

Making Everything Easier!™

Portable Edition

Dog Tricks

FOR

DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- **Teach your dog a range of cool tricks**
- **Train your dog using positive reinforcement**
- **Bond with your dog while having fun**
- **Entertain family and friends**

Sarah Hodgson

*Renowned dog trainer and author
of Puppies For Dummies*



Dog Tricks
FOR
DUMMIES®

PORTABLE EDITION

by Sarah Hodgson



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Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Dog Tricks For Dummies®, Portable Edition

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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ISBN: 978-0-470-76945-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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About the Author

Sarah Hodgson is the author of nine books on dog training, including *Puppies For Dummies*, *Dog Tricks For Dummies*, *DogPerfect*, and *Miss Sarah's Guide to Etiquette for Dogs and Their People*. In addition, she has coauthored *Understanding Your Dog For Dummies* with world-renowned dog behaviorist Stanley Coren. Her books have been translated into nine languages.

In 1988, Sarah opened her professional practice in Bedford, New York, where she continues to help families demystify dog behavior. Through positive reinforcement, family conditioning, and her signature “loving touch,” Sarah achieves profound results for people and their dogs.

With theories that link good behavior to having a solid foundation of fun in any relationship, Sarah believes that training must be simple and enjoyable for dogs and people. Blending traditional, time-tested techniques with bond-enhancing tricks and interactive activities, such as agility, flyball, and joring, Sarah shows people how to take charge of their dog in a humane, upbeat, and positive way. Sarah says, “Life is short — have fun!”

A graduate of SUNY at Purchase with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology with an emphasis on human psychology and animal behavior, Sarah is also the inventor of the Teaching Lead. Its ingenious, patented design allows its use as a regular leash, a hands-free lead, or an indoor and outdoor training aid.

Sarah lives in Katonah, New York, with her husband, their two children, and their pets.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Introduction

I'm a dog maniac who, for years, has been trying to take the edge off serious training and inject the process with a little fun. One of the reasons we share our lives with dogs is to enjoy their company, while they help us loosen our grip on this no-nonsense, career-driven world.

Don't get me wrong! I'm not negating the whole training process. After all, I am a dog trainer, and basic lessons are essential to let your dog know who's in charge. But after you've made that point, you can lighten up. Though obedience lessons teach your dog how to act in everyday situations, they're pretty streamlined and relatively predictable. A sit is a sit is a sit . . . not much variety!

Learning tricks, however, invites and encourages liveliness, excitement, and creativity. Sharing your life with a dog shouldn't be a militaristic venture, designed around what you want your dog to do; owning a dog is about joining two different species, two different spirits, in a way that makes the world better for both. So let the fun begin!

About This Book

Tricks are open to dogs of all sizes, shapes, and ages. Of course, not every trick will be for you and your dog. You'd have to be a magician to transform a pack of Pekingese into a dogsled team. But I've included a whole array of tricks for the everyday dog and owner, as well as more complex maneuvers that will delight an audience. Every dog can learn to do something.

Discover what gets your dog's tail wagging. Dogs love food, toys, and praise — with varying levels of enthusiasm. You'll find out what works best for your dog within the pages of this book and use that knowledge to build a stronger relationship with your dog.

As with other *For Dummies* books, you can surf the table of contents and create your own starting point, or you can read this book cover to cover. I've organized the tricks in each chapter (and the book) in order of complexity: simple stuff first and then fancy tricks with movie-star potential.

There is no one right method for teaching dogs, but if you steer the course to positive reinforcement — treating your dog with respect and leading him with enthusiasm and compassion — you'll have a wonderful time learning together.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use several standard conventions throughout this book:

- ✔ New terms are *italicized*, followed by definitions in layman's terms. Italics may also be used occasionally for emphasis.
- ✔ Key words in bulleted lists are **bold**, indicating the most important info. I also use bold to highlight the action part of numbered steps.
- ✔ Web site addresses are in `monofont`. Some addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. In those instances, no extra characters (such as hyphens) were put in to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending the line break doesn't exist.
- ✔ Commands that you'll use with your dog are placed in quotation marks, with the first word of each command capitalized. When two commands are given in succession, you'll see them separated by an en dash, for example, "Sit-Stay."

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made a few assumptions. See whether the following statements apply to you:

- ✔ You want to bond with your four-legged friend, keeping lessons fun and upbeat. You'd like to share cool tricks and games, do a performance together, or just have fun in the backyard.

- ✔ You're looking for a way to give your dog — and perhaps yourself — a fun and healthy workout.
- ✔ You're relatively new to trick training. If you're not, please don't think I'm patronizing you if I explain a term you've known for years — I just don't want to leave anyone out in the cold.
- ✔ Your dog knows basic obedience commands, such as "Sit," "Stay," "Down," and "Come." To make sure you have this foundational training down, I include a refresher in Chapter 3.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons in this book point out certain special bits of information. This is what they mean:



The Tip icon marks useful tidbits and helpful advice.



Friendly reminders about things you shouldn't forget, like warming up your dog before vigorous trick training, are marked with the Remember icon.



When you see the Warning icon, take care and read carefully. It alerts you to avoid common errors and dangerous habits.

Where to Go from Here

Because every dog and owner's situation is unique, not everyone will approach this book in the exact same way. Some cover-to-cover folks will read each page. Perhaps you're dying to teach your dog to high five, roll over, or turn off the lights. Feel free to check out the table of contents to find what best meets your needs or appeals to you most.

If you need a quick brush up on training basics, flip to Chapter 3 for a quick review. Not sure what your dog might be best in? Chapter 2 teaches you about breed and body basics to help you select the best tricks for your dog. After you've mastered some of the simpler tricks, you can check out Chapters 5 and 6 for other impressive moves that are fun to learn and will wow any crowd.

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I don't think teaching the puppy how to help you cheat at cards was the training and bonding experience the vet had in mind."

Chapter 1

Getting Started with Trick Training

.....

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeing the value of teaching tricks
 - ▶ Knowing the tools you need
 - ▶ Working with your dog's natural abilities
 - ▶ Looking at the basic concepts of trick training
-

Iwrote this book for the fun of it — fun for me and, I hope, fun for you. Having fun with your dog usually tops the list of reasons we share our lives with dogs in the first place. They bring us back to a time when pleasure was our only priority.

Nobody has to teach a dog tricks. After all, training is time-consuming, sometimes costly, and requires incredible patience and understanding. But if you've chosen to go this extra mile, I know that your relationship with your dog is a special one. Your dog is a special gift to you, and you have chosen to give back to him.

As you progress in your training, you'll find out more about your dog: how he thinks and what he likes. You'll gain insight into the way your dog learns and better understand how to shape that learning process, from the length of the lessons to the various teaching approaches. You'll discover how to reward and encourage your dog in fun, engaging, and constructive ways.

In this chapter, I highlight the many benefits of teaching your dog tricks, list the tools that come in handy when teaching tricks, and familiarize you with the basic concepts of trick training. Ready to go? Your dog can hardly wait!

Knowing the Rewards of Teaching Tricks

Why teach your dog to do tricks? After all, he's not joining the circus anytime soon. The answer is simple: Most dogs will jump at the opportunity to perform for fun, praise, treats . . . almost anything! Dogs are active by nature and love to *do stuff* — just jiggle your car keys or utter the word W-A-L-K if you don't believe me. Tricks give your dog the chance to release his inner, audience-starved vaudevillian, expend pent-up energy, and use his innate dog skills — jumping, barking, sock-stealing — in positive ways.

A well-trained dog also serves as an ambassador for us all. Whether you're just clowning around in your living room or putting on an act at a local fair, the work and time you devote to your dog shines through wherever you take him. Sure, your dog may never star in a commercial or show off his routines at the local Elks Club, but that doesn't rob you of one undeniable fact: If you love your dog, he's a star. And the size of your star is not measured by how many people share your pride; it's measured by you. When I listen to my friends and clients talk about their dogs, I feel the warmth in their hearts, and when I see the dog face-to-face, I already know that dog's worth.

You'll be surprised at the new friends your dog wins over with simple tricks and basic good behavior, which I discuss in Chapter 3. Watching your dog strut his stuff makes everyone feel a little bit happier. Dog-phobic kids lose some of their fear, busy people find a little time to watch, and total strangers share a smile. Those of us who love dogs congratulate you on your efforts toward making the world a more dog-friendly place.

Tools for Trick Training

The goal of tricks is to direct your dog off-leash, encouraging her to focus on your hand signals and verbal commands. If the thought of having your dog off-leash makes you nervous, take a deep breath. You don't have to unclip your dog before you're ready. I cover basic training in Chapter 4. This section gives you a thorough understanding of the equipment you use toward that end.

Collars

Buckle collars are a staple. They fit like a belt around your dog's neck and carry her rabies tag, license, and name tag. Some dogs behave just fine in a buckle collar; others sense the restraint like entrapment and pull hard.

If you muscle a puller to your side, the dog learns that being near you causes her to choke, so she pulls harder. If this sounds like your situation, consider one of the following collars for your training:



✔ **Martingale collars:** These collars come in two types: all fabric and a fabric-chain combination. Safer than chain collars (also called *slip collars* or *choke chains*), Martingale collars circle the neck and have a slip section that offers a corrective tug when a dog pulls away. The chain version also offers a corrective zipping sound that discourages pulling and misbehavior.

Use positive encouragement as your dog walks at your side. Reward your dog when she's walking near you with food or toy rewards and verbal encouragement. This will help her recognize and rely on you to lead her. If your dog darts off, stop calmly — when she hits the end of the leash, the collar's quick tug will be enough to remind her: Walking with you is good. Darting away, not so good!

✔ **Head collars:** A head collar lays over a dog's nose and secures behind her ear. Although some think the head collar looks like a muzzle, head collars act more like a halter placed on a horse — you use them to guide movement, not inhibit it. The benefit of a head collar is that it can condition cooperative skills if you reward your dog for walking at your side. Gently guiding a dog instead of yanking on her neck, it can work wonders if you're trying to restrain a hyper or headstrong dog.

Leashes, short and long

Good leash skills are the basis for a happy off-leash relationship. Think of leash-walking as holding a child's hand, not as a tug-of-war exercise to determine who's in charge. If your approach is nurturing and positive — a “here, let's go this way” or “follow me, and I'll show you” — your dog will respond with enthusiasm each time you're together.

Here are some leashes that can help you train and guide your dog:

✔ **Teaching Lead:** This patented leash is a little invention of mine. The difference between the Teaching Lead and garden varieties? You have the option of wearing my leash like a belt instead of holding it. I know that may sound funky, but it's pretty cool.

For dogs in training, this hands-free lead communicates leadership passively and allows you to teach good behavior indoors and out without a chaotic scene. Indoors? Yes. A young dog doesn't know how to act in everyday situations: The lead can help you guide good behavior — especially important when formatting good habits like greeting and sitting still for mealtimes. The leash-belt combination allows you the freedom to engage both hands while your dog learns to walk calmly at your side. In addition, the Teaching Lead encourages the most humane handling techniques without a lot of jerking and constant restraint. Designed in both leather and nylon and available with an extension for people and dogs of any size and shape, it can be used with dogs of any age. It has three applications:

- Leading, which encourages focus and quick responses to commands
- Anchoring, which teaches your dog to lie next to you when you're sitting
- Stationing, which teaches your dog her place in each room of the house and allows you to secure her outside if the situation calls for her to stay

Because dogs get more direction and less confinement, they love this lead, too. To get information on where you can purchase one, visit me online at www.when-dogstalk.com.

✔ **Drag lead:** If you supervise your dog, she can wear a lightweight puppy leash or a thin, 4-foot nylon leash indoors so you can offer gentle guidance or redirection if she acts up or ignores a direction. As you give your dog freedom to explore with her drag leash, use the commands you've been practicing (for example, "Sit," "Down," and "Stay") and reward her with food and attention. If she ignores you, pick up the leash calmly and physically position or direct her.



- ✓ **Short lead:** This 8- to 12-inch lead hangs from the buckle collar for guided direction if it's needed.

Short leads are incredibly useful when teaching tricks. The light weight on the collar helps your dog maintain her concentration (it feels like a leash is on, though nothing is dragging underfoot) and allows you to handle your dog gently without grabbing at her body or collar, a startling move that elicits an innate defensive response.

- ✓ **Finger lead:** This is a miniaturized short leash: a tiny loop attached to the collar for small or accomplished dogs who may still need guided direction.

- ✓ **Long line:** This 30- to 50-foot line gives you the freedom to let your dog run or work at a distance outside without the fear of losing control — which is especially important if you're practicing in an unconfined area. These light lines are essential for off-leash work. You can choose to let your dog drag the line provided you're able to keep track of it, or loop the end and attach your normal leash to the end of it to maintain contact at all times.

- ✓ **Retractable leash:** These leashes stretch and retract, and are useful for exercise and trick training that calls for such controlled freedom.

Please don't use a retractable leash near a road; I've known dogs to race out in traffic and meet tragic ends.



Training with a Clicker

A *clicker* is a small, handheld, toy-like object with a metal strip inside; when you press the metal strip, it makes a sharp, very distinctive click, much like the sound of a camera. Clicker training is a clever, popular way to train dogs. It's a fun, fast, and positive approach to encouraging good behavior and teaching obedience and tricks.

Some people (like me) use the clicker when introducing a new concept, especially with distractible dogs, and then phase off its use after the dog knows the trick or movement. Others use the clicker for training their dog full time, affixing it to their body like jewelry. Other people can't master the coordination or just don't like using it.

To use this gadget, you have to figure out the best way to use the clicker, and you have to work with your dog (very briefly) to help her understand what a click means. In this section, I discuss how clicker training works, give you some examples of the training process, and suggest an alternative if clicker training just isn't right for you.

Associating the click with a treat

When using a clicker, always pair the snapping sound with a tasty treat. The first time you introduce the clicker, just go one for one — click-treat, click-treat, click-treat — and before a minute passes, your dog will connect the sound with getting rewarded. After that, you're ready to train with a clicker.

What's the magic here — why do dogs learn faster with the clicker? The click sound is distinct from any other sound in the dog's world. As soon as a dog discovers that the click is followed by a goody, guess what — the dog will want to hear the sound as often as possible, and you can use the clicker to highlight good behavior. For instance, say I want to use my click sound to get a dog to sit: Each time the dog chooses to sit, I click and reward. What do you think happens? That's right: The dog starts to sit more often.



