

THE BASICS

Sitting to the Whistle

Sitting the dog to a whistle is just a continuation of the sit command with the hand signal. Instruct the dog to sit along with the hand signal, then give one 2 second blast on the whistle.

Dogs are not hard of hearing so the whistle can be as quiet as you choose.

There are many ways to get the dog to sit to the whistle, the above is one basic method.

Recall to the whistle

To train recall, call your dog by name, followed by two short pips on the whistle, as the dog comes in repeat the pips.

If the dog is a little slow in the recall pat your leg, turn and walk away from the dog.

Always do this when the dog is moving and always encourage it all the way back in.

Try not to put it on the lead every time, as it will start to not want to come back as it will feel end of play is applied when it comes back.

You can however call the dog in put it on the lead, stand up, then take it off the lead, and let it run on.

This way the dog will not associate the lead with anything negative. If the dog does not come back immediately raise your voice, and when the dog turns to you, praise the dog.

Introduction to the world

It is most important to get our new arrival to the family introduced to as many things as possible. This is better known as socialisation.

Your pup needs to experience as much as possible, without it being worried about anything we show it. For instance, we would not stand next to a busy main road to see if it can cope with cars.

What we would do, is go to a road where very few cars pass, and when they do, they are slow, and not rushing past us. So the key part of socialisation is to do it at a pace your new arrival can cope with.

Please note that not all dogs are the same, and some may take longer to adjust to new situations.

The pup on a lead

The first time we introduce a pup to a lead, it can prove to be a bad experience, if not done correctly.

Get the puppy in a place where it is happy. Normally this will be in your house, or in the garden. Show it the lead, touch the pup with it, but be sure not to torment it with the lead. If you can, take hold of the dog, and put the lead around the dog's neck. Then take it off. Show the pup it is not a problem, and it's all a game. Keep doing this whilst the dog is in your arms.

Eventually, we can put the pup on the ground, and let it walk around with the lead on. If it pulls you then go with it.

Don't try to stop it, or walk it at heel. Let the dog take you where it wants, we can sort heel work out when the dog is happy with the lead. When the pup starts to relax, we should try and encourage it towards us, and when it turns to us, we reward with a soft voice, telling the dog it is good.

Pups or dogs don't understand words, but they understand tones. A soft voice is welcoming, and the pup should react to it. We can then start to walk the pup in the direction we want. From then on, increase the length of time the pup is on the lead, but ensure it is all a positive experience.

Heel work

It's so nice to be able to take your dog for a walk on the lead. Whether to the local park, to the shops, or on a shoot, but only if it walks nicely on the lead.

This is an element of training that many people struggle with, when really there is no need to.

A dog on a lead pulling is dreadful, and it spoils your walk. You get annoyed, and could end up being pulled over in slippery conditions, or at best, a sore hand from pulling the lead. We have to remember the basic principles that I apply to all gundog training 'NICE VOICE, NOT SO NICE VOICE'. The tone of voice is difference between good and bad to the dog.

How many of you have let the dog come off heel, tugged the lead, then shouted "heel"!!!! Let us try and understand what we have just done. We have pulled the lead, and used the word heel as a correction, when we should only use it as a command.

This follows the basic principle of all dog training, which is, letting the dog know the difference between right and wrong.

We have now established how we speak to the dog. Sit the dog at the side of you on the lead. Then, in a calm relaxed voice give the command "heel", and set off. Don't set off, then say heel as the dog will move to your body language and not your command.

If the dog starts to pull, you have several options. Firstly, you can raise your voice with a "aghh" sound, and apply pressure on the lead. Secondly, you can change direction. If the dog pulls again, change direction again, ensuring you keep the dog nice and close to you. In some cases, the dog will put its nose to the floor, get the dog to sit, this moves its head up.

Be consistent with your commands, and methodical in your training. Soon your dog should be walking at the side of you, nice and relaxed. When you have achieved this, you can then start to really tidy its heel work up.

A good idea is to walk alongside a wall, or hedge, with the dog on the inside. Change the pace you walk, to get the dog to adjust to your speed, not the other way round.

Sit and Stay

This is one of the foundation commands of all our training.

Without this command, it would be difficult to complete most of our requirements in the training of a dog, and ultimately in the field. This command is taught from an early age, and can be introduced whilst feeding the dog. Begin by lifting the food bowl high above the dog's head, and give the command 'Sit'. With your other hand press

down on the rear of the dog. As soon as the dog sits, place the bowl on the floor. It does not take long for the dog to understand sit, means it is rewarded by the food.

It is my belief that we should use as fewer commands as possible. Therefore I do not use "Stay". I use the SIT command for stay. The dog is told to SIT and to sit there until given another command. The art of training a dog SIT, and stay, in one position, is not to cut corners. Command the dog to SIT, and whenever possible hold a flat palm in front of the dog.

When the dog is sat take one step back, and repeat the command. If the dog moves, you must always put it back where it came from, do not cut corners. Soon you will be able to walk further away from the dog and start to walk around the dog.

At this stage never call the dog in, the handler should always return to the dog. If you call the dog in you are asking it not to sit, so we should not confuse where possible.

Steadiness

Steadiness is very important with all gundog training, and to train steadiness, you must always put yourself in a win situation.

Sit the dog down in front of you, and drop a dummy out of your game bag or pocket. When you do this give the command sit. If the dog moves place it back where it came from.

When the dog is steady to the falling dummy you can then drop the dummy at arm's length.

Do not use a ball at this stage as the ball will continue moving, and encourage the dog to run in. Once the dog is steady to this you can then start to throw the dummies around the dog.

Do not let the dog have any retrieves on this exercise, and do not throw the dummies too far, just far enough that you are still able to reach them before the dog does should it break from the sit.

Then walk around the dog dropping dummies. Gradually increasing the distance between you and the dog.

Do not forget to repeat the command 'Sit' when you drop the dummies.

Following this procedure you will soon be able to throw dummies all around the dog who will remain sat.