dog can destroy them. Look at it this way — if you weren't a neat freak before you got your dog, you will be now.



If you attribute human qualities and reasoning abilities to your dog, your dealings with him are doomed to failure. He certainly doesn't experience guilt. Blaming the dog because “he ought to know better,” or “he shouldn't have done it,” or “how could he do this to me” won't improve his behavior. He also doesn't “understand every word you say,” and is only able to interpret your tone of voice and body language.

## *Tackling distractions*

Training your dog to respond to you in your backyard, with you being the center of his attention, is fairly simple. But then, the level of difficulty increases in relationship to the distractions the dog encounters in real life, such as:

- ✓ Joggers and cyclists
- ✓ New locations
- ✓ Other dogs
- ✓ Other people
- ✓ People coming to your home
- ✓ Wildlife

The ultimate goal of training is to have your dog respond to you under any and all circumstances. Your dog's Personality Profile (check out Chapter 5) can tell you how you have to train him to reach that goal. Also see Chapters 8, 13, and 14 for training around distractions, and Chapter 10 for more on dealing with objectionable behaviors.

## *Exploring Advanced Training for Fun and Competition*

Obedience competitions for companion dogs date back to the early 1930s, and the first obedience trial under American Kennel Club (AKC) rules took place in 1936. The purpose of obedience trials, as stated in the AKC Obedience Regulations, is to “demonstrate the dog's ability to follow specified routines in the obedience ring and emphasize the usefulness of the purebred dog as a companion of man.” We touch on the main trials in this section.

## *The Novice, Open, and Utility classes*

The three obedience classes, Novice, Open, and Utility, are designed so that dogs of any breed can participate. The level of difficulty increases with each class. The Novice class consists of basic control exercises, such as Heeling On and Off Leash, Coming When Called, and a Sit and Down-Stay (see Chapters 13 and 14). The Open class consists of Heeling Off Leash, Retrieving and Jumping, and a Sit and Down-Stay with the owner out of sight of the dog (see Chapters 15 and 16). In the Utility class the dog is expected to respond to signals to Heel, Sit, Stand and Down, and a more complex Retrieving exercise (see Chapter 17).

## *The Canine Good Citizen Certificate*

In the early 1970s the AKC developed the popular Canine Good Citizen test, the only AKC-administered program for both purebred dogs and mixed breeds. The Canine Good Citizen test uses a series of exercises that demonstrate the dog's ability to behave in an acceptable manner in public. Its purpose is to show that the dog, as a companion for all people, can be a respected member of the community and can be trained and conditioned to always behave in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs in a manner that reflects credit on the dog (see Chapter 12).

## *Agility, Rally Obedience, and more*

Since the Canine Good Citizen was started, the AKC has added Agility competitions (see Chapter 21) and most recently, Rally Obedience (see Chapter 13). For different breed-specific competitive events, such as Field Trials and Hunting Tests, Earthdog Trials, and Lure Coursing, see Chapter 21.

## *More than Training: Understanding How Dogs Help People*

Man and dog have been together for a long time. It didn't take man long to recognize the dog's potential as a valuable helper. Originally, the dog's main jobs were guarding, hauling, herding, and hunting. Over time, more jobs were added and now dogs perform an amazing variety of tasks. These tasks fall into four broad categories: service dogs, detection dogs, assistance dogs, and companion dogs. (See Chapter 21 for more information.)