

Dog Training Guide



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Dog & puppy setup & info

- Remove rugs as puppies may mistake them for puppy pads.
- Always leave toys with foster dogs/puppies to help prevent boredom destruction.
- Fosters dogs and puppies are to remain in their foster home at all times unless going for a walk (must be on lead) or in your own secure, fenced yard. Some dogs can jump/climb over or dig under fences surprisingly fast, so please be cautious when leaving foster dogs unsupervised.
- Puppies under 4 months are only allowed outside your property 2 weeks after the 3rd vaccine (or 2 weeks after 1st vaccine if older than 4 months) with the exception of vet appointments and any other outings pre-approved by the Foster Care Officer. *We recognise the importance of socialisation particularly in small pups under 4 months* so if you're fostering a puppy under 4 months, please contact the Foster Care Officer to discuss this!
- Foster dogs and pups are not permitted to visit dog parks, pet shops or other locations with lots of dogs without permission from the Foster Care Officer.
- Foster dogs are prohibited from socializing with other dogs, except those living in the foster carer home unless the Foster Care Officer has given permission.
- During walks, a minimum 3 meters should be maintained between fosters dogs and other animals, except those also living in the foster carers home.

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Bringing home a dog or pup

Before going inside, give the dog/pup the chance to go to the toilet. Neither of you want to start out with accidents! Have a clear 'game plan' for when you arrive home with your foster dog. Where will they sleep? Will they be crated or will they have a bed? Are they allowed on the furniture? Make sure your entire household knows and agrees on these rules and boundaries before introducing your foster dog.

Do not flood your dog with excitement and/or visitors when you first arrive home. Wait a couple of days to settle in first. Ensure your foster dog has a 'safe zone' like a bed or crate where they can go for quiet time when needed. Reward them for spending time there.

Establishing a predictable routine will help the dog feel safe and know what is expected of him/her and what is happening next. Make 'alone time' fun, valuable and rewarding by using some of the methods listed under 'mental stimulation' below in this guide.

Look At That! (Socialisation with other dogs)

We play the Look At That game to teach the dogs to be comfortable in their surroundings.

Dogs can be a little anxious when placed in environments or near dogs they don't know and this will teach you how to make the dog more comfortable around other dogs.

By rewarding them for glancing at the other dogs we are teaching them that it is ok for them to check out their surroundings and then to look back to you straight away.

It also changes how they feel about the other dogs. This is called Counter Conditioning. They begin to think "Whoopee! Another dog! That means I can earn treats!"

This game not only teaches your dog what to do, it changes how he feels.

As your dog glances at another dog in class or on the street say 'Yes' immediately and give your dog a treat.

Say 'Yes' and then treat (in that order) your dog every time he glances at the other dog. Soon he will start looking at the other dog not because he is worried about it but just to get you to give him a treat. This is great! Keep rewarding him for it. He has learned the game. You can now name the game "Look at that!" or "Look!"

Make your voice sound relaxed and fun when you say "Look at that!" or "Look!" because we want our dog to feel great about something that they were not sure about to begin with.

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If your dog did not look at you when you say 'Yes' (i.e. the dog has just looked at another dog) then he is most likely too close to the other dog to practice this exercise. Move further away until he is able to re-orient to you easily as soon as you click.

If your dog likes to bark at or otherwise react to other dogs make sure you say 'Yes' and give him a treat before they have a chance to react. This interrupts the behaviour sequence that we don't like and redirects the dog to look back at you. (After a while he will not feel the need to bark anyway because we are reducing his anxiety about the other dog by counter conditioning.)

You can play "Look at That!" with just about anything that your dog is worried about, including new people (if the dog is nervous around new people). Just remember to keep far enough away so your dog can easily look back at you and does not appear worried. Slowly get closer with time and practice.

Mental stimulation

Walking is a fun and a social way to exercise our dogs and ourselves but rarely achieves the desired result of tiring our dogs out. Like us our dogs require a certain amount of mental stimulation to prevent boredom and thrive. This may be given in the way of games, training sessions, food, toys and much more.

Below are some suggestions you may like to try. These are great to use when your dog is left alone. Providing plenty of mental stimulation will help you to reduce destructive and problematic behaviour.

