

Training Opportunities

by Carol Gannaway

If you live with a dog there are training opportunities around every corner. Let me explain what I mean by that. Here is a typical training opportunity. Whenever the front door opens your dog rushes out and then won't come back when you call. This situation has two training opportunities to offer, one the dog rushes out the door and the other is he doesn't come when called. The best way to deal with this situation is to break the opportunity down into parts and start training your dog!

For the problem at the door, I suggest setting up a specific training time to teach the dog to sit at the door and wait for you to say, "Okay" before the dog is allowed out the door. With the dog on leash you should practice this at the door 10 times a day until he is super about sitting and waiting at the door for permission to go out. The reward for your dog will be the opening of the door. If your dog doesn't sit on command that is another training opportunity.



The next step would be to have the dog dragging a long line (15 feet would work) and as you walk past the door open it and see what happens. If your dog heads out the door step on the long line to stop him. I like to think of this as a little quiz for your dog. Did he bolt out the door? If so, you had better do some more training or homework. If your dog sits and waits, *CELEBRATE* he passed this quiz.

Practice until your dog can sit and wait at the door for permission to go out; even without a leash. As you practice set-up your dog to be successful. As we all remember from school, passing one quiz does not mean you will pass the final exam. It takes a lot of homework and practice before you can be sure you will pass the all-telling final exam. Remember to keep your dog's training positive, focus on and reward with praise and treats all behaviors you would like repeated.

Part two of this scenario is the all too common "My dog will not come when called!" This short statement is the source of a great frustration for many dog owners and presents another training opportunity. Let's go back to the final exam scenario. The final exam here is having your off leash dog come back when you call. This is not where you would begin your training because this is the final exam and we need to work our way to that final step.

Where should you start? Let's say this dog comes nicely when he is on the leash, continue your training sessions with the dog attached to a long line. Let your dog get busy sniffing around and when he is not paying attention to you call "Fido, come!" and praise and reward your dog for coming. Then practice this at least 20 times a day in as many different situations as you can find. If dog does not quit sniffing and come running, you got it, another training opportunity.

At some point in the process of training a pop quiz will come up and you will need to call your dog while he is off leash. Did he come running? If not you need to do more homework . If your dog came running to you, yippee he passed! Now it is time to take a mid-term. The mid-term might be to call your dog while he is busy sniffing 30 feet away and off leash. Did the dog quit sniffing, look at you and come running? Or did he quit sniffing, look at you and go back to sniffing? Maybe your dog didn't even bother to look at you. Now you know how your training is really going; and you may need to do more homework.

Congratulations, you have put in the time, your dog now waits at the door and if for some reason the dog does sneak out you can give a call and your dog joyfully comes running to you! Now don't be afraid to peak around the corner for the next training opportunity!