

## The Obedience Corner Come, Sit, Stay a While!

### TRAINING THE HOUND PUPPY

In our last article we focused on teaching our new puppy the “House Rules” we want him to live by. In this article, we will steer our attention to some behaviors that Puppy needs to know around home or when you are out in the world, participating in formal AKC events, doing service dog work, or other activities. These would be behaviors like “come”, “sit”, “down”, “stay”, “wait”, “stand”, “heel”, “get it”, etc. that every dog should know how to do. We addressed ways to teach a PBGV to “come” in our first article (see *Saber Tails*, June 2004) but since it is absolutely essential that puppy learn to come when called we will do a little refresher course here regarding what this command means to the puppy. “Sit”, “Down”, and “Stay” are needed so that you can control the dog. Other commands like “Heel”, “Wait”, “Stand” are useful when walking puppy, meeting people in the neighborhood, in show rings, and all activities you and puppy/adult will participate in. This article will not stress the perfection needed for puppy to participate in obedience events or to obtain titles, or participate in other formal activities. This article will emphasize only the basics that puppy needs in order to live with his human family or perhaps become a canine good citizen (CGC).

While training Puppy, remember our training motto is: *“I am more stubborn than my dog without getting frustrated or becoming angry and losing my temper. I am patient and calm when teaching my dog.”* It is essential that you keep this in mind while training puppies. Puppies can be fragile and if frightened, hurt, intimidated, or alarmed by our actions it may be difficult to get a proper response from them for quite a while. Make the training as enjoyable as you possibly can with lots of praise for doing things right, many treats, and snuggles! Try to make every activity a game and use the word “wrong” when Puppy makes mistakes. As mentioned in our last article, the word “No” should be reserved for actions that are “bad”, not when Puppy makes a learning mistake. Also remember that puppies have very short attention spans and are easily distracted. This might mean that in the beginning your training sessions with Puppy last only about 5-10 minutes during which you do only two or three repetitions of learning the action.

### TEACHING PUPPY TO COME

There are two rules that must be remembered in teaching Puppy to come. *Rule 1 is that Puppy is never punished when he/she comes on command (even as an adult)! Rule 2 is that if Puppy does not come on command, then you go get Puppy silently without making any scowling faces, pick up Puppy, and return to the start point.* The basis for these two rules is that Puppy needs to believe that you (and the rest of his human family) are the greatest being(s) on the planet, and that by coming on command Puppy will get at least a lot of praise, loving, and possibly a treat. Looking at it from the puppy’s point of view, would you come if you didn’t really understand the word “come” or thought that you would be punished? Of course not! But if you thought that you were going to get praise, petting, and/or a treat you would like the idea!

There are four basic actions that Puppy needs to learn when you say “Puppy, come”. These actions are: react to your name, stop what you are doing, look at me, and run as fast as you can to be close to me. Usually the puppy will do the first three actions in the order described. However, coming may not happen because puppies are easily distracted and often have other priorities like sniffing a bug, chasing a bird, enjoying life sitting in the sun. Start teaching the word “come” in the house where there are few distractions. Since puppies like games, one way to get puppy to learn the word “come” is to have Puppy run back and forth between

two people. Each person sits 5-10 feet apart on the floor. One person holds Puppy while the other one calls Puppy with the command “Puppy, Come!” in a very happy, yet firm, voice. If Puppy comes, he gets a lot of praise and a treat! This person now holds Puppy and the first person gives the command “Puppy, Come.” Puppy again gets a lot of praise and a treat if it comes! Repeat this several times in perhaps two to four sessions each day for a week or so. To reinforce this behavior in an informal way, call Puppy for his dinner by giving the command “Puppy come” “dinnertime”, or “walk time”, “play time”, etc. You may also take advantage of Puppy’s curiosity when he starts heading in your direction to see what you are doing. For example if you are dusting furniture, or cleaning the floor, fiddling with a book or rustling papers, and Puppy looks at you and starts moving toward you, say, “Puppy come” to encourage him. When he gets to you give him a lot of praise, snuggles, and perhaps a treat. He’ll soon realize that every time he comes to you and waits close by your side something good happens. At this early learning stage he might not really realize what “come” means, so don’t expect him to know. At this stage he is learning to associate the word “come” with being near you and getting a treat or a snuggle. You’re building a foundation so that later you can refine this behavior into the “come” command.