Here are a few rules of paw for using treats in clicker training:

- ✓ No clicks go unrewarded! If you click, you must reward with a small treat. One click, one reward. Even if you make a mistake click, reward your dog.
- ✓ All treats should be small and easy to swallow so your dog can wolf them down and not fill up.
- ✓ Don't treat your dog when she's not having lessons, or getting a reward won't seem as exciting.

Using a clicker effectively

Here are some tips on how to use clicker training most effectively:



- ✔ **Use the clicker to reinforce each step of your dog's trick progression.** Think in terms of stage-by-stage training — break the lesson into steps, and click when your dog masters each one; as you build up to the full trick, the dog will have to do increasingly more for a click.

For example, say you want to teach your dog to make a left circle. You first plan to sit with your dog and click when your dog takes one step to the left; that's stage one. Then you hold out your click for two steps, then three — then a full circle. Training this way definitely takes longer than pulling your dog in a circle, but after your dog figures out the sequence, she does a circle with far more zest and enthusiasm than if you were to tug her around and around.



- ✔ **Capture the exact moment your dog is doing something right with a click.** If you want to give clicker training a go, timing is everything. A poorly timed click confuses a dog and can result in naughty behavior. When you've clicked, the treat should be given immediately afterward, before requesting another behavior.
- ✔ **Attach a spoken command to the behavior after your dog has figured out what's making the clicker work.** Use your command after your dog is already offering you the behavior. Initially, click and reward each time your dog sits in front of you. (You may show her a treat or reward to prompt her cooperation, but initially do not use the command.) When your dog is sitting rapidly, attach the command to the behavior — say "Sit" as she's planting her bottom on the ground. After you've paired the two, a couple of days later you're ready to prompt the position by saying the command ahead of time — just before you offer the reward. Command "Sit" first, and then click and reward the good behavior. Soon you'll be able to say "Sit" away from clicker training exercises, and your dog will be spot on.
- ✔ **As your dog masters each new command, begin phasing off the use of the clicker and rewards, but always praise your dog for a job well done.** Use the clicker when introducing new concepts and behaviors to highlight their importance.

Checking out why it's not for everyone

If clicker training is so effective, why would anyone choose differently? Honestly, I'm not a clicker-exclusive trainer. I use a lot of methods to teach dogs, and my approaches are all upbeat and fun. People have different skills, and dogs do, too.

For people who can coordinate the timing of the clicker and remember to use it, it's a godsend. Dogs learn much faster — nearly twice as quickly — when it's used properly. That said, in some homes a clicker can fall into the wrong hands or fail to fit into the daily plan. For families with young children or people who get discouraged easily or have trouble finding their car keys, just working the device can be an unnecessary frustration. Overclicking or clicking at the wrong time confuses dogs, and a clicker in the hands of a young child can give a dog career-stress overload. Don't feel bad if the clicker doesn't work for you!



Although I can guarantee the clicker's effectiveness, it's not the only way to teach your dog. If the how-to of clicker training leaves you turned off to trick training, don't be; remember, there are many ways to teach dogs. A better option for you may be to insert a sharp word cue like "Yes!" or "Good!" each time your dog successfully completes a maneuver, and leave it at that. The take-home message here is that a sharp, declarative sound used to target breakthroughs in cooperation helps your dog understand what you want her to do.

Rolling with Your Dog's Natural Gifts

All dogs have natural talents: activities they live for and things they love to do. Whether you appreciate them, well, that's another story. Fortunately, tricks can channel your dog's passions into skills that put a smile on your face. Sound too good to be true? It's not. Read through this section to get a quick gauge on what sort of tricks to start with, depending on your dog's strengths.

Carrying: The Retrieving Rover

The Retrieving Rover likes to put everything in his mouth. Toys, shoes, paper towels — they're all the same in this fellow's eyes. Correcting this behavior is pointless. When you yell, it's perceived as prize envy: You want what he has, so it must be worth keeping! Chasing him only increases the obvious value of what he has, and the frustration level ratchets up. Now your dog is training you.

Turn these frustrations on their tail by working on the retrieving and carrying skills in Chapter 5. Because you can't turn off the mouthing gene, you may as well get some help carrying in the mail and collecting the dirty laundry.

You can get a head start on retrieval skills with a *treat-cup game*. Because your dog considers all of his finds to be treasures (from his bone or favorite dog toy to the TV remote), encourage him to bring them by rewarding him with a treat from the treat cup. You may think you're rewarding delinquent chewing, but in fact, chewing won't become a problem because your dog is now showing you — and sharing — his treasures.



All dogs love treat cups. To make your own, get a few disposable plastic cups or deli containers (cut a hole in the lid of the container for easy access). Fill the cups halfway with small treats or a light breakfast cereal such as Cheerios. Each time you pass a treat cup, shake it and call out your dog's name. Soon he'll pay attention every time you call him, treat cup or not.

Entertaining: The Enthusiastic Acrobat

Enthusiastic Acrobats are peppy, bright creatures who are as happy on two paws as they are on four. Alert and inquisitive, they want to be in on everything and are drawn to laughter. Needless to say, their forwardness can be quite annoying if you don't redirect their energy. Fortunately, they love to learn, and you can start teaching a lot of natural routines from the start. You can find a trick in nearly every chapter that lauds their eagerness — finally, a hobby that rewards their enthusiasm!

Head to Chapter 6 to find out how you can teach good dancing skills and explore jumping routines that take advantage of these tricksters' high energy.

Problem-solving: The A+ Academic

A+ Academics are the engineers of the dog world. They're clever, smart, and keenly mindful of life's natural sequences, so you need to keep one step ahead of this dog's learning curve. These dogs love multistep tasks, sporting adventures, and tricks.

As you work on your chosen routines, lighten up these somewhat serious souls with rewards and praise. These dogs can frustrate more easily if they're not encouraged. A simple game like "Hide and Seek" (Chapter 6) can help to keep their tails wagging and their minds sharp.

Moving: The Agile Athlete

Is your puppy into everything? Are your houseplants being uprooted? Lamps overturned? Do you feel like your home has been turned into a racetrack, adventure park, and canine gymnasium rolled into one? Agile Athletes end up in the darndest places, and correcting them only increases their enthusiasm and mischief.

Although not getting mad can be hard, you can channel their enthusiasm with the tricks throughout the book. Leaping skills in Chapter 5 and high five and rolling-over tricks in Chapter 4 can direct his energy and problem-solving skills and turn your four-legged nightmare into a dream dog.

Trying Out a Few Basic Tricks

Classic obedience lessons use a lot of leash work. Dogs must be trained to obey and follow, which generally involves a lot of ordering about and corrections for misbehavior. It's serious stuff. Not so with trick training. These activities depend

on an invisible leash — a strong tie that brings you together in a flow of excitement and trust, like a coach guiding an eager athlete.

In this section, I give you an overview of trick training and some things you can do to get started today.



As you work through your tricks, start with the simplest routines first to build your dog's success rate and eagerness to learn new things. For example, teach "Paw" before you work on "High five" and "Wave" (Chapter 4).

Trying lessons without words

Dogs learn in ways that are both simple and complex. Dogs are so eager to earn rewards and attention that it's amazingly easy to teach them simple things. Get five super-savored treats or a toy your dog loves to play with, and then try the following lessons.

Heeding the four-paw rule: All paws on the floor

Stand upright in front of your dog and wave the treat above his head. If he jumps for it, lift the treat up and look to the sky. If he scratches at you frantically, wear a trench coat and completely ignore your dog. When he pauses, reward him immediately with the treat or toy. Repeat this five times in a row, three times a day. My hunch? In three or four days, your dog will hold still when you offer him treats and toys. Give it a try!

Sitting for a toy or before dinner

Try this wordless lesson, building on the preceding four-paw rule. If your dog doesn't know the command "Sit," flip to Chapter 3 and practice it first.

Wave your dog's toy or hold his dinner bowl above his head and wait. Don't look at or talk to your dog if he jumps or barks at you. Ignore him so he understands that these behaviors will not work with you. No sirree! Be patient with your dog and keep your eyes peeled for success. The moment he sits, reward him immediately. If he stands calmly, position him or maneuver the toy or bowl above his head so he moves into a

sitting position himself. After five repetitions, surprise — he won't bark or jump — he'll sit automatically! Good dog. Good person. You make a great team.

Rewarding good behavior

As you're working with your dog, think of yourself as equal parts coach, teacher, parent, and friend. Because many of the routines and adventures in this book will be new to your dog, you'll need to sell him on why he needs to leap through hoops, bark to ten, and retrieve a tissue. If you approach these tasks with the right attitude (mainly fun, fun, fun . . . plus rewards!), he'll be eager to participate. Consider how you'd like to be treated when learning something new — and remember what my grandmother always said, "You attract a lot more bees with honey than with salt."

To be an effective teacher, you have to identify what thrills your dog. You can use food, toys, and attention to encourage your dog's cooperation. For my treat-loving dogs, I schedule training around feeding times. I do a lesson before breakfast, and because they're hungry, the dogs are even spunkier. I end the lesson on a positive note and reward them with a yummy meal.

The timing of rewards influences your dog's understanding and works hand-in-paw with incentive training. If you want to teach your Chihuahua how to jump up and "dance" but you reward him after he has landed on the ground, you'll actually be reinforcing not-jumping. Remember your dog isn't the only one who needs to learn new techniques: Helping your dog master tricks quickly and without confusion requires you to learn a few tricks, too.



During trick training, you often hand out treats in great abundance (to say the least). Pick a sugar-free breakfast cereal or morsel of a light dog snack to keep calories down, and reduce your dog's regular meals slightly to compensate. Whatever you choose, remember it's not the amount that counts, but the act of giving — you don't need to give a lot to show reward.

Chapter 2

Turning Your Dog into a Top Student

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the power of your approval
 - ▶ Communicating with your canine
 - ▶ Teaching tricks at the right age
 - ▶ Considering your dog's breed, body type, and personality
-

Dogs like to know things. They focus on anyone who acts like a teacher: If it's you, they're in! Dogs also like to play and have fun, and most dogs are motivated by food or a favorite toy, so you can use these prompts to encourage your dog's cooperation as well. And although your dog isn't born knowing the English language, you can teach her just like you'd teach a baby — speaking in a clear voice and repeating a word until your dog makes the connection.

Part of teaching your dog involves knowing what type of dog you have. Big or small? Active or mellow? Clueless puppy, mischievous adolescent, or full-grown, set-in-his-ways dog? Before you introduce your dog to trick training, put yourself in his paws and think through the kind of activities that will get his tail wagging. Dogs are like snowflakes, thumbprints, and children — they're all unique. Each one has likes and dislikes.

No dog is going to love learning every trick in this book, but later in this chapter, I help you pick tricks that you and your dog are likely to enjoy based on your dog's breed-driven impulses as well as his personality type, age, and athletic ability.

Creating a Love of Learning in Your Dog

Before you teach that dog of yours how to serve you breakfast in bed, you have to make sure you can get her attention. Otherwise, she'll be the one teaching you tricks — ever see the owner-chasing-the-dog routine? It's hysterical but very unsafe.

Dogs think a lot like humans in some ways. They like to learn about activities that excite them. They pay attention to routines that result in positive rewards and the people who provide them. They're willing to watch them for clues on what to do. They also have favorite things that you can offer to encourage their eagerness and cooperation. (Although a \$20 bill may not get them going, wave a hot dog or a squeak toy in front of your dog's face, and you'll see what I'm talking about.) In this section, you find out how to appeal to your dog — to her desire for attention and approval, and her enjoyment of physical affection.



Dogs often perceive negative attention as confrontational play. Dogs are very keyed into what gets your attention and, like children, they don't seem to care whether the attention they're getting is negative or positive. Rather than subduing a dog, yelling or using physical correction excites them or, worse, creates a gripping sense of fear. As you teach new tricks, remember the adage: You attract more dogs with praise than punishment.

Praising your pooch

Like humans, dogs will go to great lengths to please someone they love. Dogs will pour themselves into tricks if it means getting to spend more time with you. When you praise your dog, you encourage her cooperation with your enthusiastic verbal coaching, and you may supplement it with other reinforcements like food and toys.



The intensity of the praise you should give your dog is a very individual thing: Too much can excite an active dog. A shy or hesitant dog can miss too little encouragement. And some dogs actually get frightened when humans bend over and pet or hug them enthusiastically. To find out what works best for your dog, offer praise and watch her response:

- ✔ If she's so thrilled with herself that she has trouble focusing again, tone it down.
- ✔ If she's hard to motivate, ratchet up your praise and find a toy or treat that gets her attention.
- ✔ If your dog freezes or pulls back when you bend to touch her, don't take it personally; your dog is conflicted. What is praise to you may seem to be a dominance display or a threat to her personal space. Use food and verbal praise to reward this dog.

Choosing the right reward

Not sure how to reward your dog? Some people swear, "Only treats!" Others exclaim, "Only praise!" I say the best advice is to ask your dog! To discover what makes her tail wag, do this little experiment using the three different types of rewards (praise, treats, or toys) individually to see which your dog enjoys the most!

- 1. Pick a well-known command like "Sit."**
- 2. Do five "Sits" in a row, rewarding each success with praise only.**
- 3. Three hours later, do the same thing, but reward your dog with a toy only (no praise).**
- 4. The next day, do five "Sits" again, making treats your dog's only reward this time (no praise or toys).**

Your answer should be clear: Although praise is a given, if food or toys excite your dog, use those rewards, too. The following list offers you some guidelines on these reward options:

- ✔ **Treats:** Figure out what excites your dog. Is it food? If yours turns up her nose at dried kibble, test her with a tiny piece of hot dog or a more exciting snack.



When using food to guide or reward your dog (in dog lingo, this is called *luring*), break the snack into tiny pieces so she won't get filled up and lose interest in the lesson. It's not the size that counts; it's the gift that revs the dog up!