- ✓ **Scatter feeding** – Throw kibble/dry food around the yard rather than feeding in a bowl. This makes a small meal go a long way and gives your dog something to focus on.
- ✓ **Coke bottles/milk cartons** – Remove all lids and rings from bottles. Place a handful of kibble into the bottle and leave your dog to work it out! You may like to make a couple of extra holes in the bottle to begin with until your dog gets the idea.
- ✓ **Ice blocks** – Use old take away containers or margarine tubs to make ice blocks. Simply add some diluted stock or gravy to some kibble and then freeze. Tip the ice block out of the container for your dog to enjoy.
- ✓ **Food toys** – KONGs and treat dispensing balls are great.
- ✓ **Swimming pool** - Clamshells make a great swimming pool for those dogs who enjoy the water.
- ✓ **Tug toys** – Try hanging an old tyre or piece of rope from a tree for those dogs that enjoy a game.
- ✓ **Rotate toys** - Do not leave the same toys available to your dog for more than 3 consecutive days. Try to have at least 3 piles of toys to rotate. Include a favourite in each pile.

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- ✓ **Doggy doors** – A doggy door allows your dog more control over their daily routine resulting in a calmer more confident pet. Allowing access into the home even when you are away is often effective in reducing nuisance barking and improving separation anxiety. Do make sure that the dog will not be destructive if left alone in your home.

Toilet Training

If a dog has been brought up in a good, sanitary environment he should prefer to toilet away from food, water and bedding. However, for a dog that was not raised in ideal conditions, or has been in a shelter for a long period, this may not be the case.

You will need to begin by restricting free access to your home whilst your dog is unattended. This could be outside or you may choose to crate or pen your dog. Whatever you choose, ensure the area is a comfortable and safe place for your dog.

Take your dog out to the designated toileting area after every play, sleep, meal or drink – on average every hour. When your dog goes to the toilet say the word “toilet” and praise and reward heavily. Give your dog a little food treat or toss a toy if they enjoy them each time they toilet outside. Pats and praise are often low value rewards and should not be used alone until the dog is happily performing the behaviour.

DO NOT reprimand your dog for toileting inside! This will discourage your dog from toileting where you can see him and may lead to further problematic behaviour.

Sit

Use a treat to lure your dog into position. Hold a treat at the dog’s nose and gradually move it up and over their head. As their bottom hits the ground add the word “sit”. Dogs are very visually stimulated so try turning your luring action into a clear and consistent hand signal.

Once your dog is sitting consistently try reducing your hand signals, making them less obvious and from further away. Stop using treats to lure your dog but still reward them with treats when they sit. As the behaviour becomes more consistent you can stop treating every time and begin to randomise rewards. Do not take away rewards all at once. If you begin to get failures, take things back a step.

Once you have achieved a stable sit, in a calm and familiar environment, it’s time to start adding distractions and working on distance and duration. Remember if you are not succeeding every time, slow down and take things back a step. You will need to increase your treats again every time you practice in a new area or build your distractions; it will take a while before your dog generalises the word “sit”.

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Stay

A "stay" command is unnecessary if your dog understands "sit" means sit. After all your dog cannot 'sit' and move at the same time. However, many dogs are not taught that every behaviour has a start and a finish. People are good at remembering to cue the start of a behaviour with a word such as 'sit' but they often forget to tell the dog when he can 'unsit'.

Teach your dog a release word

A 'release word', cue or signal lets the dog know that the behaviour you have asked for is over.

If your dog never learns a release word, he's going to get up when he thinks he's been there long enough! If you are unreliable and forget to release your dog, your dog will also be unreliable.

Start with very short 'stays' – so that the dog learns an end is coming. Once your dog understands this principle, he will wait for any length of time, assured that you have not forgotten about him. Common release words are 'free', 'off you go', 'playtime' and "o.k."

Place your dog in a sit and move one step away. Return to the dog immediately and toss a treat away for them to get up and follow. Give your release word as your dog gets up to move. Repeat as needed. Once your sit becomes more stable increase distance, distractions and duration before giving your release word. Remember to always return to your dog before releasing, as this will discourage anticipation.

