



FREE GUIDE

Puppy training basics

The core commands and why timing matters

Introduction

You don't need a dozen commands in the first few months — you need a handful taught well, with the right timing. This guide covers the core commands worth prioritizing, why most training mistakes come down to timing rather than the dog being "stubborn," and how to structure sessions that actually stick.

The core commands worth teaching first

Before anything else, prioritize commands that keep your puppy safe and make daily life easier: their name (as a positive, not a scold), sit, come, and a release word that tells them a command is over. Everything else — down, stay, leave it — builds more easily once these are solid. Trying to teach ten things at once usually means none of them are reliable.

Why timing matters more than treats

The single biggest factor in how fast a puppy learns isn't the treat, it's how quickly you mark the correct behavior — ideally within half a second. A clicker or a consistent verbal marker ("yes!") bridges that gap, telling your puppy exactly which action earned the reward before they've already moved on to something else. Late timing is why a puppy can seem to "know" sit in the kitchen but not understand it anywhere else — the marker was rewarding the wrong moment.

Short sessions beat long ones

Five minutes, two or three times a day, will outperform one 30-minute session almost every time. Puppies lose focus quickly, and pushing past that point trains frustration more than it trains the command. End each session on a successful repetition, even an easy one, so the puppy's last association with training is a win.

Common training mistakes

- Repeating the command multiple times before the puppy responds, which teaches them the first (or second, or third) cue doesn't count.
- Training only in one location, so the behavior never generalizes to the real world.
- Correcting a puppy after the fact for something that happened minutes ago — they can't connect the two.
- Skipping the release word, which makes "stay" feel arbitrary and inconsistent to the puppy.

Daily training session checklist

- ☐ Sessions kept to 5 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day
- ☐ A consistent marker word or clicker used every time
- ☐ One new skill at a time, practiced in more than one location

- ☐ Each session ends on a successful, easy repetition
- ☐ Treats are small enough to not fill your puppy up mid-session

Summary

Puppy training is less about repetition volume and more about precise timing and short, focused sessions. A well-marked "yes" at the right half-second will teach faster than an hour of well-meaning but poorly timed practice.

This guide is for general education only and is not a substitute for advice from a certified trainer, veterinarian, or veterinary behaviorist. If you're seeing signs of distress, aggression, or a sudden change in behavior, please consult a professional who can assess your pet directly.