- ✔ **Toys:** Some dogs cling to their toys like a baby to a blanket. If your dog has a favorite, use this to reward her. Do what I call a *burst*: For each successful attempt, toss the toy either down on the floor or up in the air (let your dog choose which is most exciting) and shout, “Yes!”
- ✔ **Praise:** All dogs love attention. For some, approval alone motivates their interaction for hours. If your dog hangs on you like a noodle, turning up her nose at food and shunning toys, then you have yourself a praise junkie, a rare dog indeed. Use your enthusiasm to propel her mastery of tricks and high adventure.

The million-dollar question is . . . drum roll . . . will you need to use treats forever to get your dog to respond to you? The answer is, thankfully, no.

Food and rewards are used in training to help you target the behavior that you’re teaching and condition a quick response to your command words. After your dog knows the command, you should immediately start phasing off the physical reward, using just your praise and encouragement instead.

To phase off treats, don’t go cold turkey, eliminating them in one day. Instead, gradually reduce your dependence — reward with food every other time your dog behaves, then every third time . . . then mix it up, giving two treats in a row, then one in three times, then every other time. The inconsistency of not knowing when the treat will come will keep your dog on her toes. Within two weeks, you can phase your dog off treat reliance entirely . . . though every once in a while, pop one in just for fun!



Offering rewards is all about timing: Targeting your dog’s success makes your intentions more clear. If you miss the moment, your dog may get the wrong message. For example, when teaching a dog to dance (see Chapter 5), you target her for standing on her two back paws; if you praise her as she’s coming down, she may think dancing means the opposite.

Speaking Your Dog’s Language

Recognizing what sets dogs apart from humans can help you modify your approach to help your dog learn faster. First off,

dogs don't communicate with the same language skills. Their verbal range is limited. Sentences confuse them. Warm sweet praise, while fitting when your dog is calm or you're rewarding cooperation, sounds whiny rather than supportive or directional when your dog needs a command to help her organize her thoughts.

When you teach your dog new skills, think of it as teaching English as a second language — work to translate English into Doglish! The sections that follow give you some ideas on how to make sure you're communicating with your dog in her language.



When communicating with your dog, use a creative approach and a heavy dose of patience. You need to demonstrate a lot of what you envision, and repeat the word cues again and again. Though your dog can't fully grasp the complexities of your language, she'll sure try to figure it out. When your dog finally gets it, she'll eagerly repeat the routine again and again.

Being the one to watch

All animals respond well to authority. The member of the group who stands forward with attitude and pride and says, "I know what to do!" or "Here's the plan!" emits confidence in everything he or she does, from gathering food to playing to directing other individuals in the group. To encourage the most cooperation from your dog, you need to step forward — you need to be the one to watch.

If your dog looks to you with eyes that are trusting and eager, you're on your way. If you can't get a blink from your dog, you'll have to do some preliminary respect work by teaching some basic commands, as outlined in Chapter 3.



I have a mantra I get my clients to repeat: "The more you look at your dog, the less she'll look to you." When you're teaching your dog tricks, the goal is that she watch you for signals and directions. If you're looking at her, she'll just be confused: *Why are you looking at me? I don't know what to do. . . .* Look at your dog to reward her cooperation and to confirm that everything is okay.

Using body language and hand signals

People use body language to support their words. For dogs, the opposite is true — body language is central to their communication, and their vocalization backs it up. Remember, your dog is always watching you for direction.

First of all, training calls for a relaxed and patient body posture. As you teach new tricks and skills, use one of the following positions:

- ✓ Stand upright and proud when directing your dog from a standing position.
- ✓ Kneel down or use a chair if an exercise calls for you to be at the same level as your dog.

If you hunch over or get frustrated, your dog will think something is distressing in the environment, not in her behavior. Because dogs can't reason that way, an angry reaction from you will only cause hesitation in your dog.



To capitalize on your dog's attention to body language, use hand signals, choosing one for each new direction you teach your dog. Throughout the text, I suggest a hand signal for each trick, though you can modify the signals — just be consistent. To direct your dog in front of a crowd without saying a word is rather impressive!

Tuning in to vocal tones

With dogs, how you sound is more important than what you're saying. When you yell at your dog, you either freak her out or look like a fool, depending on your dog's personality type. If you speak sweetly, you encourage playfulness.



When giving commands, use a clear, direct, and nonthreatening tone — think of it as a *set-the-table tone*. Use your regular voice with an ounce of over-enunciation, as though you were speaking to a toddler or directing a foreign tourist to the nearest gas station. After your dog learns a particular behavior,

you can use hand signals or whisper commands. But in the beginning, speak clearly.

You can use your voice to both steady and direct your dog. Think of each command as a short bark. Powerful (not whiny or questioning) verbal directions give your dog confidence in you and the situation at hand. When your dog is unsteady, distracted, or anxious, use familiar words to direct her. A recognized word cue can steady a dog, which quickly organizes a chaotic scene, modifies mischief, and, with tricks, lightens all interactions!

Making Your Lessons Age-Appropriate

First up, consider your dog or puppy's age. A very young puppy need not master complex skills — pottying in the right place and alerting to his name are tricks in and of themselves! You can definitely teach an old dog new tricks, and you can teach a new dog old tricks, but how you teach those tricks — and the tricks you choose — can vary according to your dog's age. This section explains how.



Beware of the aggressive reaction at any age. Some dogs have lofty impressions of themselves. If your dog growls at you as you explore any of these training routines, stop what you're doing and call a professional.

Puppy head start (under 6 months)

Young puppies can be delightfully sweet. Many will stick to you like glue and look to you for reassurance whenever the wind picks up.



Though seemingly open to learning about new things, a puppy can get overwhelmed by human expectations. In the earliest days of your life together, keep your “trick” routines to basic manners like where to potty and to sit before petting and rewards.

As you're teaching your puppy basic routines, you can practice the skills you'll use down the road:

- ✔ **Teach as you go.** Structured lessons are too much for a young puppy. Instead, practice the teach-as-you-go method, giving direction as you walk your puppy through everyday routines. Choose your command; then say it each time you walk your puppy through the activity. Say “Outside” or “Papers” as you lead your pup to his potty area. Say “Sit” as you help him assume the dinnertime pose.
- ✔ **Avoid staring and repeating directions.** To a puppy, being stared down or repeatedly ordered feels scary. Imagine it: a giant 400-pound gorilla staring at you, giving you unintelligible orders. Would you understand him any faster if he repeated the order again and again? Say your directions clearly as you gently guide your puppy's body through the trick, or show him what you're envisioning by doing it yourself!
- ✔ **Be creative.** If your puppy isn't catching on, don't get frustrated — that only scares your puppy. Instead, ask what you can do differently. Your puppy can't read your mind, and although some pups grasp routines quickly, others need a more creative approach. For example, giving treats to puppies after they potty works for some but not for others. If your puppy is treat-obsessed, he may think that peeing anywhere is treat-worthy.



Your first routines should highlight puppies' natural behavior, like saying “Happy puppy!” while they wag their tails. Young puppies, while impressionable, have short attention spans and can't follow complex sequences.

Teenagers (about 6 to 14 months old)

Ah, the teen years. As for most animals, dog adolescence is a study in extremes: One minute, the dogs are full of enthusiasm to learn new things; the next, they're distracted, overwhelmed, and reverting to naughty behaviors like chewing and nipping. When introducing new tricks or routines, your adolescent dog may give you the canine version of the teenage eye roll from time to time.

If your dog knows the basics, tricks are ideal ways to have a little fun and shape his social skills. Keep these three things in mind:

- ✓ **Choose tricks that lean toward his passions.** If your dog likes to grab things, work on retrieving and carrying skills. If he's athletic or jumpy, work on tricks that highlight those inclinations. Got a companion who likes to bark, dig, or investigate? Find activities to encourage those skills (Chapter 1 covers natural canine abilities).
- ✓ **Break a trick into mini lessons to build the success rate.** Adolescent dogs get discouraged easily. Shy dogs shut down; more-energetic dogs lose interest. For instance, if your goal is to teach your dog to roll over, break the lesson into six mini lessons. Yes, six! Here they are:
 1. Lie down.
 2. Lie down on his side.
 3. Lie down on his side and then arch his head over his neck.
 4. Lie down on his side, arch his head over his neck, and then roll backward.
 5. Lie down on his side, arch his head over his neck, and roll over.
 6. Lie down on his side, arch his head over his neck, roll over, and stand up!

Each success builds confidence, and although breaking the lesson down is more time-consuming, the extra effort can be well worth it.

- ✓ **Keep the lesson short and sweet.** Young dogs get bored and distracted easily. Keep each lesson focused, upbeat, and short: five to ten minutes maximum. Master one skill before moving on to the next, and highlight a successful routine at the beginning and end of each practice session.

Mature dogs (about 1 year and older)

As dogs age, they become less impulsive, provided they've had some basic training. Everyday distractions like the

vacuum cleaner, butterflies, and the mail carrier's visit become commonplace and ho-hum.

The urge to be the center of your attention, however, never gets old. Spicing up your maturing dog's routine with some new tricks is easy. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- ✔ **Give lessons before meals.** Older dogs get set in their routines and can predict meal times with uncanny accuracy. Use this ability to your trick-training advantage. An ideal time for lessons is right before a meal: hungry and alert, your dog will be eager to learn new activities — especially those that earn food rewards!
- ✔ **Factor in your dog's attention span.** Mature dogs have better concentration and will enjoy having your complete attention. Depending on your dog's personality type (which I discuss later in “Tagging Your Dog's Personality”), vary lessons from two to five minutes.
- ✔ **Account for aging.** Dogs age much too quickly. Although a 3-year-old dog can perform dazzling jumping feats, at some point he'll slow down. His knees will ache. He'll lose his youthful spark and drive. He'll need longer rest-and-recovery periods. Don't despair — we're all growing old. Work with your dog and pace his routines to his comfort and enthusiasm levels.

Tailoring Tricks by Breed

Open any dog book, and you'll see lots of different dogs. Big dogs. Small dogs. All-sizes-in-between dogs. Dogs with short hair. Dogs with long hair. Dogs with no hair! All these different dogs belong to different breeds. A *breed* is a group of dogs that share similar physical traits — they're all the same size, have the same hairstyle, and act pretty much the same.

In America, breeds are categorized into seven groups: Sporting, Hound, Working, Terrier, Non-Sporting, Toy, and Herding. The American Kennel Club (AKC) organizes these groups, according to shared characteristics. One thing's for sure — different breeds do different things.

To know which tricks and activities you and your dog will get the most out of, take a look at his breed. Certain breeds have character traits that naturally lend themselves to specific tricks and activities. In this section, I discuss the seven breed groups as well as mixed breeds and tell you which tricks may work best for them.

Sporting group

Retrieving breeds, Spaniels, Pointing breeds, and others in this group were originally bred to spend entire days running in the fields seeking out and collecting land and waterfowl for their masters. The Sporting group is still pretty hung up on the retrieving thing. They're an energetic, loyal, happy lot who thrive on interaction. Trusting, friendly, and eager to please, they take to training well and generally view each new exercise as an adventure. Your Sporting dog will excel at fetching a tissue and learning to dance (see Chapter 5).

Hound group

These guys, including Beagles, Basset Hounds, and Greyhounds, were bred to course fast-moving game, with hunters in quick pursuit. Dogs with a mission! Active, lively, and rugged, the Hound group has been domesticated into fun-loving, gentle pets with a high spirit for adventure.



Not bred to look to humans for direction, members of the Hound group usually don't. Consequently, obedience training can be slow and challenging; Hounds would rather trail a rabbit than hang out doing "Sit-Stays."

Trick training, however, with its use of food and toy lures, takes on a whole new meaning. Hounds excel in activities that require their nose, and if you put them in the spotlight, these guys are real hams. Although independent and somewhat distractible when their instincts call, they're still a lot of fun. Your Hound dog may enjoy learning how to sing along with an instrument (see Chapter 5) or hunt for hidden treasure (see Chapter 6).



A leash or enclosure is required when Hounds are outside.

Working group

The Working group, breeds such as Bernese Mountain Dogs, Boxers, and Samoyeds, is the most diversified group in terms of their breed functions. Some members of the Working group pull sleds, others guard flocks, and others protect the homestead. They do, however, have one common thread: They've all worked in the past to serve people.

You can't ignore a dog with a history like that of the Working group. Obedience training is a must, though after the dog masters those skills, trick and activity training is a natural adjunct. Not quick to embarrass themselves doing circus routines, however, these dogs prefer more-complex, multistep tasks that put their minds to work. Try tricks like playing dead (see Chapter 5) or the shell game (see Chapter 6).



An untrained Working dog is lost. Unemployment leaves them bored, nervous, and in some cases, territorial and aggressive.

Terrier group

These guys come in two varieties: rodent and pest hunters, like the Cairn Terrier, Lakeland Terrier, and Kerry Blue, and bull baiting/fighting terriers like the American Staffordshire and the Bull Terrier. Originally bred for their tenacity in many European countries, their popularity has spread worldwide. Terriers are a self-assured, spirited, and lively bunch.

Trick training, however, is a different story. Terriers love the spotlight. As happy on two legs as they are on four, they'll dazzle you with their athletic feats. They'll leave you in a fit of hysterics marveling at their spunk, quick-mindedness, and good humor. You and your Terrier may enjoy "Chase your tail!" or dancing (both in Chapter 5).



Untrained or isolated, Terriers can become chronic barkers, destructive chewers, or urine markers, and they may develop aggression over objects, over food, and with other animals.

Toy group

Dogs in the Toy group, such as the Maltese, Yorkshire Terrier, and Chihuahua, were bred for one thing and one thing only: to be companions. In keeping with their ancestors, they continue to perfect the art of being adorable. Playful and affectionate, Toys love the spotlight, and if the end result of a trick session is more attention, they'll be happy to cooperate. However, if the task is too difficult or you're not praising them enough, Toy dogs just might go on strike.

Anyone who's ever shared his or her life with a small dog will tell you they're adorable, especially when they're puppies. Spoiling them almost seems to go with the territory. Their behavior is so miniaturized that it's rarely a problem; however, living the unstructured life, being doted on night and day, is just as harmful for their psyche. The result? What I call Small Dog Syndrome, recognized by excessive barking (I'm in charge — hear me roar!), nipping (I may be small, but watch out when I'm mad!), and, at the other extreme, excessive clinging (I can't cope on my own). Sound familiar?