Drop

As with the sit, use a treat to lure your dog into position. Hold a treat to your dog's nose and gradually lower it towards the ground. Aim for just in front of your dog's toes. Do not be tempted to drag your hand forward as this will likely result in your dog's bottom popping up. Take your time and give the dog a chance to work it out. As their tummy hits the ground say the word "drop".

Always teach this from a sit. Repeat and progress as with a sit.

Pulling on the lead

When we come across any behaviour we don't like our first course of action is this:

1. Find out how the behaviour is being rewarded and take that reward away.
2. Train an alternate and incompatible behaviour and reward it highly.

1. How is pulling on the lead being rewarded?

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Most dogs love going for a walk. It is filled with sights, sounds and most importantly smells that are exciting and fascinating. Every step forward your dog takes is extremely rewarding. So if he is pulling on the lead and continuing the walk he is being rewarded.

How can we take that reward away? Easy. As soon as the lead is tight we stop. We do not continue the walk until the lead is loose.

2. What do we want him to do instead?

We are going to pick a spot where we do want our dogs to walk. It doesn't matter if it is on your left or right, next to you or slightly in front where you can see him. Pick a spot that is comfortable for you and your dog. In that spot imagine a circle. Any time your dog steps into the imaginary circle Click with a clicker and Treat (or say YES and treat, this can be done instead). It's best to start learning this in the back yard with the dog off lead. Wander around your yard Clicking and treating whenever your dog steps into your imaginary circle.

Soon your dog will have figured out where the circle is. Now we are going to expect him to walk with you within that circle for 1 step before he is clicked. When he is good at that we will expect him to be in the circle for 2 steps before he is clicked. And so on.

When your dog is capable of walking with you within that circle for 5 or 6 steps you can attach his lead.

Be very careful that you do not use the lead to pull him into the imaginary circle. If you pull him into the imaginary circle then the lead is tight! We want our dogs to learn that when the lead is tight we don't move. If you need to, attach the lead to your belt or loop it around your elbow.

So now you can put it all together. Rewarding walking within the circle and stopping the instant the lead goes tight. Remember you can reward your dog in different ways. When he is walking nicely you can point out an interesting object for him to investigate or start a game of on-lead chasings.

When your dog is good at this in the back yard you can head out into the real world. *Remember that this is raising the level of distraction quite high so you will have to lower your standards for a little while.* If, in the back yard, your dog can walk within the circle for 10 or so steps then when you head out onto the footpath you may have to start rewarding him for just 3 steps. Then you can slowly increase the criteria again.

Tips for common behaviours

Jumping up

When we come across any behaviour we don't like our first course of action is this:

1. Find out how the behaviour is being rewarded and take that reward away.

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2. Train an alternate and incompatible behaviour and reward it highly.

1. How is jumping up being rewarded?

Usually it is with our attention. Even if we yell “get off”, push the dog towards the ground or even just look at him he is getting our attention. From now on you should only ever give your dog attention if he is decidedly attached to the ground. If the dog is sitting that is even better. As soon as a paw comes up, patting ceases. If he has all 4 feet on the floor or sits, pats start up again. Try to get everyone the dog meets to do the same thing. Sometimes the dog is rewarded by us continuing to do what he wants.

For example, if your dog jumps up on you while you are preparing his meal do you continue to make it? Instead you should immediately return his dish to the counter and go back to what you were doing before you decided to feed him. Wait a few minutes and try again. Each time your dog jumps up mark the unfortunate event with an “oh Dear” and stop the process of feeding him. Same goes for taking a toy outside for a game, if the dog jumps up the toy goes back in the toy box/cupboard and you do something by yourself for 5 minutes.

Unfortunately jumping up is a self-rewarding behaviour. That means it is fun to do whether you reward it or not. Because of this we have to prevent the behaviour when we can. E.g. If you can see that your dog is getting excited and he always jumps up when he reaches “excitement level 10” stop playing at “excitement level 9” and wait until he is calm before interacting with him again. We can also prevent the behaviours by interrupting the sequence of events that lead up to jumping up and redirecting the dog onto the behaviour we like. E.g. If you know the dog will run down the hallway and jump up on you when you get home, be prepared for it. Keep a tasty reward in some Tupperware outside the door and have some in your hand while you enter. As the dog runs towards you take a step forward and with the food in your hand, put the food right in front of the dogs nose to prevent him coming forward and lure him into a sit. Then give him big pats and attention for as long as his bottom remains of the ground. As soon as he stands up all patting ceases. If he sits, pats start up again. Change from a lure to a reward as you would do for other behaviours.

