

The 'Emergency' Sit

Having a really solid and reliable sit, and an 'emergency sit' could one day get you and your puppy out of serious trouble. He may be just about to step off the footpath onto the road as a car is coming.....

We use sit as it is easier to learn,

- usually more reliable, (than stay for example)
- faster for the dog to execute (than recalls)
- less vulnerable for the dog (than down)
- more stable (than stand)

Firstly we need to really 'proof' the sit, dogs learn a lot by context more so than words, so he may know sit with the food bowl in your hand, but probably doesn't know 'sit' if you were asking him to sit from a lying down position yourself.

- First goal is to have an instant sit when inside your home with puppy next to you. Then with puppy in front. Then while you are sitting. Then add distractions, eg outside in the yard, with the kids playing, with other dogs running around etc, (all this with puppy next to you).
- When this is really solid we can start adding distance, say from the other side of the room, but back now with no distractions, as we are adding difficulty we go back a few paces and increase the praise for the increased difficulty.
- So tell puppy to sit when he is ten feet away from you, instantly if he does *lots* of verbal praise while you walk up to him with the treat, (don't call him for the treat or the recall will get rewarded not the sit).
- If he doesn't sit from 10 feet (and most puppies won't), then continue to say sit as you walk toward him, don't increase tone or severity of voice as he is not doing anything wrong - *this is a new exercise now that he just does not understand yet*, so at no stage is he to think he is in trouble. Just continue to say 'sit, sit, sit' as you walk toward him, when you get to his 'known sit zone' he will sit, and lots of praise. Then do it again and reward, and again.
- As you practise this exercise you will find that the distance you have to travel to puppy before he sits will get less and less, as he hears you and knows that you are coming and he is going to sit anyway, he may as well do it sooner.
- Don't forget praise, and sometimes make the reward a really exciting game, as later in the park when you call out 'sit' his response will be 'beauty here comes a game,' which will be especially helpful if what he is currently doing is fun.
- Once your distance sit is reliable inside the home with no distractions, then a bit at a time start adding distractions, children, different toys, etc.
- Then you can start in your yard with no distractions, perhaps increase the distance in your yard before you add distractions, when you add the distractions in the yard decrease the distance.
- Then the big step outside to the quiet park, low distraction/distance first and increase, remember one step at a time
- If at any stage he misses go back a few steps and increase the praise
- *remember to try to add only one new parameter at a time.*

Our aim is to have a puppy that will drop everything and sit from 2 paddocks away, on a single verbal command!

‘Counter commanding’

Counter-commanding means teaching a command that is contrary to the behaviour you don't wish to happen.

All your good work getting an emergency sit to prevent your puppy getting himself into trouble you can now use to prevent you getting into trouble! A good example is your puppy is just about to jump all over your visiting in-laws, who have clean white clothes on and don't like dogs anyway-

Guess what you're going to say?, not 'no' or 'get down' or 'careful' , but **SIT**, if puppy is sitting he physically is unable to jump up on anybody!

If puppy is sitting he can't-

- Jump on your visitors when they arrive
- Run away with your good shoe in his mouth (more on this later)
- Leap out the car before you have his lead on
- Knock the shopping out of your arms when you get home
- Land on the children
- Chase the cat around the house
- Jump up on the lounge
- Pull you over on the end of his lead
- Jump in your lap while you're driving
- Run across the road after another dog
- Land in your lap while you're drinking coffee.....Etc

He can't bark at the children walking past if he is on his mat chewing a bone

He can't bark at the postman if he's on his mat with a bone

He can't rip up your washing when he is chewing his own chew toy

Whatever behaviour you can teach that is impossible for the dog to do at the same time as the undesirable behaviour is called counter commanding, and its use to prevent or cure problems is only limited by your ingenuity.

And once you have mastered the emergency sit, whether you use it in an emergency or as a counter commanding response, once your puppy is sitting you then have some control, you have him stable, you have a rewardable opportunity, and you can then ask for what you want next, eg recall.

Or you can just say good puppy go play, his best reward.