

An Obedience subcommittee has been formed as a part of the Performance committee. At present George Jensen, Ingrida Robinson and Teressa Keenan have agreed to serve on the subcommittee. The following is the first of several articles that we propose to publish in Saber Tails about obedience. Since obedience is an integral part of owning and working with dogs and other animals, we feel that we need a continuing effort in PBGV obedience training. Keep in mind that obedience training is needed for all PBGVs whether they participate in conformation, obedience, tracking, agility, other formal events, or are your companions. Training is ongoing and continuous and always needs to be a part of you and your dog's life together. Initially, our focus will be on home obedience instead of the formal obedience required for competition.

We are adopting the following theme for the obedience effort: *"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."*

Hounds are often stereotyped as being unmannerly, headstrong, and difficult to train. Some of the common topics on popular e-mail lists include dealing with "problems" such as digging, barking, running off and just generally not behaving. We all know how creative our PBGVs can be. They are independent, intelligent, resourceful and curious. They are bred to be this way so that they can hunt on their own in order to please the master. So, while they are quite capable of getting into mischief and being goofy, teaching home obedience and manners is easy and fun!

Some of the basic commands used around the house that we all want our Fidos to know are "come", "down", "off", "leave it", "wait", "sit", "stay", and "quiet" or "no bark". These basic commands are like tricks the dog can learn. Each trick has its own cue word, just like "shake", "roll over", "fetch", and "jump".



Teaching home obedience manners is simple. First - clearly define in your mind what the action should be when the command is given. Commands should be single words or simple two-word combinations that state what you want the dog to do. (One command is usually a string of little actions chained together. You might have to teach each

little action in steps.) Second - decide how precisely the command must be performed by the dog. By this we mean: in what situations must it be done each and every time the exact same way? How will you make it clear to Fido what the intent of the command is? This will eliminate confusing situations

for the dog. For example, if your command "down" means to lie down, will Fido be allowed to sit up or roll over while he's performing "down"? Or if your command "off" means "get off the couch" does it also mean, "get off the kitchen table"? The more consistent you are in your commands and expectations, the quicker the dog will learn. And third, your dog has to be taught to do what you want it to do when you give it the command. The fourth step is to set up situations in which he can practice what he's learned. You want your dog to be able to generalize the newly taught behavior so that it is performed any time, in any place.

For example, "Fido, come" would mean: react to your name when I say it, immediately stop what you're doing and look at me, listen to me say the command "come", run like heck directly towards me, and remain seated or standing close enough to me so that I can hold you by the collar, put your leash on, give you some love, etc. Later, you will want to increase the distractions to provide him with more challenging environments in which to perform the behavior. This



constantly reinforces what he's learned, and makes it new and exciting for him. Yes, you can teach Fido to "come" without stopping to sniff or eat anything on the ground and to not be distracted by a cat, squirrel or rabbit flying across his path! Because the command "come" is so important for the dog's safety and well being we will focus the rest of this first article on this subject. Let's break down the command "come" into its several parts. Did you notice that the sentence in the previous paragraph contained four actions? Stop--listen--run--sit/stand. If your Fido thinks you're the coolest thing on the planet, then Fido will do the first three actions pretty much in this order the first few times you call him (getting him to sit/stand usually requires some separate teaching). Then there are the other Fidos...the rescue dogs that aren't used to coming to people, or dogs that are way too distracted to stop and listen or care that you said, "come". These dogs would be most adult PBGVs who are enjoying themselves in the yard. These dogs will need to be motivated into coming. We will address some of the details for retraining rescues in a later article.

What do you need to do to ensure that your PBGV thinks you are the coolest thing on the planet? Assuming that your Fido is a puppy, he usually thinks his humans are the coolest things on the planet. But there are also other wonderful things, i.e., the cat, a squirrel, grasshoppers, etc. We need to teach our independent, intelligent, resourceful, curious hounds, who want to please us, that when they are given a command, they

aren't to pay attention to any distractions. As a result, we can use these characteristics to get the result we want.

Since most puppies are curious about their surroundings and want to please, they respond well to being offered a treat, some praise and a snuggle, or a brief game of tug. Use these characteristics to your advantage with puppies. Start out by reinforcing all behaviors associated with the come command that you like. For example if your puppy is starting to trot over to see what you are doing and looks at you, immediately stop washing the dishes, say "Fido, come" and then praise him for what a good dog he is, what a great smart pup he is and give him a treat or a brief snuggle. It won't take Fido long to 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, but 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 expand this behavior into the "come" command.

Now that Fido has been taught that coming to you is always a good thing, he has to be taught that he needs to come each time he hears that word. Since you want him to "come" the first time you say the command, you will help him be successful by only giving the "come" command when you can enforce it. So you put him on a leash. Initially the leash can be short, then gradually become 20, 30, 40 feet long. You should always be able to physically control your pup when adding the "come" command to his vocabulary. This way you won't inadvertently teach Fido that he can choose to ignore you. If all goes well Fido will come running toward you to see what good things are about to happen. If he does not immediately respond, gently tug the leash a little and verbally encourage the puppy as he moves towards you. (Don't repeat the "come" word; you want puppy to only hear it once so that he learns to respond the first time he hears the word.) When he gets close, give a treat and lots of praise!



Once Fido understands and is reliably coming to you while on a leash inside the house, you can up the anti a little bit and use a long line instead of a leash. Go through the previous steps inside the house with you further away from your

puppy. When Fido understands that "come," means the same thing even though he is further away from you, move to a new location in the same training session. This provides continuity

for the dog's thinking process. Take Fido with his collar and long line outside into the back yard. When you move outside, don't be surprised if Fido seems to forget what he learned in the house. You now have new surroundings and have added distractions. Start back at the beginning by shortening the leash to six feet. Allow Fido to explore his surroundings safely for few a few minutes. Then in a happy, gentle yet firm voice, say, "Fido, come!" When Fido hears his name he will look at you to see what you want. Then when he's looking at you he will hear the word "come". If he comes toward you lavish on the praise and give him a big reward. If he looks at you as if you are speaking in tongues give the line a gentle little tug to remind Fido that even though you are now outside in the yard "come" still means the same thing. And when he makes any movement toward you tell him what a grand smart puppy he is and reward him with a treat and a hug when he gets to you. He will soon get the idea. Your continuous job is to keep practicing in various locations in the house, out in the yard, at the park, at the dog show, etc.!

These same steps can be used to teach the adult PBGV the command "come". However, rather than the gentlest of tugs, you might want to use a stronger tug or a quick jerk on the leash. You may also have to increase the level of the reward with an older dog, since being near you isn't quite as cool as it was when you first met. Also, your older dog has probably learned already that when you call him, you don't always have good things in mind for him. When he has come to you in the past, you may have put him in his crate, trimmed his nails, given him a bath, or done some other horrible thing to him.



Please keep these ideas in mind as you work and play with your PBGVs. They'll love the attention, and it's wonderful mental exercise for them! Even if you don't have time to play and train with them for several days, you'll be amazed at how much information they'll retain until the next time!

In our next article we will focus on how to teach some of the other commands. Feel free to forward any and all suggestions of questions that you may have to *Saber Tails*. We will try to answer any questions in future columns.

Committee members can be contacted at the following E-mail addresses. George Jensen : pbgv@3-cities.com
Ingrida Robinson: gjrobinson1@attbi.com
Teresa Keenan: rioghail@msn.com