If obedience is too structured for you, try trick training. Little dogs take to it like a fish to water, and seeing them perform is a real hoot. Your Toy breed may enjoy jumping through a hoop (see Chapter 5).



It's easy to neglect any type of training with Toy dogs, but owner beware! Without direction, they can become quite tyrannical, ruling the house with constant barking and snapping. To get the most from these little guys, train them to do some useful tricks, endearing them to one and all.

Non-Sporting group

Unlike other groups, there is little consistency in personalities here because the Non-Sporting dogs were all bred for different tasks. One thing is consistent though — they're all lovable! Some take to trick training better than others. A Dalmatian, for example, will slide into a tutu much more readily than a Lhasa Apso. Consider teaching your Non-Sporting breed to roll over (see Chapter 4) or dance (see Chapter 5).

Many of the Non-Sporting breeds were originally bred for specific work, but because work is hard to come by these days, they've become companions. If you have a dog from this category, consult breed-specific books to figure out what yours likes to do.

Herding group

Dogs in the Herding group, such as the German Shepherd Dog, Australian Shepherd, and Border Collie, were bred to move flocks and herds. Agile and alert, they're quick to figure out whether the people they live with are smart enough to be considered shepherds or passive sheep. If you're a sheep, your herder will run circles around you; if you're his shepherd, training will come quickly and easily.

Ready to master anything new, Herders make great trick dogs. Herding dogs take to many activities with natural style and grace. Some they naturally master include hide and seek and the name game (see Chapter 6 for both).



Isolated or ignored, dogs in the Herding group may develop timidity, barking, or pacing habits.

Mixed breeds

If you have a mixed breed dog, don't despair! Your job is twice the fun. First, see whether you can identify the mix. If you're not sure, get a professional opinion. After you have a general idea, read over each group your dog may belong to. Then on to the fun part: the observational experiment. Study your dog's behavior and decide where he fits in. I know a Shepherd-Retriever mix, Charley, who's the spitting image of Rin Tin Tin but who'd retrieve a ball for you until the cows came home.

Considering Body Type

Your dog's body type affects which tricks he'll be drawn to. Although your Basset Hound may have the enthusiasm of ten Border Collies, coaching him through a dance routine may not be in his best interest; instead, teach him to find your keys. Which body type category does your dog fit into?

- ✔ **Balanced proportions:** Dogs who have balanced proportions, such as English Springer Spaniels, Airedales, and Bichon Frises, are generally comfortable moving into various poses and thus can excel at trick training. These dogs are controlled by their breed drives, age, and personality, so read the corresponding sections in this chapter for guidance on where to get started.
- ✔ **Leggy and light:** Slender, long-legged dogs such as Whippets, Vizslas, and Border Collies, often excel in tricks that use their agile frames. They're not built for contemplation and stillness, so save tricks that demand these skills until after you have them hooked on performing.
- ✔ **Short-legged, big-boned:** Dogs with this body type, such as Bulldogs or Basset Hounds, may be high on enthusiasm, but due to their frames, they're low on flexibility skills. Although your dog may not be bred for tricks that demand speed and agility, your dog can excel at plenty of clever tricks such as singing while you play an instrument that will most definitely wow the crowds!
- ✔ **Stocky and solid:** Dogs who have solid builds, such as Rotweillers and Mastiffs, are more inclined to process their motions rather than act impulsively. Choose tricks that highlight their problem-solving capacities, such as searching for hidden treasure.
- ✔ **Handicapped dogs:** If you're the owner of a handicapped dog, either by accident or birth defect, I commend you for picking up this book. It shows that you accept your dog's physical limitations, that you recognize that he's mentally competent and eager to learn — like every other dog in the world — and that you love him with abandon. Set your sights on tricks that your dog can easily master and perform in front of visitors or a crowd. Having your three-legged dog sit back on his haunches and wave will certainly shift others' expressions from sadness to delight!

Pinpointing Your Pup's Personality

After you understand your dog's ancestry (see the earlier sections on breed and body type), you need to look at his personality. Like people, each dog is different, and how dogs relate

to the world directly affects how they'll relate to you, the teacher. Dogs have distinct personalities, and some are definitely more into learning than others. Fortunately, every dog has a weak spot. Whether it's cheese or liver or a toy, your job is to find something your dog is bananas about and use it to reward his efforts and encourage his cheerful cooperation. Sure, dogs could work for nothing, but that would be like forcing you to work for no pay. Dogs aren't prisoners, so reward them — the payoff is great!

I've identified six character types of dogs. Read them over and identify yours:

✔ **Eager Beaver:** As trick dogs, these creatures will do whatever it takes to make you happy, although they can be difficult and manic if you ignore them. Presented with new material, it's almost as if they're racing the clock to figure out what you want.

You'll notice they excel in tricks that approximate what their particular breed was designed to do. With this dog, all you have to do is decide what's next, and it's done. Though enthusiasm and staying power are a must, harsh techniques will crush their spirit.

✔ **Joe Cool:** These fellows are laid back and relaxed, and they're not terribly interested in organized activities. Obedience puts them to sleep, and when it comes to tricks, you may get a teenager-style eye roll when you request "Paw."

But every dog — even the coolest of the cool — has a soft spot for something. Maybe it's cheese; maybe it's dried liver. But after you discover it, you'll be amazed at how quickly your mellow fellow will come to life. Lessons must be kept short and your enthusiasm high to keep these guys awake and interested.

✔ **Comedian:** These guys are the Jerry Seinfelds of the dog world. They live for a laugh. These wonder dogs will figure out a routine before you've had a chance to learn it yourself. Quick-minded perfectionists, comedians will get into a lot of trouble if they're not directed.

- ✔ **Bully:** These dogs take themselves far too seriously. In a group of dogs, they'd be destined to lead, and your home is no different. Unless you're an experienced trainer, dogs with this nature can be difficult to work with.

Obedience training is a must. If your bully dog threatens you, seek the advice of a professional trainer, and don't delay.
- ✔ **Sweetie Pie:** Docile and mild, these dogs like to observe situations rather than control them. Whereas obedience training makes them feel more secure about situations, tricks help build their confidence. They adore the people they love and train best under a soft, patient hand.
Yelling or hitting frightens them terribly, even when it's not directed at them.
- ✔ **Nervous Nellie:** These dogs like to view their world from behind your legs. Be patient and forgiving when teaching new maneuvers, and you'll notice how eager your dog is to please you. Training is essential to help these dogs feel more secure and to build their confidence.

Chapter 3

Teaching the Basic Manners

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Going over basic commands
 - ▶ Keeping your dog calm and attentive
 - ▶ Getting your dog to speak and shush on command
 - ▶ Testing basic training beyond the house
-

My clients always want to know how often they need to practice in order to have a well-behaved dog. My answer? You don't need to practice — you need to apply! Apply what you discover to everyday life. Basic skills like sitting before a meal or meeting company are the building blocks your dog needs to know before she can flip a treat off her nose and catch it or show off her dancing skills (see Chapter 4 for more on these fun tricks).

Teaching tricks requires that you set some time aside, but first you need to review the basics, and that's what this chapter is all about. This chapter teaches or refreshes the skills that you and your dog may already know, like "Sit" before a meal or "Stay" while you chop the vegetables.

Encouraging Self-Control: Basic Commands

Think of basic training as the backbone of trick training. From "Sit" to "Stay" and "Come," these commands are a must before

you proceed to anything fancier. Just as kids need to know their alphabet before they can spell, you and your dog need to know and use these basic commands to build from the proper foundation.



As you teach your dog basic commands, remember that the biggest motivating factor in training is you. To be a good teacher, remember the three c's:

- ✓ **Consistency:** Use a familiar command in similar situations, like “Sit” for greetings. Encourage everyone to do the same. If two people give different directions, your dog won't know who or what to follow.
- ✓ **Clarity:** Be clear in your communication. Remember that dogs are not little people. Bent postures invite playful interaction, not respect. Soft tones sound wishy-washy. When directing your dog, stand tall and speak clearly. Be the one to watch!
- ✓ **Compassion:** Be compassionate and praise a lot. Remember that you attract more dogs with dog biscuits and good cheer than with discipline and frustration. A cheerful attitude inspires a dedicated learner.



Think of each command as an interactive communication rather than a complex request. Your dog can't break down complex sentences, but a short, clear word cue helps your dog recognize what you'd like her to do in all situations that require that behavior. The shorter your word cue, the better. Think of a bark. “Molly, sweetie-pie, can you sit down for Mama?” is not bark-like; “Sit” is. Use this command anytime you need your dog to sit.

Calling Your Dog

Two commands are associated with summoning your dog to your side: her name and “Come.” First you want to make your dog's association with her name a positive one. Then you can get her to come at your bidding. The following sections show you how.

Name

What do you do when people whom you respect call your name? Do you ignore them? Or do you look up, expectant and excited that an adventure may follow? You want your dog to be interested and excited, too. To create positive associations with your dog's name, remember the following:

- ✔ **Use your dog's name for happy interaction.** If you need to medicate, isolate, or otherwise commiserate about something (a chewed shoe perhaps), go and get your dog; don't call her by name.
- ✔ **When you call your dog, have something fun in store.** Shake a cup full of treats, bounce or toss a toy, or pretend you've found something in the grass. Be enthusiastic when your dog responds to you.
- ✔ **Don't overuse her name.** No one likes to check in constantly. Give your dog some freedom to explore.

"Come"

You should first teach the "Come" command as a sensation of closeness. Here's how the process works:

1. Throughout the day, reward your dog anytime she chooses to reconnect with you.

Say "Come" as you reach out to pet or reward her, encouraging your dog to look up by sweeping your hands to your eyes. If you're using a clicker, highlight this moment of togetherness: Click and treat.

2. After the dog understands that the word means closeness, command "Come" to get your dog to come to you.

Gradually extend the distance and increase the distractions, working in a safe environment.

Getting Your Dog in Position

Sometimes you need to restrict your dog's movement, and the commands that follow enable you to do just that. Teach your dog to sit, lie down, stand still, get back, or stay put under your legs or chair when you're sitting, and not only will your dog have impeccable manners, but she'll also understand the appropriate starting points for learning many tricks.

"Sit"



Think of the "Sit" command as the "Say please" direction of the dog world. Encourage it before anything your dog perceives as positive, such as meals, treats or toys, pats, or greetings at the door. Dogs learn manners at home, just like kids, so be cool when you come in; don't pay attention to your dog until she's composed enough to "Sit-Stay."

To signal "Sit," do the following:

1. **Swing a pointed finger from your dog's nose to your eyes, as if you're scooping her attention toward you as you command "Sit."**
2. **If your dog doesn't respond, use either a treat or a toy to encourage her cooperation, or position her.**

To encourage cooperation, do the following:

- Say a happy marker word like "Yes!" each time her bottom hits the floor.
- If you're using the clicker (see Chapter 1), click and reward cooperative efforts.

You can position your dog by squeezing her waist (the midsection just below her ribs).



Luring is an effective way to encourage cooperation. Use a toy or treat to lure your dog into position, holding the bait just so as you guide your dog into position. Then command "Sit" as your dog is doing the action. If she doesn't listen, give the "Sit" command once as you gently position your dog. Avoid repeating yourself — repeating isn't cool in any language.

“Down”

The “Down” command encourages your dog to lie flat on the floor. It’s essentially for getting dogs to relax, but it’s also a necessary cue for trick-training as a first step for tricks like rolling over (Chapter 4). Initially this exercise can be a real bear to teach, so here are some steps to follow if your dog doesn’t know this one:

- 1. Give the command “Sit” and then either kneel or stand at your dog’s side. Hold a favorite toy or treat on the ground slightly in front of your dog.**

Let your dog puzzle over the predicament, but don’t release the prize or say anything until her elbows touch the floor.

- 2. As she lowers herself, say “Down” and then praise, reward, and release her.**

Continue this exchange for anything your dog treasures, from treats to toys and attention. Work on Steps 1 and 2 for three days.



Some dogs want nothing to do with the “Down” command; they consider lowering themselves too stressful, a loss of face, or just plain not fun! To encourage the proper motion, you can press your left thumb gently between your dog’s shoulder blades as you lift a front paw out gently.

- 3. Starting on the fourth day, say “Down” as you stand calmly at your dog’s side, adding your hand signal, which is a downward point of your left hand.**
- 4. Continue the reward exchange for another three days, and then begin to phase out the object reward, relying solely on your verbal praise.**

Teaching Patience

Being able to exercise self-control is always a good thing. The “Stay” and “Wait” commands help your dog to do just that.

“Stay”

After your dog understands “Sit,” introduce the “Stay” command. At first, say “Stay” while standing at your dog’s side; then pause and release with “Okay!”

Now tell your dog to “Stay,” and pivot directly in front of her; the separation challenges a dog’s impulses. Return to her side and release with “Okay!” As your dog catches on, increase your distance and add some distractions (you can hop around or make funny sounds — make it fun for both of you). If your dog stands up, reposition calmly and remind, “Stay.” Slowly, as your dog improves, move farther out in front.



Remember to always return to your dog’s side before releasing her to ensure that she doesn’t get up while you’re apart.

“Wait” and “Okay”

The “Wait” and “Okay” commands tell your dog to stop in her tracks, check in with you, and wait to be released at “Okay.” It’s a self-control thing like “Stay,” but it’s more in the moment. You teach it like this:

- 1. Holding your dog to your side on-leash, walk to any threshold (doorway) in your home.**
- 2. Stop abruptly as you reach the threshold and say “Wait” as you distract your dog with a toy or treats.**

If she bolts anyway, pull her back behind your heels and repeat, “Wait,” as you continue to show her the positive distraction. Repeat the pull back as often as necessary until she pauses and looks to you.

- 3. The moment your dog is still, say “Okay” as you lead her forward and reward her.**
- 4. Try using the “Wait” command at the front door.**

Now you’re ready for the big time! Go to your main doorway. Prepare yourself as previously, holding the leash and carrying a favorite toy/food distraction. Command “Wait” just before you open the door. If your dog bolts, be ready. Pull her back to your feet and remind, “Wait.” When she does, say “Okay” as you reward her and lead her through.