Now that puppy is beginning to think good things happen when you say “Puppy Come” you will start teaching him that there are MANY situations in which he must still come to you. Take Puppy out on a lead and practice where there are more distractions. But keep Puppy on lead for many sessions since you will need to help him succeed when you give the command to come. Initially you will be using the lead to enforce the command to come by gently pulling the puppy to you when it is distracted by a smell, bug, other animal or human and chooses instead to go investigate. Start with a 6-8 foot lead and as weeks and sessions progress use longer and longer leads, even up to 20-30-40 feet long. As Puppy becomes more reliable in coming, keep testing him by letting him wander to investigate the surroundings. When Puppy’s quite distracted and has forgotten about you, call the command “Puppy, Come.” Gently pull in the lead to get Puppy close to you to feed the treat or play with his favorite toy. Be patient. Learning to come when called takes a lot of time! As a secondary reward, give Puppy permission to again go exploring his environment. This way he not only gets a treat or favorite toy if he comes, he gets to go back to his adventure. Eventually though, you will want to let Puppy off lead and spend time being sure that he understands that good things happen when he comes when called. See Figure 1 opposite page.

When you first take the lead off outside be sure that the area is safe and relatively free of distractions. A fenced back yard will do or an enclosed area such as a tennis court if you can use one. Again play the game with two people some distance apart. If you have taught the puppy to sit or down and stay, you can tell it to sit, down or stay and walk about 6-8 feet away from it, turn and call Puppy in a very happy, yet firm, voice. Be sure that it is staying before calling it. Keep increasing the distance between you and Puppy about 4-5 feet at each repetition as his “come” skill increases.

Ok, QUESTION: What do you do if puppy does not come? ANSWER: go get it, unceremoniously pick it up, and bring it back to the start point, say absolutely nothing. Don’t smile. Don’t laugh. Your body language will speak for itself. What will your body language to Puppy look like? What will your body language tell Puppy? By going and getting Puppy with purpose, and unceremoniously picking him up, and bringing him back to the start point to begin again, your body language has indicated displeasure. Do the exercise again from the start, with you standing just a few feet closer to Puppy. The important thing that changes when you restart after bringing puppy back, is that you must relax and again use a happy, firm command “come” so that puppy knows that everything is again ok. After you have brought Puppy back to the start point in the unceremonious manner and have set him down, that is the end of the



*“Come”*



*“Taking in lead”*

**Figure 1: Teaching puppy to “Come” using lead**

entire displeasure with the event. Don’t harbor any emotion about what happened 25 seconds ago when he first didn’t come to you. He is mentally past that point, and so you must be also. What you don’t want to do is talk to him or smile or laugh at him as you’re picking him up. If you do, you are giving Puppy the impression that he may have been correctly doing what he was supposed to; he will interpret your verbal interaction as praise. If your philosophy is to use the word “Wrong” you could say it once at the point where you catch and pick up Puppy. Be patient... it will not take an overly long time before Puppy comes reliably most of the time. There are though, a couple of situations where Puppy might become totally hard of hearing regardless of how much training you’ve done to perfect the “Come” command. These would be the times when Puppy is hunting and sees a rabbit, squirrel, bird, or other game. This is when instinct takes over. It takes a lot of time and repetitions of practice to overcome instinct.

