

Greetings from Central Utah Wag-N-Train Dog Rescue & Training, Inc. Here is our monthly training tips E-Newsletter:

TEACHING OUR DOGS TO SAY PLEASE

From ABe a Benevolent Leader by Pat Miller

We can't emphasize enough what a pleasure it is to have a dog who offers a polite automatic *Asit* when she wants something or because she's not sure what you want her to do; either way, you win. *Asit* is your dog's way of saying *PLEASE*.

A successful leader/owner controls the valuable resources and shares them with her dogs generously and judiciously. Appropriate behaviors earn rewards. Inappropriate behaviors do not. It is no different that teaching a toddler that he has to say *PLEASE* to get a cookie rather than scream *AGIMME* at the top of his lungs.

Here are a few exercises you can insert into your daily routine to teach your dog to say *PLEASE* and to remind your dog that you are in charge of the resources and he receives them thanks to your benevolence.

Say *PLEASE* For Meals or Treats The first step is to remind your dog that you control the food bowl. For starters, there should be no free-feeding. If your dog can pick from his dish whenever he wants, you allow him to believe that he controls the very valuable food-bowl resource, and you miss a golden opportunity to reinforce deference one or more times a day.

Each mealtime, after preparing the dog's food, lift the bowl off the counter with his meal in it, and hold it at your chest. Wait for him to sit. If necessary, move the bowl over his head to lure the sit, or ask him to sit verbally (if he knows what *Asit* means). As soon as his bum touches the floor, place the food bowl on the ground. If he starts to get up before the bowl is down say *Aah, ah, ah!* and lift the bowl to chest level again. Keep doing this until you can set the bowl on the floor without him moving. Then tell him *Aokay!* and encourage him to eat.

This is actually engaging in a little friendly food-guarding, a concept his canine brain should grasp easily. You are saying, *Athis food is really mine, because as leader all things belong to me, but because I'm nice I'm letting you have some of my food.*

Say *PLEASE* To Go Outside Anytime you are going to open a door to the outside world, ask your dog to *Await!*. Open the door a crack, and if he starts to go through, say *Aah, ah, ah!* and close the door. Then start again. Tell him *Await!* and open the door a crack again. If he stays still, tell him he's a good boy and close the door again. Gradually work up until you can open the door wide and he doesn't go through unless you tell him he can.

Sometimes you will release him with an *Aokay!* so he can follow you out the door and sometimes you will go through and close it behind you, leaving him in the house. You are telling him, *Athis is my door. I get to decide who goes through, and when. Sometimes you get to go through, sometimes you have to stay.*

Say *PLEASE* For Greeting When your dog(s) run up to greet you, pay close attention. If he gathers himself to jump on you, say *Aah, ah, ah!* and turn you back. Watch him over your shoulder, and when he settles solidly on all fours, or even better, sits (because that has become his automatic behavior) say *AGood Boy!* and turn back to greet him. If he jumps up, turn away again. Keep repeating until he will sit politely to be greeted.

You are telling him, *I am the leader, and as leader, my greeting is a valuable resource that I only give to dogs who are sitting.*

Say *PLEASE* For Fun Does your dog like to chase the ball? Play tug-o-war? Go for a ride in the car? A walk on the leash? Precede all his favorite activities with a polite sit. *Asit* makes the ball go. *Asit* brings the tug toy to dog-mouth level. *Asit* gets the leash attached for a walk, or

removed for a romp at the dog park. ASit@ makes all good things happen. You are telling him AI control all these wonderful resources - you can have access to them at my whim and pleasure, when I decide you can and not before.@

Say APlease@For Attention Rather than allowing your dog to demand your attention, make him ask by sitting. If he is a big dog and you are sitting in a chair or on the sofa, a Adown@ is an even better APlease@ for attention.

You are telling him that this very valuable resource (your attention) must be earned with a sit or a down; he doesn't just get it on demand.

An important concept to remember: The more assertive your dog's personality, the more important it is that you control as many available resources as possible, and are consistent about paying them out for appropriate behavior. Whatever your dog's personality, the better you are at controlling resources and rewarding them for desirable behavior, the better behaved your dog is likely to be.