5. After you've mastered the front door, try the car.

Take your dog to your car and instruct her to “Wait” as you open the door. If she lunges, snap her back, refusing to let her in until she looks to you for permission.

By now your dog should perk up every time she hears you say “Wait.” Start using the command whenever you want your dog to stand still: when talking to friends, crossing the street, visiting the veterinarian, or as a preliminary step to more advanced training.

A flat palm flashed quickly in front of your dog's nose is the hand signal for “Wait,” and I use an upbeat flash outward for “Okay.”

Restricting with “Nope”

Your dog won't always make the right choices — that unattended slice of sausage pizza on the coffee table may be too hard to resist. At times like these, your dog can benefit from a little guidance from you — this is where the “Nope” command comes in handy.

“Nope” (or “Wrong”) sends a simple, clear message that what your dog is doing isn't appropriate. Use “Nope” to teach your dog to back off from temptations, whether the temptations are food, moving objects, or other distractions. Or to try a different approach, use “Nope” when a trick cue brings on the wrong behavior.



Always follow a negative command with a direction that tells the dog what to do instead. Your dog wasn't born with an instruction manual on how to live with you; you need to show and teach her what's appropriate. “Nope” says that's not the right thing to do; a follow-up direction says, “Do this instead!”

To help your dog learn better impulse control with “Nope,” you must first teach her what this direction means. Here's how:

- 1. With your dog in the next room, place something tempting, like a plate of cookies, on the floor.**
- 2. Put your dog on a leash and bring her into the room and approach the plate.**

3. The very second your dog notices the temptation, pull on the leash and say “Nope.”

Say “Nope” conversationally, as you would other commands.



Initially say “Nope” as a command, then if your dog still darts ahead, pull the leash back abruptly. Though pulling your dog back may work to discourage her, if you forget to say “Nope,” your dog will have no idea what you’re talking about when she’s off-leash.

4. Walk by the plate.

Does she stay focused on you? Good dog — say “Yes!” or click, and then offer a reward. Redirect her with a command like “Get your bone.”

If your dog shows any interest in the plate, tug and say “Nope.” After your dog turns her attention back to you, redirect and praise her.



Focus your correction on the object and the impulse, not your dog. Growl at the object — your dog will grow wary of the item rather than you. Timing is everything, so give corrections the second your dog starts to contemplate a mischievous deed, not after the fact. If she’s already downed the cookies, you’re too late!

5. Repeat this routine the next day with a similar temptation, gradually exposing her to more tempting objects later in the week.

Pretty soon your dog will see something tempting on the floor and turn her nose toward the sky, as if to say, “I don’t see anything.” Now you can practice with cars, kids, small creatures, and any other distractions. Make a huge fuss when your dog focuses on you. (For more on dealing with distractions, see the later section “Introducing Temptations.”)

Next you can use the “Nope” command when directing your dog or encouraging her cooperation with tricks and other adventures. If she knows that “Nope” is about what she’s doing — not a confrontation between you — she’ll use her head to figure out a different approach or look to you for a clue.

Barking and Not Barking on Cue

Some dog breeds are prone to barking . . . a lot! Terriers bark when a sound alerts them. Hounds bark when they catch a scent. Protective breeds bark when alerted to the unfamiliar. And many dogs love to bark just to hear themselves. Dogs who bark for a cause will not be silenced, but don't despair — if you're sharing your life with a barking dog, there is hope. After you embrace your dog's natural vocal talents, you can teach him when barking is appropriate and when it's not. Although it sounds too good to be true, conducting your one-dog band is easier than you think.

To teach your dog to bark on command, use the following tips:

- ✓ **Make eye contact:** Look at your dog alertly when you want him to bark. Break your stare when you want him to quiet down.
- ✓ **Use voice commands:** You need two: "Speak" and "Shhh." Enunciate clearly when you give your commands.
- ✓ **Give hand signals:** Use snappy signals to both encourage barking and discourage it.
 - To signal "Speak," try snapping your fingers near your mouth.
 - To signal "Shhh," put your index finger to your lips as if shushing a child.

Asking your dog to "Speak"

First, you must embrace your dog's natural vocal talents. This is easy enough — just attach a command to his passion. If your dog is a little hesitant in the barking department, you'll need to be more demonstrative to egg him on, but the goal is the same. The following steps show you how to attach the "Speak" command to your dog's barking behavior:

1. **Get something your dog lives for — a ball or a treat, for example.**
2. **Secure him to a post or tree, or stand on the other side of a door.**

Stay within your dog's sight if he's stressed by being physically separated from you.



- 3. Wave his prized object just out of reach while you encourage him to get it.**

The moment he barks, give it to him and praise, praise, praise!

- 4. Begin to add the hand signal to your voice and eye cues.**

Snap your fingers near your mouth.

- 5. Repeat this procedure until your dog reacts quickly to the “Speak” command.**

Encourage him to “Speak,” using the command and hand signal, throughout the day for positive things, such as a meal or a walk. If he speaks out of turn, just ignore him.



To encourage a puzzled or submissive barker to speak up, try baiting him with an enticing toy or treat, prompting him with a sound cue like the doorbell ringing, or tossing a toy and not releasing him to chase it until after he has sounded off!

Commanding “Shhh”

Now it’s time to teach your dog to be quiet. Sound like an impossible dream? If you make it fun and teach it like a trick, you may be shocked to find how quickly your dog picks it up!

To link the “Shhh” command to silence, follow these steps:

- 1. Return to Steps 1–3 of the “Speak” lesson in the preceding section, isolating your dog and standing in front of him with something tasty or fun. Say “Speak!”**
- 2. After a few barks, say “Shhh,” stamp your foot, and avert your eyes.**

The moment your dog stops barking, reward his silence.
- 3. Gradually extend the time your dog must be silent to be rewarded.**
- 4. Repeat this process until your dog responds to both “Speak” and “Shhh.”**

Practice your commands throughout the day, varying which ones you reinforce based on the situation. Sometimes reward the “Speak,” other times the “Shhh.” Have your dog “Speak” and “Shhh” two or three times before rewarding him. He’ll be so proud of his new trick, and so will you!

Time for Bed: Settling Your Dog

Teaching your dog to go to his comfort station on cue isn’t hard at all. Each time you’re in the room and you’d like your dog to quiet down, tell him “Settle down” as you point to his area. If he ignores you, lead him there and say “Settle” as you position him in a comfortable “Down” position and instruct “Stay.” If your dog challenges his “Stay” command, secure a leash to an immovable object near the station, leaving just enough slack for your dog to lie down comfortably. Soon you can just point, and your dog will go happily — content to chew his favorite toy and stay out from underfoot.

You can turn going to the comfort station (or to his crate) into a bedtime trick. Simply choose your command, such as “Time for bed” or “Go to your room,” and say it as you point toward and lead your dog to his place. If you reinforce your dog’s cooperation with a treat, toy, or special bone, he’ll be scurrying to the location just for the fun of it. If your dog is too distracted or ignores you, attach a drag lead (a 4-foot leash; see Chapter 1) and guide him along.

Ringing a Bell to Signal That It’s Potty Time

The most important routine your dog has to learn in leaving your home (also known as his den) is where to go to the bathroom. Think of it like teaching a toddler to go on the potty — but your dog’s toilet will be a place in your yard or well-organized papers in a corner of the house.

If you teach your dog the bell trick, you can rely on him to tell you when he needs to go out to do his business. Some dogs even use the bell to remind their people when they're hungry or thirsty, too. People either love this trick or they hate it.

When a dog needs to go to the bathroom, he'll navigate to wherever you've coached him to potty. If a door blocks his way, hang a bell next to the door at his nose level. Here's how to teach him to ring it:

1. Tap the bell with your fingers as you lead your dog through the door.

Be very relaxed about ringing it, staring at the bell — not your dog — and opening the door as if the two depended on each other.

2. Walk directly to your dog's bathroom area.

Your dog should begin to ring the bell on his own within a week.



Some dogs ring the bell by nosing it, others by pawing it. Let your dog do what comes naturally to him. Avoid forcing him into the bell, or he'll refuse to cooperate.



If your dog isn't ringing the bell himself after a week's time, rub a dab of butter on it before you bring him to the door; then encourage his interest and open the door the moment he sounds the bell.

Introducing Temptations

While working on tricks or doing other activities with your dog, you'll encounter distractions. Unless you limit your performances to solitary stints in your living room, something — somewhere — will vie for your dog's attention. Instead of waiting for that day, introduce temptations in a controlled way so your dog will know that no matter what, the show must go on. Do this before you launch into tricks, and you won't have to waste your lessons calming or capturing a runaway dog. This section explains how.

Sounds

Unfamiliar sounds are so . . . unfamiliar. Some direction from someone who knows what's going on would help — hey, that's you!

Introduce your dog to various environments and sounds. Look for weed whackers, car horns, playground noises — anything out of the ordinary. Direct your dog with recognized commands so she feels safe and relaxed no matter what's happening around her. Later, when your tricks have been well-rehearsed, your dog will be able to focus on you above all the other sounds going on around her.

Motion

Zippy, unpredictable motion elicits the predatory response in even the smallest of dogs. They must give chase and bring that mighty caribou to its knees, even if the prey is on the small side — and looks a little bit like a chipmunk. Although a little backyard bunny chasing is okay, running after a pack of children while performing tricks is not.

To teach your dog to focus on you above all else, praise her cooperative skills and reward her attention when working together. Then rig a scenario to elicit her chasing impulse by asking some helpers to run around you while you're proofing basic training skills. If you see your dog's chase impulse kicking in, say "Nope" (see the related section earlier in this chapter) and tug the leash back sharply. When your dog passes the run-by test, graduate to bike-riding and food-waving. Practice — carefully — around moving cars. Praise her when she's focused on you, and remind her to "Stay."

People

Good news, bad news: Everybody loves a well-mannered dog, so be prepared. Most people will ask before they approach, but some people won't. Kids and toddlers can't resist — some rush right in for the teddy bear hug before their parents can intercede. Bring your dog to a park, and you'll discover she's a kid magnet.

Prepare your dog to meet people by practicing at home. Slowly, start to encourage interaction in unfamiliar locations. Here's how:

- ✓ Shake a cup of treats and teach your dog to sit each time she hears it rattle.
- ✓ Put the cup by the front door. Each time someone enters, shake the cup, command "Sit," and reward your dog when she's sitting.
- ✓ Take the cup wherever you go and encourage the same manners you've taught at home.

Off-lead or untrained dogs

Leashes add an interesting — and not always good — dynamic to dog-dog interactions. Because the leash causes your dog to strain forward to greet a new dog, she may look assertive even if she's submissive. It creates an aggressive body posture when her mind may not be. When an off-lead dog approaches, he may misunderstand the posture and get assertive in response.

The best thing to do when an off-lead dog approaches is to discourage your dog's interaction and walk quickly away from the other dog. Most often, off-lead dogs are curious and just want to say hello, but some are aggressive, protecting what they perceive as their territory: If you leave, they'll quickly lose interest.



If you have a small dog or encounter off-lead dogs regularly, you can buy a spray deterrent to defend yourself and/or your dog if another dog or animal charges at you. This nontoxic spray is useful to stop most animals in their tracks. I recently saw a product called Spray Shield, by Premier, which you can find online at Amazon.com.

If you're in town and approached by an on-leash but poorly trained dog, tell your dog to "Wait" at your side. You can roll with the chaotic greeting — or do what I do: Just look the dog's owner in the eye and say, "This isn't a good time now," and walk away.

Chapter 4

Easy Tricks and Old Favorites

In This Chapter

- ▶ Showing some love with wags, hugs, and kisses
 - ▶ Pausing for paw tricks
 - ▶ Rolling with tricks that may be second-nature
-

One of the fastest ways for you to get addicted to trick training is to teach your dog some easy tricks that showcase that puppy love. And dogs, like people, love to succeed, so the surest way to get your dog addicted to trick training is to start with a few surefire winners. Here are a few tricks that everyone can master — people and dogs of all ages!

“Wag”

Teaching your dog how to wag his tail on command is so easy. If a tennis ball brings the tail into action, hold up a ball; if food gets the tail to wag, use that. Catch your dog wagging, praise him for it, and think of a clever cue word to command each time (like “Wag”). Use your cue word in a positive, inviting tone, and watch your dog come alive.

Now add a hand signal like waving your right hand back and forth. Start out with a pronounced sweep, and then phase off until you can make small motions with your index finger.

“Give Me a Hug”



“Give me a hug” is a breed-selective exercise. If your dog is injured, has dysplasia, or is skeletally challenged (like a Basset, a Bulldog, or a giant breed), avoid this trick. And don’t forget — if your dog refuses, move on.

You can teach this command in several ways. If your dog loves to wrap his paws around you, you can reinforce this behavior when it’s happening by using a clicker (as I explain in Chapter 1), or you can cue your dog by luring him and pairing his cooperation with a word like “Hug.” Reward your dog when he’s in the hug position — this method works best for calm dogs who are not prone to excessive jumping.

For jumpy dogs, try a more sedate method. I taught my wild-child dog Shayna to hug by first ignoring the behavior when she was jumping all over me and then sitting with her and organizing it this way:

1. Kneel down on the floor or sit in a chair and give your dog the “Sit” command.

Check to make sure your dog is sitting square on the floor, not leaning to either side.

2. Lift your dog’s front paws gently and place them on your shoulders as you say “Hug.”

Give your dog a thorough pet and/or a reward.

3. Say “Okay” and help him down.

Do Steps 1 through 3 only three times per session, and stop if your dog becomes too energetic or starts to nip. Leave the leash on and give a tug on the leash as you say “Shhh!” if your dog gets too excited while on two paws. Also, try practicing “Hug” when your dog has less energy.

The silent signal for “Hug” is to cross your arms over your chest and tap your shoulders with your fingers. You can demonstrate the signal each time you say “Hug.” Be patient while teaching this sign language — it may take a while for your dog to make the connection.

“Kisses!”

Getting your dog to give you kisses is a real delight — unless you hate dog kisses. You can teach this trick quickly by association, simply saying “Kisses” whenever you’re getting a licking.

If your dog is licking out of control, make it more of a two-step process:

1. First teach your dog “Enough” to signal him to stop licking.

Keep a short (8- to 12-inch) leash on your dog and say “Enough” in a pleasant but serious tone. If your dog doesn’t listen, tug the leash as you withdraw your attention.