**TEACHING PUPPY TO SIT, STAY, AND OK**

Puppies often learn to sit by themselves but with help they will learn that the action they are doing is what the word “Sit” means. To help these puppies learn what the word “Sit” means, put them on lead and have them walk along beside you. At this point, do not worry if Puppy is in a proper heel position but be sure he stays within reach. As you are walking holding the lead in both hands, stop, say ‘Sit’, and with your left hand gently push Puppy’s rear into a sit position. You may have to gently lift the puppy’s head with the lead with your right hand initially but try not to. Also try not to bend over Puppy but bend your knees into a squat to do this. It should only take a few times for Puppy to get the idea and soon all you will need to do is to gently lift Puppy’s head with the lead when you stop and say “Sit” and it will sit. Be sure to give it praise, a pat on the head or snuggle, and possibly a treat when it sits on command.



**Figure 2: Rufie sit**



**Figure 3: Rufie sit (note treat in left hand)**

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While playing with puppy on the floor, if you see puppy starting to sit, say "Sit" and give puppy a treat, praise, and a snuggle for sitting. You can also just gently push the puppy's rear down giving the command "Sit" while holding a treat above its nose so it has to reach up for the treat.

Another way to teach the puppy PBGV to sit is at dinnertime. Before placing its dish in front of it, stand beside the puppy and gently push its rear down telling it to "Sit." When it sits it gets dinner. Again, in a short time it will catch on and sit when told to. Now place a screw eye in the bottom of the kitchen cabinetry. Attach a 3 to 6 foot length of cord to Puppy's collar and run it through the screw eye. Be sure that you or someone else is holding the string. Tell Puppy to "Sit" then "Stay." Put your hand in front of Puppy, palm facing its nose, when you say "Stay." Place its dinner dish at least 5' away from puppy. Puppy will try to rush to the dish but will not be able to because you (or someone else) are/is holding the cord. Repeat the commands to "Sit" and "Stay." If Puppy follows the orders, release the string and say your release word (one author uses "Ok!"). Be patient, it may take a few tries for Puppy to get the idea. It will not take long, though, for Puppy to learn what these words mean and you will not need the string any more. Now you've trained Puppy to recognize three commands that you can practice wherever you go! In addition, you have created the foundation for the Puppy to learn long sit stays, and the place where it needs to sit while waiting for dinner.



**Figure 4: Rufie doing Long Sit**

## TEACHING DOWN, STAY, AND DROP

"Down" (or whatever word you choose) has one meaning and one meaning only. It means to lie down and be horizontal on the floor with elbows and tummy touching the ground. When the "Down" command is followed by "Stay" it means that Puppy lies down and stays exactly where it is. All dogs, including puppies, will resist lying down because that position is a sign of submission to another being...you! Thus, down must be taught. Because Puppy is small and not very strong you'll be able to manipulate Puppy's body into the position for Down. With Puppy beside you on lead just gently push down and slightly backwards on Puppy's withers as you firmly give the command "Down". Be persistent as you push Puppy down, being sure that its elbows and tummy are touching the ground (Fig 5a). An alternative way to teach down is to have Puppy on lead and place a treat on the floor in front of it while giving the command "Down." As puppy's nose goes down the get the treat gently slide your finger through puppy's collar and pull puppy's head down while gently pushing its rear slightly backwards and down. After a few tries eliminate the treat and do the same thing without the treat. It will not take long until

puppy gets the idea. Assuming either way works the first few times you try, you can practice "Down" while you are out walking Puppy once it gets the idea of what the word "Down" means. Just stop, give the command "Down" and if puppy lies down give it a lot of praise and perhaps a small treat. Good Dog!



**Figures 5a & 5b: Teaching Brandy "Down"**  
**In second picture (Fig 5b) George has placed the treat in front of Brandy's nose with his left hand while pulling her head down with his right hand. This action is difficult to photograph because Brandy is small.**

Once puppy learns what "Down" means, you can practice "Down" combined with "Stay". While Puppy is on lead, give him the "Down" command. Then place your hand in front of puppy with the palm facing Puppy's nose and give the command "Stay." Slowly take 2-4 steps forward, turn and face puppy. If puppy starts to move say something like "AH" or "Wrong." If puppy goes down and stays, praise him. Keep him in the Down position for just a few seconds then use your release word and let Puppy come to you. If it succeeds, give it a snuggle, lots of praise, and perhaps a treat. Puppy will soon get the idea and stay in one place lying down. As Puppy improves the duration of the Down, you can slowly increase the distance you walk away from him. When you can get 20-30 feet away, hide behind a tree, wall or corner of the house for a few seconds to again slowly increase the duration of you now being out of sight for a

quick second or two or five!

