**Week One**

**How to Train**

*Basics*

In this class, we are primarily using positive reinforcement—teaching our dogs by rewarding them for behavior we want them to do again. The most effective reward for dogs is usually food; I recommend using small, pea-sized pieces of something they love. Food has been shown to make the strongest association quickly for dogs learning new behaviors, and you can even use their normal mealtime food for basic training at home if they like it enough! Other rewards can be mixed in as desired, including toys and play, petting, and praise. Keep in mind that these things are only effective rewards if your dog likes them enough to want to repeat the behavior to earn them again!

*Markers*

A marker is a sound, like the click made by pressing the button on a clicker, or a word, such as “yes”, that marks the exact moment your dog does something right and is followed by a reward. This helps connect the dots for your dog so they understand WHY they are getting a treat. Whether you use a clicker or the word “yes” or keep both as options is totally up to you—just make sure that you always follow the noise or word with a reward so it maintains its value. The click or “yes” can later be faded out when your dog’s behavior is solid and you are fading out the treats as well.

So if you are teaching your dog to sit, for example, as soon as their rear end hits the ground you would click or “yes” and then give them a treat. Think of the timing of the marker like taking a picture of the behavior you want; as long as the marker happens at the right time, the treat can be a little slower because the marker has let them know they did something right and a reward will be coming.

**Watch**

Wait for your dog to make eye contact. Click or say “yes” and offer a treat. Repeat several times until they are offering eye contact more quickly. If desired, you can add a cue word into this such as “Watch.”

**Sit**

Move a treat from your dog’s nose slowly backwards over their head. As they lean back, their rear end should start to bend back and down. Once it hits the ground, click and treat.

**Touch**

Hold out a flat hand a few inches from your dog’s face. Most dogs will move toward it; as soon as their nose touches your hand, click and treat. If they don’t move toward your hand, remove it and try again with your hand in a different position/area. You can also start by clicking for looking at your hand or moving slightly toward it at first and build up to touching your hand if they are unsure. (Tip: Make sure you are looking at your hand and not your dog when you ask for this one; if you are making eye contact, they will probably stay focused on your face instead!)

**Doggie Zen**

Put a treat in your hand and show it to your dog. Close your fist and wait. Your dog may paw, smell, lick or nibble on your hand. As soon as they stop trying to get the treat, click and offer it to them. If they are really persistent and having trouble leaving the treat alone, you can draw your hand away for a moment and try again with it at a little more distance.

**Week Two**

**Leash Walking Step 1**

Recommended equipment: A harness with a clip on front of the chest is ideal. My preferred brands are the Freedom harness, the Balance harness by BlueK9, and the Ruffwear Frontrange harness. For dogs who are especially strong pullers, sometimes a head halter can be a good alternate option (I highly recommend you spend some time getting the dog used to the head halter with lots of good associations before walking them on it).

If you start to walk and your dog pulls (puts any tension on the leash), you should immediately either stop walking or change direction. Keep in mind that any time you allow your dog to pull forward as you walk, they are learning that pulling = getting to move forward in the direction they want.

If they are walking next to your side, make sure to click and treat, delivering the treat right next to your side (not in front of you, as this will cause them to start to go across you more when walking). Offer lots of praise and forward movement when they are not pulling on the leash!

**Down**

Start with your dog in a sit. Take a treat and lead it slowly from their nose straight down the the ground. Hold it there and wait. Click and treat when their front elbows touch the ground. (Tip: Some dogs may do better if you take the treat straight down and back toward them, between their front legs, or around to the side of their body.)

**Come When Called Step 1**

The first step of a strong come when called is to pair it with their absolute favorite treats. Choose a word that they don’t already ignore or have a bad association with (I like “here” for most situations) and start by saying the word and offering food right next to your leg. Do this 4 or 5 times in a row and take a break, then try again. Once they are getting excited when they hear the word, you can start to try it when they are a little further away or slightly distracted. Do NOT use it yet for situations where you aren’t sure they will come back to you; you don’t want them to learn to ignore it. Also be very careful to only use it for things with good associations, as it is really easy to poison this cue and teach them it means things are about to happen they may not like.

**Week Three**

**Leash Walking Step 2 – Close and Focus**

Close is the first step in teaching your dog to walk next to your side. If they are in front of you, you can use a treat or hand touches to have them follow your hand back and slightly out from your side, then lead your hand back in toward your side to have them turn around until they are facing the same direction as you, parallel with your foot. Click and treat. As they get better at this, you can work up to having them sit next to your side before clicking.

The other step for this week is to really work on rewarding focus on you while walking. If you are walking and they are looking at your face, make sure to reward that heavily. The more focused your dog is on you on your walks, the better they will be about staying near you and not veering off for distractions. Remember, you are competing with a lot of real world rewards, like squirrels and interesting smelling trees, so you need to be more interesting and rewarding!

