

Dog Training With Hand Signals

Hand signals can ensure that your dog will obey you even if you can't make yourself heard. Some experts even say that a dog trained on hand signals will more attentive to his owner than one raised without. Here are a few tips below for teaching your dog hand signals.

Train with an assistant.

Because it can be difficult to corral an excited puppy, a friend can help you keep your puppy under control while you are making the hand gesture. For instance, when you make the hand gesture for "sit," your friend can press down on your dog's hindquarters.

Work in an area that is free of distractions.

If you own a puppy, you already know that the least little thing can distract him, but you can mitigate this by working in a quiet, secluded area. If you have more than one dog, it can be a good idea to train them separately.

Develop distinctly different hand signals for each command.

There are many different types of hand signals that you can use. Some of them are quite standard, like the use of a hand, palm down, held parallel to the ground and then lowered for the voice command "Sit." There is no reason, however, not to develop your own signals. As long as they are clearly different from each other and easy to do, your dog should have no trouble recognizing them.

Keep your hand signals consistent.

As with any command that you give your dog, make sure that each hand gesture corresponds to the same requested action each and every time. If you suddenly change gears, there is a good chance your dog will be confused, something that can set their training back quite a bit.

Train with treats.

Dogs are very reward oriented, and while most of them will perform a trick for praise, almost all dogs will work for a treat! When you incorporate treats into the training, you are making sure that your dog receives unquestionably positive reinforcement when he does well. Overtime this can serve to remove any ambiguity from the dog's mind about what the desired behavior is for each command.

Teach simple commands first.

One piece of advice that is often given by expert dog trainers is that your dog needs to learn to heel before anything else should be taught. When your dog can automatically fall into step beside you, you know that he or she is paying attention and is mature enough to handle more complex commands. Because a dog can be taught to come to heel automatically, no hand gesture is usually needed. To start with, put your dog on a choke chain and leash and start walking. By using small, gentle jerks to slow her down if she gets too far ahead, you can teach her to heel in relatively short order.

Teaching your dog hand signals can be a great way to train because it reduces confusion by reinforcing the voice commands. Remember to take it slow and steady and your dog will be following your hand gestures before you know it!