A useful variation on the command “Down” is the command “Drop.” (In the obedience ring it is a principle part of the Drop On Recall exercise.) This command can be useful when you want Puppy to lie down momentarily and should only be taught after Puppy will “Down” reliably. When puppy learns to do “Drop” well, it could ultimately save his life if you need to suddenly stop Puppy. “Drop” is different from “Down”. Drop means that Puppy immediately lies down in a specific position for a short time and then is asked to do something else. “Down” means that Puppy stays in a particular spot until you come for it, call it, or release it. To teach “Drop” simply walk with puppy on lead and give the command “Drop” instead of “Down” and stop. Gently push Puppy down, drop his treat in front of his nose between his front feet, and start walking again. Puppy will start after you. Repeat this activity periodically as you are walking Puppy for whatever reason. In time, Puppy will get the idea and will drop on his own without you needing to push his withers down.

## STAND AND STAY

In our last article we discussed the Stand as it relates to standing for examination in the conformation ring. For that action we used the word “Stack.” In reality Standing for Examination is a subset of teaching Puppy to stand still when told to “Stand.” When you are out for walks with your PBGV and meet a friend or neighbor you may just want Puppy to stand quietly by your side for a brief conversation before moving on. Thus, Puppy needs to know what the command “Stand” means.

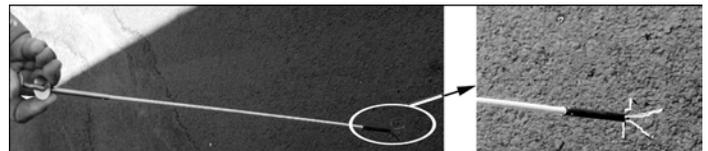
To teach “Stand,” start by walking with Puppy on lead. Stop periodically, as suggested when teaching “Drop,” say “Stand.” Usually, at the beginning puppy will not stop but if it does it may sit. If it does not stop simply gently pull the lead taut to stop Puppy. If it stands, praise Puppy lavishly. If Puppy sits, reach down and lift its rear while repeating the command “Stand.” Again it will not take long for Puppy to get the idea. Once Puppy begins to get the idea of standing, add the command “Stay” and take 2-4 steps forward, turn and face Puppy. If Puppy moves, say “Ah” with your hand in front of you, palm facing Puppy. Puppy may stop and stay still and if it does give it a lavish amount of praise and possibly a treat. If he doesn’t stand still, say “Wrong” and try again. It will not take long for puppy to get the idea and soon you can try dropping the lead and walking around Puppy while he remains standing. Keep practicing after this accomplishment and soon you will be able to do the total exercise off lead.

## TEACHING PUPPY TO HEEL

Heel is a command that means walk or run while staying close to the owner’s side. Heeling needs to be learned both on and off lead. It can be taught whether you choose to use treats or not. In the long run the dog must learn to heel without treats. We discussed how to train PBGVs for the Companion Dog (CD) title in our third article (Saber Tails: December 2003). The exercises for the CD are: Heel on and off lead, Stand for Examination, one minute Long Sit and a 3 minute Down. Whether or not you want to do Obedience, it is a good idea to teach your PBGV puppy what “heeling” is so that it does not drag you all over the place when you’re out walking. For most cases the precision needed for heeling in the obedience ring is not needed for puppies or for obtaining a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) award. Proper “Heel” position is shown below for reference.