**Greeting People**

Start by having your dog sit as someone approaches. While they are petting your dog, offer occasional treats and praise for keeping their feet on the ground. If they start to jump, ask the person to stop petting and move away until they have their paws on the ground and are calm enough to try again.

**Greeting Dogs**

I recommend starting at a distance of several feet. Get your dog to focus on your or sit. Click and treat. If you are going to allow a hello, tell them they can go say hi, relax your leash and/or move forward, and count to three. When you reach three, praise them and call them away or walk away. If you want to continue the greeting and the other dog is a new friend I recommend trying the three second greeting a few times to make sure they are getting along before allowing longer interaction. And of course, always ask the other person and make sure the other dog seems comfortable before allowing them to say hi!

**Leave It**

Start with doggie zen as done in week one. Move the treat to the ground, keeping it covered with your hand. If your dog stops going for it, click and treat. The eventual goal is that they will look fully away from the treat and at you, so eventually you will wait for that eye contact before clicking. As your dog is doing better, you can also slowly remove your hand until they are able to fully leave the treat alone even when uncovered.

**Week Four**

**Stay**

Start with your dog in a sit or down. Wait a few seconds, and if they hold the sit or down, click and treat. Slowly, start to lengthen this time, and add in a release word to let them know they can move again (I like “free). Once they can hold their stay for several seconds, you can add in a cue of “stay” and/or a hand help upright and flat (like a “stop” signal). You can also start to slowly add in distance by moving, backwards or to the side. Always end the stay with a release word or another cue, such as come when called. If they are having trouble holding the stay, trying a shorter time or less distance until they are doing better.

**Heel**

Start with your dog in a “close” position, next to your side and facing the same direction as you. Reward them in that spot a few times. Say “heel” and take a few steps forward. If they stay next to your side, click and treat, making sure the treat is delivered right where you want their head to be, over to your side. For most dogs, after about three steps they will start to pull ahead, so start with these short distances before clicking and treating. Over time you can try to take more steps and space out when the treats occur.

**Come When Called with Distractions**

I recommend having your dog on a long leash or in an indoor space for this step. Pick an item for your dog that will be interesting but they should be able to leave alone – a lower value toy or closed bag or container with lower value treats can be a good starting point. Place this item on the ground at a little bit of distance and call your dog to come to you. As soon as they are heading your direction, click and jackpot them (the best treats or multiple treats) when they get to you. Gradually move the distracting item closer so they can even pass by it if it is in their path. Over time, you can make the distracting item more difficult; the goal is to leave it alone or ignore it when you call, even if they have some interest in it. If they are failing every time, go back to an easier object!

**Week Five**

**Heel with Leave It**

Place a lower value item (less exciting toy or piece of food) on the ground. With your dog at a distance where the item will be out of reach, ask them to close and heel. Walk past the item, keeping it out of reach at first, and click and treat if they look at it without pulling toward it. If they do move toward it, make sure to hold the leash steady and ask them to “leave it.” Click and treat for moving away from the item. Gradually move closer until they can be within reach and still not grab it.

**Chin Rest**

Hold one hand at your dog’s face level or just below, a little in front of them, palm up and sideways. Take a treat in the other hand and lure them across until their chin is on your palm. Click (or “yes”, since both hands are busy!) and treat. After a few tries, try this with no treat in your hand, just rewarding after the click or yes. Start to reward for longer periods of calm until they can sit with their chin resting in your hand for longer and longer.

**Drop It**

Begin with no object present. Say “drop” and drop a treat near your dog. After a few repetitions of this, you can try reaching toward your dog more when releasing the treat, or pointing the treat out with your hand after you drop it; this is to get your dog used to your hand reaching toward them for when you will need to pick up a dropped item. Eventually, you will have an object like a toy in the space, continuing this exercise even if they are not picking up the toy, and build to where they will look for the treat and open their mouth to pick it up as soon as you say drop, even if they are holding an item.

Here is an excellent video that lays out this process:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndTiVOCNY4M

**Week Six**

**Puppy Pushups**

Puppy pushups are just a sit, followed by a down, followed a sit. This is great practice for distinguishing between a sit and down on cue as well as sitting up from a down!

**Trick – Bow or Spin**

Bow – Start with your dog standing. Take a treat and lure from their nose straight down and slightly back between their front legs. Click or “yes” while their rear end is still in the air, even if it’s briefly at first, and then treat! Do this until they start to keep their rear in the air, elbows on the ground in front, in a “bow” for longer and longer. You can add a cue of “bow” or “take a bow” once they get the hang of it!

Spin – Start with your dog standing. Take a treat and lead from their nose toward the side of their body. If they will continue to follow the treat, lead them in a full circle before clicking and treating. If they stop partway or have trouble, you can shape this by clicking and treating for making progress around the circle until they get a complete spin!