When discouraging licking, look away and not at your dog. If you look at your dog, you’re essentially saying, “Do it again!”

2. Teach your dog to lick on cue.

To teach your dog to lick you, take a frozen stick of butter and rub it on the back of your hand. During a period when your dog is calm, go to him, extend your hand, and command “Kisses” as he licks your hand. When you’ve had enough, just say so — “Enough!”

When your dog knows the trick, you can add a hand signal: Rub your right index finger on the back of your left hand, as though your finger is your dog’s tongue.

“Paw”

Nothing like starting with a classic: giving a paw. After your dog masters “Paw,” you can really start being creative, teaching her to wave, give high fives, and turn out the lights. But everyone’s got to get started somewhere — after you master the basic “Paw,” the sky’s the limit.

To teach the basic “Paw,” first get your dog (on a leash if she’s antsy) and some favorite treats, and go into a quiet room. Then do the following:

1. **Kneel or sit in front of your dog.**
2. **Command “Sit,” position your dog’s hindquarters if necessary, and offer praise.**
3. **You can try two methods at this point:**
 - **Physical:** Using a thumb, press your dog’s shoulder muscle gently until her front leg lifts, as shown in Figure 4-1. Then lay your hand under her foot pad as you say “Paw.”
 - **Treat-based:** Hold a treat in a closed hand a couple of inches in front of your dog’s foot. When she paws it, open your hand to reward her. With each repetition of this step, gradually raise your hand to your dog’s elbow. Now add the “Paw” step. Keep the treat in your other hand, as you extend your closed hand. As she hits your hand, say “Paw” and gently grasp her paw with an opened palm. Treat her the moment your palm connects to her paw.



Figure 4-1: Pressing the shoulder to get your dog to lift a paw.

4. Now signal and command “Paw.”

Is she catching on? If not, help her complete the “Paw” by pressing her shoulder blade gently. Praise her warmly, whether she caught on or needed your help.



The hand signal for “Paw” is to stretch out your hand, as if to shake hands.

“Wave”

A dog who knows how to wave hello and goodbye — miraculous, you say? Fortunately, it’s not hard to teach at all. Here’s how:

1. Place your dog in a “Sit-Stay” and show her that you have a treat in your left hand.
2. Standing in front of her, say “Paw” and signal with your right hand (as if you were going to shake hands).
3. As she lifts her paw, wave your signal hand and say “Paw-Wave” as you reward her with the treat.
4. Repeat this, slowly weaning off the initial “Paw” signal in place of a wave signal — simply waving to your dog while saying, “Wave hello” or “Wave bye-bye!”

“Other One”

As your dog gets into the “Paw” trick, you may notice that she favors either her left or right paw. To prevent having a one-dimensional dog, teach the cue “Other one.” Here’s how:

1. Say “Paw” and lovingly praise your dog when she raises her paw.
2. Extend your hand to the other paw and say, “Other one,” using the treat-in-your-hand trick or shoulder press to inspire her cooperation.

Hold the treat in a closed hand a couple of inches in front of your dog’s foot until she paws it, or press the shoulder muscle gently with your thumb until she lifts her paw, as I describe earlier in the section “Pausing for the basic ‘Paw.’”

- 3. If your dog lifts her favored paw, use a sound such as “Nope” and repeat your original request while you put pressure on the shoulder muscle of the other leg.**

When your dog lifts the other paw, praise, treat, and give her a big hug (if your dog likes that sort of thing)!

The hand signal for “Other one” is to stretch out your hand to the specified paw.

“High Five”

Okay, hot shot, gimme five! Getting your dog to give you five is easy to teach, and dogs love it. Afterward, you’ll both have something to celebrate.

To teach “High five,” simply hold your hand, palm out, at the same height you normally do when you say “Paw.” If the command “High five” gets a puzzled look, then say “Paw” to request the action and say “High five” as the dog’s paw makes contact with your hand. Drop the “Paw” command when your dog makes the connection. Slowly lift your hand higher to accentuate the “High five.”



When asking for the “High five,” stay within your dog’s height capabilities. If you hold your hand too high, your dog will leap up to try to please you, but you don’t want to encourage jumping. “High five” is a three-paws-on-the-floor trick.

“Fetch”

Though a well-trained retriever looks like he was born with a tennis ball in his mouth, fetching is a little more complicated than it appears. The toughest trick is teaching your dog to release the object happily: the human equivalent of sharing. The best approach in my opinion? Break this one into three, easy-to-master parts before stringing them all together in the final stage.

Stage 1: “Go get it!”

Here’s where you can instill a love of fetching in your dog. Simple to master, all your dog must do to earn praise, rewards, and your attention is to chase after toys. That’s it!



1. Toss a favorite toy.

If your dog doesn't chase it, go after it yourself: dogs, like kids, learn by example.

2. The moment your dog starts chasing the toy, cheer him on: "Good boy!"

If your praise distracts him, wait until he's reached his toy.

3. As he plays with his toy, approach him with a treat, and reward and praise him.

4. As your dog catches on, command "Go get it!" as he chases after the thrown object.



All your dog has to do is to follow and grasp his toy: *nothing else.*

Stage 2: "Bring"

Anything a dog puts in his mouth is special, at least to him. So the first step in teaching your dog to retrieve is to get him psyched to show you his "treasure." All your dog must do for this step is come back with his prize.



The focus here is on the "Bring," not the "Give."

Here's what to do:

1. Pocket some treats or another favorite toy.

If your dog is too treat-focused and won't leave your side if there's a treat on the scene, leave food rewards and clickers out of the picture. In this case, your overwhelming enthusiasm will be your dog's just reward.

2. Gently toss a toy a few feet away from you, saying "Go get it!"

3. Each time your dog brings the toy back, shower him with praise, but don't take the toy away. Click and/or reward him with food if it doesn't overshadow the toy; or bring out another toy to excite him to drop the one he brought back.



If your dog ignores you when he gets the toy, try running away from him after he has picked it up, with a different toy in hand. If he still won't bring it back, pretend to eat some of his treat.

4. As your dog catches on and trots back to you happily, say “Bring.”
5. Toss a different toy and repeat Steps 3 and 4.

After your dog is bringing his toy to you on the “Bring” command, you’re ready for the “Give” command.

Stage 3: “Give”

Relinquishing an object is the trickiest part of the retrieve, especially if you’ve chased your dog for things in the past. Remember, when you chase a dog for an object, you’re communicating “prize envy” — that whatever the dog has must have value because you want it back. Be patient. Follow the steps and be smart enough not to lose your temper if your dog tries to outsmart you. A graceful retreat is not a failure.



TIP

Start young! Fill and place cups of treats around your home. When your pup/dog is chewing or playing with his toys, shake the cup and say “Give” as he spits it out. Treat him, pet him on the head, and leave — without touching his toy. By connecting the command “Give” to the act of releasing, you get two helpful results: Your dog relaxes when people approach him, and he has a more comfortable association with the “Give” command.



REMEMBER

Never chase your dog to get him to give up an object. Instead, teach the “Give” command and be patient! Follow these steps:

1. Pull up a chair and line up some treats plus your dog’s favorite toy.
2. Call your dog over, show him the toy, and praise him when he takes it.
3. Wave the treat in front of your dog and say “Give” as he spits out the toy. (The treat should induce him to drop the toy.)
4. Praise and reward your dog the second he releases the toy.
5. Now go to a hallway or an enclosed space. Toss the toy a short distance, saying “Go get it.”

- 6. Praise your dog the moment he picks it up, and then kneel down and say “Give” as you reward the release.**

To signal “Give,” hold your open palm in front of your dog’s mouth.



Some dogs are so food-obsessed that they can’t think of anything else. If you’re having a rough time getting your dog’s attention with treats around, you need to teach him without treats. Simply replace Step 3 with an extra helping of praise, or use two toys and exchange one for the other.

You may notice that your dog releases the ball as you approach or tosses it on the ground near you. Although this is acceptable when starting out, you eventually need to be more selective with your rewards.



Deliveries are to be made mouth-to-hand. Here’s how to shape this behavior:

- 1. Go back to your chair. Hold your dog on-leash if he moves away.**
- 2. Now give your dog the toy, praise him for having it, and then say “Give” as you extend your hand under your dog’s mouth.**

If your dog drops it on the ground, ignore him, pick up the toy, and prompt him again, this time angling your hand and bracing his body with the leash. Enthusiastically praise and reward the instant the toy drops into your hand.

- 3. Click/reward the moment the toy drops into your hand.**

Stage 4: All together now

After your dog learns that when you say “Bring,” you want the object you point to and when you say “Give,” you’re looking for a hand delivery, then you’re ready to help him connect the two talents.

- 1. Go to a hallway or small room, like the bathroom.**
- 2. Give the toy a short toss and instruct “Go get it!”**

3. Say “Bring” and cheer your dog back to you when he grabs the toy.
4. Extend your hand to retrieve the object, and say “Give.”
5. When he releases the toy, reward him with praise and/or treats for a job well done!
6. Repeat Steps 2 through 5 twice, and then stop.



If your dog gets so excited that he can't hold on to the toy, you may be rushing it. Try teaching the last step first: praising your dog for releasing the toy. This should help him feel clever and calm down. Encourage him to “Hold it” by picking up the toy and playing “Keep Away”: when he grabs it, he'll be more eager to “Hold it.” Last but not least, you can work on “Go get it.”

“Beg”

“Beg,” “Ask nicely,” “Put up your paws” — take your pick of a verbal command — they all mean the same thing! Getting your dog to sit up on her back legs (also called *haunches*) is a real charmer.

Some dogs are born beggars. Your dog may have even discovered the begging trick by herself during one of her more-successful ploys to get attention. If your dog is a natural beggar, praise her each time she offers you the begging behavior. Soon you'll have a smart aleck on your hands who sits up at every opportunity, and you'll have no trouble getting her to beg on cue.

Here's how to teach the begging trick:

1. Instruct “Sit” and make sure the dog is sitting squarely (not leaning to either side).



If your dog is relatively coordinated but often gets a little too excited about food rewards — she's jumping, turning inside out, and basically unable to sit still — make her part of the “Corner Crew”: Start the dog out in a corner of the room to help her feel more secure. Tuck her back end toward the wall. The walls on either side help limit and guide her movements.

If she's super-excited, practice when her energy is lower, such as late in the evening or after a good romp.

2. **Take a treat and hold it an inch above her nose.**
3. **As she stretches to sniff the treat, bring it back slowly between her ears as you command, "Beg."**

The dog should rise up to follow the path of the treat.

4. **Click (or say "Yes!") and reward the dog's split-second attempt to sit up.**

After she catches on, hold out on rewarding treats for performances that are more balanced.



The hand signal for this trick is to move your palm upward, facing the sky. Start your hand at your hip and move it to your chest level.

"Roll Over"

Dogs who are as comfortable on their backs as they are on their paws really groove with rolling tricks. How will you know whether your dog qualifies? She'll roll anywhere, anytime, and often of her own volition. She'll sleep on her back. She'll scratch her back by rolling on the carpet. She'll come in with a grass-stained coat from rolling in the yard.

"Roll over" always brings a smile to my face. Although teaching it requires some patience, it demonstrates the importance of *sequencing* — breaking the sum of a trick into parts and then linking the parts to perform the trick.

Before you begin, bring your dog into a quiet room and place treats on a nearby table. Find your clicker if you're using one (see Chapter 1 for more on clickers). Here are the three training sequences:

1. **First sequence:** Call your dog to you and put her in a "Down-Stay." Kneel next to your dog and scratch her belly until she lies on one side. As she does so, say "Roll"; then reward and praise her. Repeat this sequence 10 to 20 times until your dog responds comfortably to this direction.

- 2. Second sequence:** Repeat the preceding steps. Then take a treat and circle it from under your dog's chin to just behind her ear (see Figure 4-2). As her head twists to follow the treat, her body will rock to the side. Say "Roll," offer a treat, and praise her. Repeat this sequence 10 to 20 times until your dog responds quickly.
- 3. Final sequence:** Repeat the preceding steps. Now circle the treat slowly backward over the back of your dog's head as you say "Roll over."



When your dog is first learning to roll over, she may need some help. Guide her over by gently pushing her top front leg to the other side as you say the command.

Click (or say "Yes!") and give your dog a treat whenever she does a full roll, whether you helped your dog or not.



Figure 4-2: Using a treat to lure a dog to roll over.

As soon as your dog gets the full roll sequence, practice a few times, and then quit on a high note.

After your dog is comfortable rolling over, you can teach a simple hand signal to prompt this trick:

1. **Continue to kneel next to her when commanding “Roll over,” but lean backward in the direction you want her to roll.**
2. **Hold your index finger parallel to the floor, and draw small circles in the air as you give your verbal command.**
3. **Help your dog initially if she seems confused, praising her as you assist and jumping up with her to end the trick.**
4. **As soon as she responds to the cue without your help, stand up and give the command and the hand signal, always accentuating your hand signal.**



Your end goal is to direct your dog from a standing position. Gradually move up from a kneeling position to a one-kneel bend to eventually standing up, as you over-accentuate your hand signal.

After your dog seems to be able to follow the command, you can teach her to keep on rolling or to jump up after the first roll. Using enthusiastic body language, you can easily communicate when you want your dog to jump up. Toss your arms in the air and jump like a bunny when you're encouraging your dog to leap up.

If you want your dog to continue rolling, lean in the direction she's rolling and exaggerate your signal initially.

Pump your clenched fist in an enthusiastic hooray to signal your finishing roll!

Chapter 5

Harder Tricks to Amaze Your Friends

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Training your dog to help around the house
 - ▶ Turning your dog into your song-and-dance partner
 - ▶ Performing two-step tricks
-

Dogs want attention; they *need* attention. They jump and bark and run around you in circles to make sure you notice them. Sure, it drives you crazy, but with some time, effort, and a bag full of treats, you can redirect these negative behaviors into tricks that will impress your friends. The best way to teach your dog when not to jump, bark, or circle is to teach her when she *can* behave in these manners. This chapter shows you how to redirect that enthusiasm and put it on cue.