### Heeling on Lead

With puppy on the lead say “Heel” and start walking forward with puppy by your side. Keep the lead short and tight. You can also use a mechanics pick up tool shown in following picture to guide Puppy (with the lead held loosely), or a 3-foot long skinny dowel. (The mechanics pick up tool is used to pick up items dropped in tight places. It is about 2 feet long and can be purchased at hardware stores for less than \$5.00.) If Puppy starts to get ahead of you say “Ah” or “Wrong” and gently hold it back. If it then lags again say “Ah”, then encourage it to move by gently pulling Puppy forward. George has essentially taught Rufie to heel entirely off lead by having a treat in his left hand or in the claws of the pickup tool held in front of Rufie’s nose holding a treat. As Puppy starts understanding the idea of heeling, you can release it from heeling with an “Ok”, to give Puppy permission to go sniff or explore in front of you. After a short period of sniffing, bring Puppy back to your side using the word “return”(See our third article referenced above for how to teach “Return”), and give the command to “Sit.” Be sure puppy sits. Again start walking forward by



**Figures 7: Mechanics pick up tool**



**“Stand”**



**“Stay”**



**George returns to heel position.**

**Figure 6: Teaching Rufie “Stand” and “Stay”**

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giving the command to “Heel.” Repeat this several times on your walks and soon Puppy will be walking at your side when you tell it to.

## Heeling Off Lead

You will also want to teach puppy to walk by your side when he’s off lead. Here you must be very careful because many PBGVs have a very strong hunting instinct; if they see a rabbit, squirrel, or other animal they may break away from you and initiate a chase with the animal. Thus, you need to practice off lead training in a secure, preferably fenced, setting. A bit of food held in the 4-prong claw of a mechanics “pick up tool” is very useful. This tool is also useful in teaching Puppy what “Pay Attention” means. The prongs can grab Puppy’s collar to guide and release Puppy at will while you teach Puppy to heel off lead. It is long enough so it can also be used to guide Puppy as described in our third article in a similar fashion to using the dowel.



**Figures 8:**  
*Brandy follows treat*



**Figures 9:**  
*Rufie follows treat*

A good place to start training off lead is in a hallway in the house. Give Puppy the command “Heel” and start walking. Guide Puppy with a bit of food (a kibble, small piece of chicken, etc.) held in the prongs of the tool just in front of its nose. Puppy will follow the bait. Periodically remind Puppy to “Pay Attention.” If Puppy follows the bait while heeling beside



**Figures 10:** Pick up tool as lead



*Side View*



*Front View*  
**Figures 11:** Proper heel position



**Figures 12:** Rufie doing figure 8 pattern. Note treat in pick up tool.

you, stop, have puppy sit, and give it the treat with a lot of praise. The first few times Puppy will try hard to get the treat from the mechanic’s pick up tool so use the word “Ah” or “Wrong” if he gets too anxious for his reward. Puppy only gets the treat after he has walked by your side, then sat by your side after you stopped. The pick up tool is great for this purpose since all you need to do is push the prongs open and the treat will drop into Puppy’s mouth. Once Puppy gets the idea, see if you can get Puppy to follow the tip of the tool. It has held treats, so the smell will still be there. As Puppy gets better at playing the Heeling game, gradually shorten up the tool up in your hand so that Puppy keeps seeing your hand and continue saying, “pay attention.” Once Puppy is doing well in the house, move your training to the outdoors and continue working with your dog off lead. Gradually reduce your reliance on the tool by using it only to catch Puppy’s collar with the prongs, or gently touch it behind the ear, to keep Puppy in proper heeling position. Periodically release Puppy while he’s doing the heeling in proper position as a reward for his efforts!

