

Training Tips from Sarah Hogdson

A well-trained dog is a lot easier to live with than an untrained one. Sarah Hogdson, dog trainer extraordinaire and author of such books as *Dog Perfect-The User Friendly Guide to the Well-Behaved Dog* and *Puppies For Dummies*, has a simple training philosophy:

"I believe that the single most important element in the dog/owner relationship is understanding. While dogs do experience emotions, they express themselves differently from humans. Challenging behavior is simply a reaction to the stress of not understanding what is expected from them."

The toughest animal to influence is not the dog. "It's the people," Sarah admits. "People mean well or they wouldn't be trying a more understanding approach."

For Sarah, the dogs are the easiest part of the equation. Listening to them and translating their confusion are what make Sarah's techniques user-friendly for people of all ages and every walk of life. "Training is not about telling dogs what to do, it's understanding their side of the story and discovering better ways to communicate your concerns."

Here are some training tips from this trainer of champions:

Tip 1: Your dog considers you (and your family) as another dog.

Before you can teach your dog anything, you must consider his worldview. Dogs depend on a hierarchy, not a democracy. It's all about leadership, one leads, the others follow. A dog can't distinguish a road from a



field, a stick from a table leg, or a pillow from a stuffed toy. Your dog can't quite grasp your departures or that the food on the countertop is off limits. If you don't take charge, he might just lose his cool... trash the house while you're out or nosh on the dinner meats while you're not looking. Confusion, canine-style.

Tip 2: Use "Doglish," Not English.

Imagine aliens have abducted you. They've put you in an unfamiliar environment and left you sitting alone. Alien #1 walks in looking odd, hollering gibberish, and racing around. Out he goes, leaving you dismayed. Alien #2 comes in calmly, lifts his arms in a 'be still' gesture, and leaves. Which alien would you choose to deal with? Number 2, naturally. How does this relate to you and your dog? We humans are alien to our dogs. Though they willingly accept us, they don't understand English. To understand and communicate with them you must learn to speak their language: "Doglish." It consists of: Eye Contact, Body Language, and Tone.

Eye contact - Look at your dog for good behavior and know corrections given with eye contact are considered interactive, not discouraging.

Body Language - Stand tall, and stay cool. You're the one to watch. Bending over your dog is often translated as a play posture and will excite, not impress.

Tone - Yelling is barking in "Doglish." Don't yell; you'll only stimulate or scare your dog. Though your dog won't understand much English, she can learn command words if they're used consistently. When teaching your dog words, or commands, use a clear, and direct tone - not angry or apologetic.

Tip 3. Clickers make training easy.

To start, get treats and a clicker. Click and treat. Your dog will alert to the (clicking) sound happily. Now use it for training. Teach the Basics and encourage good behavior:

Command "Sit," luring your dog into position with a treat, click, reward, and praise — Good dog!

Command "Down," the same way.

Command "Come" by teaching it as a command of closeness. Throughout the day command "Come" when your dog is near you. Encourage him to look up by sweeping your hands to your eyes. Click and reward. Gradually extend the distance and increase the distractions.

For Housetraining - When your dog eliminates in the right area, say "Get Busy." Click the instant your dog finishes, treat and praise warmly.

For Jumping - When your dog jumps, look away. Click, treat and pet only once all four paws are on the ground. Four on the Floor—that's a good dog!

For Chewing - Anytime your dog is chewing an appropriate object, click to make him stop, then treat and praise warmly.