

ACADEMY OF CANINE BEHAVIOR

Proper Sequence of Commands

GOOD: This word is used to communicate with your dog that he has made the right choice. It is said with a pleasant tone, and sometimes accompanied by physical praise (treats or pats). When your dog hears this word, there should be no doubt in his mind that you are happy with him. Be genuine with your praise!

NO: This may be the hardest word to use properly. When you use this word, the dog should NOT feel a sense of dread. Rather, it is used to let the dog know that he must *THINK*, as he has made the wrong choice. If he puts his mind in gear and pays attention to you, you will help him figure out what he can do to make you happy. **It is only in conjunction with this word that you are allowed to give the dog any form of correction.** Please make sure you understand this concept completely before you work with your dog.

OKAY: Okay is the word that lets the dog know that she is done doing whatever you just asked her to do; the *release*. It is important for you to learn to use this word consistently, as it helps the dog understand the difference between one command and the next.

Three important techniques for reinforcing your dog's vocabulary

- 1. Understand whether the word is a CONCRETE or ABSTRACT command.** If it is a concrete vocabulary word, you can show the dog how to do what you're asking (e.g., you can physically place your dog into a "Sit"). If the word is an abstract vocabulary word, it means you cannot show the dog how to do it. If so, you must rely on the association of the word and the action (e.g., your dog learns the word "Speak" by associating it with barking).
- 2. Follow the proper sequence of commands: ASK-GET-PRAISE.** Make sure the dog knows you are talking to him by stating his name to get his attention (This does *not* mean the dog has to look at you), then clearly ASK the dog to do what you want by stating the proper command for the situation. If the dog does what you asked, PRAISE him with the command word, e.g., "Good Sit!" If the dog does not do what you asked, GET what you asked for by telling the dog "No" and clearly give the command word again, e.g. "No, ... sit." You may or may not need to use a correction in conjunction with the word "No", depending on where your dog is in his training. It is very important that the command word never be repeated immediately after itself (sit, sit, sit, SIT). It must always be asked only once and followed by a "Good" if the dog complied, or a "No" if the dog did not. An example of the proper sequence of commands is as follows:

ASK: "Fido, sit."..... (Fido doesn't sit)
GET: "No (correct), sit."..... (Fido still doesn't sit.)
GET: "No (correct), sit."..... (Fido now sits.)
PRAISE: "Good sit!"..... (Fido gets praise)**

***Remember: The level of praise should reflect how well your dog performed. As a general rule, your dog gets physical praise (treats or pats) when he responds **first time asked**.*

3. Troubleshoot after three attempts at the command. If you have asked more than three times and your dog has not complied, then one of two things is wrong. Your dog may not understand what you are asking, in which case you must back up and make sure you have done a good job of educating. Or, your dog chooses not to mind you because you have not presented yourself as a leader to whom your dog feels compelled to listen. In either case, examine *your* training methods to understand why your dog is acting a certain way.