“Hit it!”: Closing Doors, Turning Out Lights, Playing the Piano

After your dog knows how to “Paw” (see Chapter 4), you can teach her to target a disc and then use the disc’s placement to help her learn to play music, close doors, and work the light fixtures . . . before you know it, your dog will be saving you a bundle in electric bills!

After your dog knows “Paw,” create a target disc with a small container lid or a business card. Then do the following to teach your dog to strike it with her paw:

- 1. Present the target disc in the palm of your hand and command “Paw.”**
- 2. The moment your dog hits the disc, say “Hit it”; give your dog a treat (or click and treat) and offer praise!**
- 3. Phase off holding the disc flat in your hand, holding it at the same level but pinched between your thumb and forefinger.**

Repeat this until you’re able to hold the disc out and your dog will paw it when directed with the “Hit it” command.

Once your dog learns how to “Hit it,” you can parlay that one behavior into a whole host of cool, helpful, and unique tricks, such as closing the cabinet, turning out the lights, and playing the piano! Though these tricks might sound like magic, it all boils down to the placement of the target disc. This section includes three tricks that do just that.

Closing the door or cabinet

When teaching your dog to close cabinets and doors, she may be initially startled by the sound the door makes as it shuts. Before asking her to tidy up for you, place her in a “Sit–Stay” next to the hinge and give her a treat as you open and shut the door gently. She’ll then get used to the sound.

At first, hold the target disc near a cabinet door at what would be a normal “Paw” level for your dog — about her elbow. Do a couple of “Paws,” holding your hand near the door. Next, encourage her to paw the disc by saying “Hit it.” If she has a light touch, encourage her to really whack the disc by egging her on and withholding the reward until she does.

Next, tape the disc to the outside of the opened cabinet door. Kneel close to your dog and point to the disc. Reward each attempt to strike the door with her paw. After two days, withhold the reward until a successful closing.

Over the course of four days, gradually start combining the familiar cue with a new command: “Hit it–Close it.” Phase out the “Hit it” command so “Close it” will mean just that.

Turning the lights on and off

Teaching your dog to turn out the lights requires blending the “Hit it” command with a jumping sequence. If your dog is tall and agile enough to reach the switch, she’ll be more than happy to oblige you.

To begin, get a light switch like the ones on your wall. Use your target disc to teach your dog to paw it and to get comfortable with its feel. Tape the disc above the fixture and hold the fixture in your hand initially.

At first, hold the switch at a normal “Paw” level — about your dog’s elbow — and pair the command “Hit it” with “Lights” as you encourage her cooperation with praise and rewards. This will seem awkward at first; your dog isn’t used to things moving when she paws them. Use praise to encourage her and rewards to emphasize the moment her paw connects with the switch.

Separately teach your dog to jump up on the wall by the switch. Pat the wall and teach “Up, up” (if your dog doesn’t know the “Up” command, flip to Chapter 4 for a quick lesson), guiding your dog there with a treat if necessary. At first, all your dog needs to do to earn a reward is jump up and stand against the wall.

Gradually lift your practice switch higher and higher until it’s at the height of the real switch. Each time, prompt your dog with the command “Hit it–Lights!” At first, reward and praise your dog if she touches the switch. After four days of practice, reward her only if she activates the switch. After she’s got it down pat, phase off the “Hit it” command and emphasize “Lights!”

Now that you’ve connected the dots, try this trick in the real world. Move to other switches in your home, using the pretend switch step if your dog acts confused.

Playing the piano

All you need to teach your dog to play the piano is a keyboard, a target disc, and the command “Paw.” Here’s how it works:

1. Teach your dog to paw a target disc.

I explain how to do this earlier in the intro to the section “Hit it!”: Targeting paw tricks with lights, doors, and music.”

2. Place the keyboard on the ground and place your disc on it.

3. Pair the command “Hit it” with “Piano”: “Hit it–Piano!”

4. Move the disc to various spots on the piano.

The hand signal for this trick is to pretend your fingers are tapping an imaginary keyboard.

“Achoo!”: Fetching a Tissue

If your dog has mastered his finding, fetching, and carrying skills, you can train him to play nursemaid when you’re under the weather.

You have two options with the tissue trick, which basically involves fetching a tissue from the tissue box:

- ✓ When you say “Tissue,” your dog runs and gets you one.
- ✓ When you sneeze, your dog gets you a tissue.

Although the second option is way more impressive, it might leave your dog in a state of career stress. After all, other people sneeze, too.



In either case, you need to piggyback the new command onto a more familiar one, such as “Tissue–Take it.”

For props, you need a box of tissues and a low table that your dog can reach without jumping aboard with all four. Also, go to your local discount store and get one of those fancy plastic tissue box containers so the box will have some resistance when your dog fetches the tissue. (You can also weigh down a regular box.) Fasten the tissue box to the table with tape initially. And for the training phase, the tissues should be pulled out and lightly re-stuffed into the box.

Stage 1: Fetch me a tissue, please

The first part is a classic retrieve:

- 1. Kneel on the floor next to your tissue box. Entice your dog to take the tissue; when he is reliably taking it, pair the behavior with a command, like “Tissue!” If your aim is to have your dog fetch the tissue on an actual sneeze, follow your tissue command with a very theatrical sneeze.**



Ruffle the top tissue as you sneeze to pique your dog’s interest and to entice him to take the tissue.

- 2. Reward him for taking the tissue.**

Now your dog has the tissue. Not much help if you need to wipe your nose! But you both know about retrieving.

- 3. When your dog takes tissues, encourage “Bring” and “Give.”**
- 4. Reward your dog the instant he drops the tissue in your hand.**

Stage 2: Retrieving off the table

The next phase of this trick is to teach your dog to put his front paws on the table. If the idea is abhorrent to you, place the tissues on the ground or on a low coffee table. Otherwise, pat the table and give the “Up” command (see Chapter 4). Click and reward the instant your dog’s front paws hit the table. Be patient; just getting your dog to believe you’re inviting him to come up on the table may take awhile.

Make sure your dog understands that it’s front paws only on the table. You can discourage him from bringing the rest of his doggy self along with a gentle “Nope” or a mild restraint.

Though I recommend using a low table, even that may not be low enough for a very small trickster. Use a low stool or chair, or even a pillow, to help your little dog reach the table. Place the stool between you and your dog, facing him. With treats in hand, command “Up” and pat the stool. If your dog jumps

up with two paws, reward him immediately. Soon you can say “Up” and point without patting the chair. Then simply follow the preceding steps to teach him to put his paws on the table.

Stage 3: Putting the whole act together

Now to unify the acts . . . soon your dog will automatically fetch you a tissue each time you sneeze!

- 1. Sit down and place the tissue box between your knees.**
- 2. Tell your dog “Get me a tissue,” or sneeze your most wonderful sneeze, and hold out the box.**
- 3. Reward him the instant he grasps the tissue, the little genius!**

Progressively reward only proper tissue pulls, where he pulls the tissue all the way out of the box and drops it in your hand.

- 4. Set the box on the corner of the table (the place it will always be when you do this trick) and repeat Steps 1–3.**

Your dog may need a gentle reminder of “Up,” but you can soon phase out that command.

- 5. Move a little bit away from the table, and then request “Get me a tissue.”**

Repeat the command, moving farther from the table each time. Eventually, stand and sit in various places in the room when you make the request. Be sure to reward — and say “Thank you” — each time he brings you a tissue.

Let's Dance

Is your dog just as happy on two paws as she is on four? If so, you can teach her to be your dance partner.



Dancing or standing on two legs is not a trick for growing pups. It can wreak havoc on their growth plates. Wait until your dog is at least 12 months old before starting on this trick.

Basic steps: Getting your dog on two legs

The “Dance” trick can help you in the greeting department, too. When your dog learns to dance on her hind legs on command, you can call up the routine whenever you open your door to guests. Here’s how to teach this trick:

1. Gather some treats and a clicker, if you’re using one.

Give your dog a hearty scratch and lots of praise to loosen her up.

2. Hold a treat at arm’s length just inches above your dog’s nose.

3. The moment she stands on her hind legs, click/praise and reward.

Do this five times, and then stop for the day. After she connects this sequence, add the cue word “Dance.”

4. Increase the time your dog must balance on her hind legs before you reward her, but don’t go overboard!

Three seconds is a long time for a dog to balance. It takes a while for your dog to build the muscles necessary to stand on two legs.

5. Now you can get fancy: Moving the treat slightly to the left or right will encourage athletic dancers to spin in a circle; bringing the treat forward an inch will encourage your dog to step forward like a human!

Remember this secret — if you have fun with it, your dog will be in heaven, jumping just to please you. What could be better than that?

Dancing together

Personally, I love to dance. It’s a great way to exercise and fun for the whole family — whether they walk on two legs or four. Whatever your personal taste, nothing pleases your dog more than being invited to share your passions!



These are not tricks for impulsively excited or dominant dogs! If yours is assertive, engaging her in this way may send her the wrong message. Better skip this one!

Disco dog

If your dog loves to jam and you're into disco music, dust off your record collection and clear the floor. You'll never dance alone again (or be kidded about your Bee Gees infatuation).

As you're jammin', your dog will be getting excited and wondering what part she can play in all this fun. Take one of her treats and say "Dance-Disco," and then simply show her the direction you'd like her to move by inching the treat to the left or right. Review moves like weaving and spinning taught in the "Chase your Tail" trick later in this chapter, and put them to music! Reward even her simplest efforts. Soon you'll notice that your dog is movin' to the groovin'.

The two-step

Are you a country music buff? Well, here's the dance for you — the canine two-step. Hold a bent arm out just above your dog's head and encourage your dog to jump up and rest her front paws on it. When your dog is in the proper dancing position, up on her hind legs, ask a helper to bait your dog forward with a treat and move together paw-in-arm!

It takes a few weeks for your dog to build the muscles necessary to walk on two legs. Don't overdo it! Build her stamina gradually, and stop the moment she gets down. Think of your dog as an athlete. Work her out slowly.



If your dog's a diehard jumper who just can't seem to keep her paws off you, rethink this paw-in-arm dancing routine. Sure, it's fun, but you won't be able to get your little Casanova to stop.

Taking a Bow

Of course, no performance would be complete without a bow. To teach your dog to bow, use all three of the following approaches. Soon all of them will meld together and your dog will be dazzling her audience to the very end of the act!

- ✔ **Caught in the act:** Whenever you catch your dog stretching her front paws with her bum in the air, command “Bow” as you twirl your arm out for a signal. Praise enthusiastically.
- ✔ **Jury-rigged:** Take your dog into a quiet room with some favorite treats and a clicker if you have one. Hold her belly up as you hold the treat to the ground, just in front of her paws, and command “Bow.” Slowly fade off the belly hold, simply using the cue word “Bow.”
- ✔ **Smush face:** In a quiet room, take a treat and hold it against your dog’s nose. Press the treat gently back and downward, thus encouraging your dog to bend forward on her elbows to get the reward. As she does, say “Bow” and reward her!

Jump Rope

Jumping rope with your dog is quite a spectacle. This takes a little doing to teach — sequencing staying, jumping up, rhythm, and awareness — but with a little patience you’ll most certainly wow any crowd!

First your dog needs to get the hang of the “Jump” command. When being taught to jump up in the air, she may get confused and try to jump on you. To teach your dog the new definition — “no paws on me” — you can use the flat of your hand or a square of cardboard. While your dog’s standing, hold your prop above her head. When she sniffs it curiously, reward her immediately!

As she catches on to the new game — “bump the prop with my nose” — attach a word cue such as “Jump” to direct her off your body. Now hold the prop up so your dog must jump to hit or bump it. Jump, dog, jump!

If your dog touches your body or anyone else’s while jumping, say “No,” and withdraw the treat. Look up at the ceiling for 10–20 seconds (to show her the fun ends for a while); then start again.

Next, secure a piece of carpet to the floor, making sure it doesn’t slip. Have your dog stand on the carpet and tell her to “Stay.” Have her do a few practice jumps. Then do the following:

1. Introduce a 7-foot nylon/cotton weave jumping rope.

Let your dog sniff it so it doesn’t startle her. Jiggle it to familiarize her with the motion.

2. **Secure one end of the rope to a doorknob or immovable object at your hip level; encourage your dog to jump and try to sneak the rope beneath her.**

Don't circle the rope over her head yet because this might startle her. Reward your dog for jumping whether or not she clears the rope.

3. **Now work on your timing, helping your dog get accustomed to the rope's motions. Don't swing it over her head yet!**

As your dog's enthusiasm grows, reward only her successful jumps.

4. **After you've got this down pat, begin full over-the-head swings encouraging one, two, then three jumps in a row.**

To infinity and beyond!

After your dog is a master, you can practice jumping rope together. Watch your knees and focus on the timing.

Jumping Through a Hoop

For humans, living your life jumping through hoops can be a drag — but for dogs, it's just fun. Jumping through something really adds zing to any trick routine. For this trick, get a hula hoop from your local toy store.



If your hoop rattles when you shake it, cut a little hole in the plastic and dump the beads. This sound frightens some dogs.

Then do the following:

1. **Set up your original jumping pole across a threshold or between two pieces of furniture. Center the hoop next to the pole. Ask a helper to hold it or brace it between two heavy books.**
2. **Let your dog sniff the hoop.**
3. **Instruct your dog "Over" as you move toward the obstacle. If your dog refuses, toss food or a toy through the hoop.**



If your dog still refuses to jump through the hoop, let her watch as you climb through cheerfully. You can also stand on one side of the hoop, toss a cherished treat through to the other side, and lead your dog through calmly.

- 4. After your dog cooperates, start adding the command “Through” to “Over” as you start for the jump, like this: “Over-Through.”**
- 5. Hold or prop the hoop higher so the bottom of the hoop is even with the height of the pole positioned at a comfortable jumping height for your dog.**

At this point, your dog may hesitate because the hoop looks, well, like a hoop, not like a level jump. If this is the case, approach the hoop slowly and let your dog walk through it a couple of times. Use food and/or toys to encourage her.