2. What do we want him to do instead?

No dog can sit and jump up at the same time so it is an incompatible behaviour. Your dog should sit lots. He can sit before pats and attention from anyone, before meals, before a game begins, before being allowed in the house or on the couch. This will make it easier for your dog to sit in situations where he is excited such as you arriving home because he does it all the time and has learned to control his own wriggling body. Remember to highly reward sit. To begin with you will need to reward it with a treat or toy as well as your attention but eventually your attention will be enough.

NOTE: If jumping up is always directly aligned in front of you, and is accompanied by a hard stare in the eye with any signs of aggression such as hard nipping, or growling please seek further assistance from the Foster Care Officer (Kemps Creek carers only) or the Welfare Officer (branch carers only) of your AWL NSW branch immediately.

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Digging

Try filling holes with dog poo. This may discourage your dog from returning to the area to dig but they will dig in other places. Make sure that they have plenty of interactive food toys and have been well exercised and spent time with you before you leave them.

You can allocate a designated digging area. This could be a sand pit, old veggie garden or even an unused corner of the yard. Encourage digging in this area by burying treats. Remember that this will be positively reinforcing digging which will result in more digging so only use this if you are happy for the dog to dig.

Chewing

Manage the issue by making sure the ONLY items they can chew are 'legal' chewing items. If they have an illegal item simply call them to you and swap for a legal item. Do not reprimand them for chewing the wrong items.

Mouthing/biting

Allow your dog to mouth your hands and lower arms when playing with them. If your pup bites hard (this is subjective and different for each individual), say "ouch" or "oww", withdraw your hand and swap for a toy. If the puppy continues to bite, go away and give yourself a time-out (go into another room for 5 seconds).

The aim is that your dog will think that the only way to keep play happening with you is to play softly. Repeat every time your dog bites too hard. Your dog will quickly learn how rough they are allowed to play.

10-20 seconds in 'time out' is normally enough to give your dog time to settle down. If you take much longer than this to return, your dog will probably forget they were even playing with you and the lesson may be wasted. Remember to keep time-out short and ensure you return to your dog when they are calm and quiet, not noisy and boisterous.

If your dog is easily excited, start by only playing quiet games that don't get them into a frenzy and don't encourage them to bite.

As with all behaviour modification, the most effective way to avoid negative repercussions is to teach your dog what it is you DO WANT as opposed to what you DON'T WANT!!!! Avoid falling into the punishment trap!

NOTE: If the biting escalates, please contact the Foster Care Officer (Kemps Creek carers only) or the Welfare Officer (branch carers only) of your AWL NSW branch immediately.

Destroying yard/destructive behaviour

Try the suggestions in the 'Mental Stimulation' section of this document. These are great to use when your dog is left alone. Providing plenty of mental stimulation will help to reduce destructive and problematic behaviour.

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Recall/come when called

Dogs do not automatically know that their name and the word “come” means look at you and move towards you. This behaviour needs to be taught. Some simple things to remember when teaching recall are:

Never use your dog’s name as a punishment or reprimand – We want recall to be a fun and consistent behaviour. Using your dog’s name in a negative way will adversely affect this.

If you cannot see your dog’s face do not use his name – Try only to use your dog’s name when he is looking at you and moving towards you. Try a clap or a whistle or “pup pup” to get his attention before calling him.

Set your dog up for success – If you know he is not going to come, don’t bother calling! It is hard to compete with a beach/park full of dogs; birds, kids etc. so don’t try. Go and get your dog or try something other than their name to get their attention like running the other way, laying on the ground, a squeaky toy.

Always reward your dog for coming – We have all had those moments when we have called and called our dogs only to be ignored, then just as you’re ready to give up, over they bound tail wagging looking mighty pleased with themselves. We are often feeling frustrated by this time and the temptation is to tell our dogs off. Don’t, it will only make things harder next time. Take a deep breath and reward your dog for coming, *finally*, then go and reward yourself for staying calm!