## TEACHING PUPPY TO “GET IT”

Most PBGVs aren’t natural retrievers, but they can be taught. And once they learn they usually think it is fun to do. They can learn while you’re playing with Puppy. PBGV puppies do like to chase things like soft toys, kongs (with a cookie in them), etc. As you are playing with puppy, initially throw his favorite toy 5-8 feet away from you and as you do, say, “Get it” or “Get Toy.” When puppy gets the toy, tell it to “Come” and if it comes, give it a lot of praise, snuggle, and possibly a treat. Repeat the activity several times but quit before Puppy gets bored. Use the activity as a play game, and soon puppy will get the idea. (However, for PBGVs to retrieve dumbbells for the AKC Open obedience class “Get It” has to be taught so that Puppy understands the precision as required by AKC regulations. Puppy may have to be 6-10 months old before you want to start imposing the precision requirements.) More often than not, when you throw a dumbbell, a stick, or similar item the puppy will go after it, sniff the dumbbell or stick, look back at you as if to say “you sent me after this! Why? It doesn’t even smell or taste good” and start to do something else. So what can you do to make it fun?

One way to teach picking up the dumbbell is to have Puppy sit in front of you while you do this activity. Be sure to have treats nearby within reach. Gently place a dumbbell in puppy’s mouth saying, “Take it.” If puppy takes it, praise puppy and say “Hold it”. Praise if puppy

holds the dumbbell. Now say, "Give it", and take the dumbbell out of puppy's mouth, give lots of praise, and give it a treat. If the puppy resists your putting the dumbbell in its mouth be persistent and gently push it in. If he drops the dumbbell gently put the dumbbell back in its mouth with the two commands. Just say "Wrong" softly and continue. Do this activity 3-5 times a session one or two sessions a day. It may take a week or so for Puppy to get the idea that he must hold the dumbbell in his mouth until you take it back. Be patient but persistent. Once Puppy will hold the dumbbell start lowering your hand closer to the floor as you command puppy to "Take it" until you're resting the dumbbell on the floor as you get Puppy to "Take it". Now change your command to "Get it." If Puppy picks up the dumbbell, great! Give Puppy lots of praise, a big snuggle, and a treat. If not, try again but this time put the dumbbell in Puppy's mouth. If Puppy holds the dumbbell praise it and give the command to "Give it" and more praise and a treat. It may take a week or so before Puppy will pick up the dumbbell. Once Puppy will pick up the dumbbell throw it about 1-3 feet and tell Puppy to "Get, Dumbbell." Make this a game with lots of praise for success and lots of treats for doing what you want. Soon you will be able to toss the dumbbell across the room and Puppy will get it. From this point on you can teach Puppy to get many things.

## SUMMARY

*In this and our previous article, our primary focus has been teaching puppies several needed behaviors so that they can live with you, their people. Puppies are open books, sometimes fragile, and need to be taught how to behave in the human's world. It is up to you, as the owner of Puppy, to take the time to train them to be successful and happy partners in your human pack!*

*Please let us know if you have any questions, or have any feedback about this article.*

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**"Take it"**



**"Hold it"**



**"Give it"**

**Figures 13: Brandy learning to take dumbbell in her mouth**

## OTHER USEFUL COMMANDS

In this article we have focused on teaching puppies basic commands that they will need when living with you. There are other commands that are very useful such as "Wait", "Place", "Off", etc. that were discussed in the Obedience Corner (September, 2003). Others have been discussed in previous articles so detailed discussions of those commands will not be repeated here. Also, we have presented ways to teach fun things such as shake hands, dead dog, etc. that one can teach to even young puppies if you take the time to teach them once they are strong enough to do them. PBGVs are bright dogs and once they start training they want to continue. They also learn things on their own. For example, George's dog Brandy learned to "Beg" on her own and Rufus learned to stand on her hind legs for a treat. Brandy learned because when George and Peggy put their PBGV's to bed they get a cookie. One night Brandy sat up and begged on her own. She received a lot of praise for offering this action, and also got an extra cookie! She now does this behavior all of the time on command and offers it when she wants something. Rufus was lavishly praised the one day when she just stood up. What a cute action! Now she stands up on the command "Up" and sits up on the command "Beg." Both dogs were less than a year old when they figured out how to do these behaviors. If you are alert you can use these situations of offered actions for teaching purposes. If the particular behavior is a behavior you want, just give Puppy praise and a cookie for doing it on its own!



**Figures 14: Brandy showing her "Beg"**



**Figures 15: Rufie doing "Up"**