

DOG LIFE



How not to fail obedience classes

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

The main concern in obedience training is "obedience failure." Why is that?

During your training sessions in obedience, your dog and you are learning. The professional trainer will program your dog and show you how to guide and execute the commands. If a command is not achieved, you will have to guide and correct the dog till it is. Once your dog gets it, you must practice frequently when you're home. All commands should be practiced in and out of the home. Only the heel and turns will be done outdoors, for obvious reasons.

Whatever you have been taught, you must always apply and practice daily at home as many times as possible. If you don't, your dog will only associate its training with the training sessions. At home and on the streets, the training must be followed through. No chances, no choices and no excuses, you must make sure your dog does it. If you don't, you will not reach your goals. You as the owner will fail, and so will your dog. Yes, obedience training does get boring, practicing the same thing over and over, but repetition is what is needed. To avoid getting bored, practice and work your dog during your walks. Go to different locations sometimes and practice.

If your cell phone rings during your walks, answer but still maintain the walk, and correct as necessary to keep the heel. You can also choose to have your dog sit beside you while you answer your phone. However, if it gets up and breaks the command, correct it right away. This will teach the



dog that regardless of the circumstances, it must listen.

Whenever you are working any of the commands outdoors, use your judgment. Practice in shaded areas. If the grounds are wet, many dogs will try to avoid sitting down, or at least hesitate to do so. That is normal. The funny thing is that in play they may willingly sit or lie on wet grounds.

If possible, give your dog a chance to eliminate before your walks or prac-

tice sessions. This has two effects: First, Fido will be under less pressure, and second, the walk will be like a reward. When Fido is done eliminating, begin gradually getting Fido in the heel position. On your walks don't try to teach Fido everything at once. Teach Fido only what your trainer has shown you to date. Yes, after several classes you can integrate each new command into your walks. Remember that when you started, it was just one

or two commands, and then more were added as the weeks progressed. On your walks, keep adding all the new commands, everything you have learned. If Fido is weak on one of the commands, practice that one more.

Practice first in a controlled environment till both you and Fido feel confident. Then progress to the outdoors – not your backyard, because that's Fido's playground and sanctuary. Keep stationary commands to a 20-minute total workout. For example: sit stay, down stay, stand stay in repetition. In other words, have Fido stand, then sit, then down, then back to a sit and stand, over and over. Make sure that after each command you wait for 20 seconds. After a while increase the time between commands.

The hardest command to teach Fido is the down command, either from beside or at a distance. You must be patient, because that command means submission in the eyes of Fido. Fido will not want to submit, but all dogs do so eventually.

The only way NOT to fail is by following my formula: Patience, persistence, consistency & repetition will be your key to success.

Failure is not an option if you are willing to put in the time and effort.

Have a woof woof of a month.

*Harry Kalajian M.D.T.,
behaviorist, ethologist & psychologist,
has over 32 years of experience
in all aspects of training.
Executive Dog Training Inc.
941-447-8234
executivedogtraining.com*