Management - You may find it easier to keep your dog on lead whilst teaching recall. A 5 – 9m lead will give your dog some fun and freedom whilst giving you the ability to reward a successful recall every time. You can also try a dragline. Leave a lead on your dog that is not long enough to get in the way but long enough that you have something to step on or grab hold of if needed. This is a lot safer and easier than grabbing for a collar. Extender leads are not recommended, as these will encourage pulling on the lead.

TO BEGIN

You will be teaching your dog the meaning of their name – their name means look at my human, or move/run towards my human.

You must NEVER look or sound scary – you must always use a friendly tone of voice and a relaxed, encouraging body posture (non-threatening). Begin teaching this exercise in a non-distracting environment (inside or in the back yard).

To begin the exercise, you will be using your dog’s name only when they are looking at you. If they are not looking at you, use an inviting sound or ‘pet name’ to get their attention.

As soon as your dog looks at you, say their name and drop a delicious treat on the ground where they can see it. They should eat it and look to you to see if there is

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another one, immediately say their name and drop another treat on the ground where they can see it.

REPEAT

Repeat this exercise for several repetitions until they are really getting excited. That is when you 'finish' the exercise. Always finish a training exercise at the height of fun – this means next time you begin a training session, your dog will be over-the-moon with excitement!

PROGRESS

Progress to rolling the food treats a short distance away from you. And repeat as above. Gradually increase the distance, difficulty and distractions as your dog improves. If your dog is not returning to you immediately for the next treat, you have moved too fast. Take things back a step or two and slow down.

Once your dog has mastered this, and is coming consistently, start to move away from them right after you have dropped or rolled the treat. They will then need to run towards you to hear their name and have you roll another treat.

Very soon you will be able to make this a very active game with your dog running away to pick up their treat and then running back to you to continue playing the game. Each time your dog is running towards you, call their name.

The dog is practicing running to you whilst they hear their name. Your dog puts two and two together and learns that their name means run towards my human – and IT'S FUN!

You can even do this exercise whilst sitting down relaxing – what a great way to give your dog their dinner! – Kick back and watch some TV, wait for the ads to come on and play the game – it sure beats them eating all those biscuits in 30secs from the bowl!

ADDING DISTRACTIONS

Start with mild distractions and add harder ones as your dog improves their ability to focus on where the food has gone and promptly return to you for another go.

NOTE: You will be aiming to use only your dog's daily ration of food as the basis of all treating. Try to make the food you use for training, a complete diet that is suitable for your dogs' individual needs. As with all training, you will need to increase the value of the reward as difficulty level increases, for example, when adding distractions or in new environments. If kibble loses its appeal try mixing a bit of chicken, sausage etc. with it. The smell will coat the biscuits giving you a higher value treat without using too much junk food.

Stealing

Is your dog constantly looking for new things to play with? Does he steal your shoes, the kids toys maybe, even the dirty washing?

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The first thing to remember is ANY attention is good attention. Reprimanding, chasing and trying to remove the item from the dog, only serves to make it more valuable. They now have your full attention and a game! Does your dog receive this level of attention for playing with their own toys?

Try distracting the dog with one of their toys, or try a game or food reward. Do not interact with the dog until they have left the object you don't want them to have. Once you have their full attention, use your food, toy or game to reward heavily. You can then quietly remove the object of previous focus when the dog is not paying attention.

Try not to leave enticing things laying around the house for your dog to discover.

Do not give your dog old shoes/slippers to play with.

Rotate their toys regularly so they don't get a chance to become bored with them.

Resource guarding

If your foster dog is growling or displaying aggression over food, toys or other resources, please contact the *Foster Care Officer (Kemps Creek carers only)* or the *Welfare Officer (branch carers only)* of your AWL NSW branch immediately.

Pease seek further advice from the *Foster Care Officer (Kemps Creek carers only)* or the *Welfare Officer (branch carers only)* of your AWL NSW branch immediately if:

- ✓ It's been several weeks with no improvements.
- ✓ Your dog has bitten someone or you think they might.
- ✓ You are uncomfortable doing this training or feel like you're in over your head.
- ✓ There are any other major behaviour issues.

Credit: This guide has been adapted and used with permission from the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania (Foster Care Guide).