When you feel that your dog is ready, have her try the hoop alone by following these steps:

- 1. Vary your locations to get your dog used to hoop-jumping in various areas. Prop or hold the hoop securely on the floor.**
- 2. Instruct “Through” as the two of you trot up to the hoop. Let your dog go through the hoop alone.**
- 3. Praise her joyously and encourage her to jump back through the hoop toward you by running backward yourself.**
Clap, sing, praise, treat — let your dog know what a star she is!
- 4. Progressively raise the hoop to a height appropriate for your dog.**

After she’s comfortable with this routine in a restricted area, start working her in more open areas. Keep your praise and energy high; this display is a real crowd-pleaser.

From Counting to Calculus

My dog Hope, a Cairn terrier mix, is a total ham. Auditorium events really knock her out! One of her favorite tricks is what

I call the numbers routine. I'll give her an arithmetic problem or have her count to ten with a group of kids, and she's more than happy to oblige. Using my signal, I start her off on cue and (magically) quiet her when the stunt is complete. Ta-da! The counting trick is where your bark-training efforts really pay off. People will be thrilled to see your dog doing so well in math.



Before you start asking your dog to count anything, you must polish his “Speak” and “Shhh” skills so he can do them with hand signals alone (see Chapter 3). If you use voice commands, some doubters may think your dog isn't really counting.

After you have the commands down pat, you can begin asking your dog some basic questions. Just follow this sequence:

1. Give the “Speak” hand signal.
2. Count the barks.
3. Signal “Shhh” after your dog has barked the correct number of times.

Try starting with these questions:

- ✓ How much is two plus two?
- ✓ How old are you?
- ✓ How many eggs are in a half dozen?

Work on your silent communication, making your signals progressively subtle so that no one can tell you're helping out. After your dog can answer the basics, you can proceed to more difficult math problems.

If your dog's a focus freak and can't take his eyes off you, you may need a hand signal for each bark response. For example, if the answer is “3,” you signal three bark cues, and then cut the barking off with your silencing cue. Of course, you'll be far more discreet if you can use your signals like an on-off button. Many dogs will just keep barking until they see the silence cue. See what works for your dog.

Singing a Solo

Concerned your dog's not musically inclined? Most dogs aren't, if that makes you feel any better. In fact, I've never

owned a dog who knew just what to do when I brought out my guitar. The silver lining? Most dogs who love to bark can be easily cajoled into barking along to music.

To teach your dog to bark when you sing a certain tune or play a specific instrument, first you need to teach him how to speak and quiet down on hand signals (see Chapter 3). After he's learned these skills, the rest is easy if you follow these steps:

1. Get out your instrument.

If it's new, let your dog sniff it.

2. Put it in your mouth and signal "Shhh" to get his attention.

Play a few short warm-up notes as you continue to signal him to stay quiet.

3. When you're ready for your dog to begin barking, signal "Speak" as you egg him on with excited sounds and body postures.

4. When you're done, stop playing, say and signal "Shhh," and take a bow!



When choosing an instrument to play with your dog, think it through. If you've got a passion for playing a particular instrument — the piano, for example — think twice about inviting your dog to join you in a duet. Although it's fun once in a while, his eager intrusion may wear on your nerves. Consider an instrument that's cheap to buy and a rare noise in your home, such as a harmonica or kazoo. Your dog will nearly go into convulsions when you pull it out, so be prepared — after you teach him to bark, you'll have a rough time quieting him until the instrument is safely tucked away.

"Chase Your Tail"

A dog chasing her tail is a funny thing to watch, and no one can argue that she has truly mastered the art of having fun with herself. Whether your dog's a natural for this routine or not, it's not a hard trick to teach.

If your dog chases her tail naturally, praise her while it's happening. Use the clicker method or other positive reinforcements like food or toys to let your dog know you think the behavior is cool.

Take a biscuit, hold it level with your dog's nose and command "Chase your tail" as you slowly rotate the treat around her body. I said slowly! Start slow; that's an order! Reward half-spins initially, then full spins, then two, three, four spins, and so on.

The hand signal for "Chase your tail" is to hold your index finger up and swirl it in a circle. Accentuate your hand signal, and soon you'll be sending your dog silent cues — no words needed!

This trick is great if you want your dog to wipe her feet. Just command "Chase your tail" while she's standing on a doormat!

Looking Embarrassed or Disgusted

It can be endearing to see your dog hide her face behind her paw in embarrassment. Or, you can associate this trick with the emotion of disgust by having her simply scratch her nose in disgust. Eventually your dog will respond to a hand signal only, and you can lead up to it with questions like "I heard you met a fancy Poodle the other day" (to show embarrassment), or "Would you like some beans with your dinner?" (to show disgust).

Getting your dog to do this trick takes patience and repetition. First, catch her in the act as often as possible. Anytime your dog voluntarily scratches her nose, praise her enthusiastically. If you've got a clicker handy, use it only if you can click while she's got her paw on her face. Poorly timed, the clicker can teach a dog to stop scratching her nose!

To practice these exercises, work with your dog when she's calm and cooperative. If she has too much energy, she'll quickly get frustrated and quit.

First, you must practice your "Paw" command (see Chapter 4). Then you're ready to begin:

- 1. Take your dog into a quiet area and tell her to "Sit."**
- 2. Practice a few "Paw" commands.**
- 3. Hold a treat down low and on the opposite side of the paw your dog has been giving you.**

If your dog has been giving you her right paw, hold the treat to her left side.



4. **When her paw and nose meet, mark the moment with a clicker or a “Yes!” and reward and praise.**

You may need to gently hold the skin below her neck to brace her head into position as her paw comes up. If your dog lies down, place your hand along her ribcage to prevent it.

5. **Stop the instant she makes a contact and give her a healthy helping of treats and/or reward the session generously with a favorite game.**

Avoid overdoing this trick. It’s not a common behavior like sitting or lying down, and your dog will grow frustrated with it if it’s repeated excessively. Short sessions ensure fun!

The hand signal for embarrassed or disgusted is to cuff the side of your nose.

Flipping and Catching a Treat Off the Nose

In this trick, you teach your dog to balance a treat on her nose, then flip it up and catch it. Sound hard? Maybe you’ve seen seals do this with a fish. And surely your pup is smarter than a seal!

You need to break this trick into two parts: the balance, and the flip and catch.

Stage 1: Balancing the treat

The first part trains your dog to keep her nose still:

1. **Line up treats on a nearby table.**
2. **Put your dog on a “Sit-Stay.”**
3. **Gently hold your dog’s nose steady for five seconds, reminding “Stay” if she gets restless. Click and reward her steadiness.**
4. **Repeat Step 3 five times.**

Take a break, and pick up training again later that day or the next day.

5. Repeat Steps 1–3 above, but place a treat on your dog's nose while you steady it, reminding "Stay."
6. After five seconds, say "Okay," and remove the treat that's on her nose.
7. Reward her with a different treat, so she doesn't become obsessed with the treat that's on her nose.
8. Repeat this exercise four times and then stop for the day.

Practice this balancing act until your dog is proficient at balancing the treat on her nose for at least 15 seconds with no nose-holding required.

Stage 2: Flip and catch

Teach the flip and catch only after perfecting the balance.

1. **Balance a treat on your dog's nose, and then introduce the next concept (the flip) by saying "Okay" as you slide the treat from your dog's nose to her mouth.**

After a day or two you should notice that your dog tries to flip the treat herself. Praise her only if her flip follows your "Okay."

If she flips prematurely, say "Ep, ep," and practice the balance alone a few times before continuing.

To help your dog learn to wait for your "Okay" before flipping the treat, vary the balance time before sliding the treat into her mouth.

2. **Balance the treat on her nose and command "Stay."**
3. **Walk back 3 feet and pause.**
Vary the length of your pauses as you practice.
4. **Say "Okay" for the catch and make a big fuss when she does, praising your dog with lots of love.**



Chapter 6

Interactive Tricks

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Gathering for group games
 - ▶ Looking for hidden objects
-

Dogs love to play. The more you can let go and roll with their enthusiasm, the more fun you'll have. Some games, like tug-of-war and wrestling, inspire confrontation, so use the games in this chapter instead to format your fun. Interactive activities like “Catch Me” and Hide and Seek can build your bond and inspire respect.

Hide and Seek

Hide and Seek is a great game and also reinforces that indispensable “Come” command. You need one to four players and a treat cup, and your dog needs to know his name and the “Come” command. “Stay” also comes in handy (see Chapter 3).

Start with this game inside, one-on-one:

- 1. While your dog is occupied, go into an adjoining room with a treat cup; call out his name and shake the cup.**

Use a disposable plastic cup filled halfway with small treats, such as Cheerios.

- 2. When you hear him running, say “Come” clearly.**

Praise him, offer a treat, and let him return to whatever he was doing, putting the treat cup away — or he may never leave your side!

3. Increase the level of difficulty by calling him from two rooms away.

You should still be in sight, not hard to find.

4. After a couple of days of hiding in plain sight around the house and calling from room to room, go into the adjoining room and hide behind a chair.

After your dog catches on to this game, you can increase the difficulty of your hiding places and add another teammate. Eventually, your two-legged geniuses can play a game to see who gets found first and who gets found last. Gradually phase off using your treat cups.

The Name Game: “Where’s Sally?”

Teaching your dog everyone’s name couldn’t be easier. Pick one person at a time and have the person sit across the room with a treat cup. Instruct your dog to find that person by name. For example, say “Where’s Sally?” and have Sally shake the cup the moment she hears her name. Progressively ask Sally to distance herself from you, having her in various rooms of the house so your dog will always be curious to find her location.

After your dog is eager to track Sally (and her treat cup), reintroduce her nearby — but phase off using treats. Sally can call and encourage your dog with praise instead. Soon just her name will inspire enthusiasm.

The Shell Game

Dogs love to be included in the shell game. Whether you’re sitting at home or on an adventure, you can use shells, cups, or even sand piles to hide your dog’s treat or toy under one of three stacks. After you shift the stacks about, ask your dog, “Where’s your bone?” or “Where’s your toy?” If your dog’s confused, pretend to sniff each pile — he’ll copy your example and find the bone or toy soon enough.

“Catch Me”

I’ve always hated games that involve people chasing dogs, especially when that game involves a coveted laundry item. Games that encourage your dog to focus on and follow you, however, are a real prize when it comes to training and having fun. These games also reinforce the extinction of bad habits, such as nipping and jumping.

To play “Catch Me,” a variation of the children’s game Red Light, Green Light, you need one or two players and a dog toy. Your dog needs to know “Sit,” “Wait,” “Down,” “Stay,” “Okay,” and “Nope.” (See Chapter 3 for details on these commands.)

- 1. Turn and face your dog from about 3 to 6 feet away; say “Catch me” and then turn and run.**
- 2. After a few feet, pop back to face your dog and command “Wait!”**
- 3. Treat your dog when he stops, then say “Okay, catch me,” and run again.**
- 4. Now that he’ll stop, try another quick command like “Sit” or “Down,” luring your dog into position if he’s confused by the excitement.**
- 5. Follow each stationary command with “Okay, catch me” to continue the game.**
- 6. When you’re through, tell your dog “Okay” and give him a favorite toy.**

Keep the game short, just one or two minutes.



Some dogs get too excited or overwhelmed by this game. If yours isn’t cooperating, try a different game. If he goes wild, racing in a big circle playing hard to get, guess what? — this isn’t the game for you!

I know I’ll catch some flak for writing about “Catch Me.” People are always asking whether high-energy games encourage mouthing and jumping. My response? If it escalates the dog’s bad behavior uncontrollably, leave it out. If your dog enjoys the game and you can curb naughtiness with a sharp

“Nope” or “Wrong” (see Chapter 3), then go for it. “Catch Me” is a fun activity and sharpens your dog’s impulses, teaching him to follow — but not jump or nip at you.

A Treasure Hunt Game: Digging for China

Have you considered hiring your dog out to the local excavating company? The prerequisite, of course, is to teach him to dig on command. Equip yourself with a clicker, garden gloves, and treats, and then follow these directions to play “Digging for China”:

- 1. Find a private area in your yard to teach your dog to dig; bury some treats 1 inch under the ground to pique his interest.**
- 2. Start blissfully digging yourself, unearthing the treats as you go and handing them to your dog.**
- 3. Reward your dog for joining in, saying “Go dig!”**
- 4. Now try hiding a few treats or a toy before bringing your dog to his digging spot; then give the command “Go dig.”**

Like an archeologist discovering treasures, he’ll unearth them with obvious delight.

I can already feel the page trembling; you may be worried that without your approval, your dog will unearth your shrubbery and carpets. Though I won’t promise you a rose garden (no pun intended), most dogs who are reinforced for digging in one area usually stick to it. By teaching your dog to dig in specific locations, you discourage him from digging in other places.

Bang! Shootout at the O.K. Corral

This trick combines two commands: “Beg” (from Chapter 4) and “Bang.” Together, they create a cool stunt that will wow audiences everywhere.

First, get your dog to sit up by using the “Beg” command, adding a command such as “Put ’em up.” Make the shape of a gun with your thumb and index finger and point it at her. Practice that quite a few times.

The way to teach a new command for an old trick is to first link them, then phase out the old command. So when your dog starts this trick, you need to give her the commands “Beg–Put ’em up.” Emphasize the new hand signal, and slowly eliminate the “Beg” command.

After your dog is sitting up, it’s time for the “Bang!” command. Teaching this part of this trick isn’t too difficult if your dog has mastered the “Down” and “Stay” commands that I cover in Chapter 3. Get your dog to lie down on her side on command with these steps:

- 1. Instruct “Down,” kneel beside your dog, and gently roll her on her side.**
- 2. Rub your dog’s belly until she’s calm, and praise her.**
- 3. After a few days of this, your dog should be comfortable rolling onto her side. Start giving the command “Bang–Stay.”**

“Stay” should be familiar; if not, review Chapter 3. If she lifts her head, lovingly rest it back on the floor and command “Stay.” Initially have her stay two to ten seconds, varying it each time but rewarding her enthusiastically!

- 4. Extend the “Bang–Stay” time until your dog is up to 30 seconds.**
- 5. Now it’s time to command your dog from an upright posture. Give the command from a standing position, bend to help your dog into position, stand back up, pause, and release.**

Once you’re able to stand, vary the time you pause before releasing and praising your dog.

It may take a week or two for your dog to catch on, but soon she’ll drop and roll onto her side at the simplest suggestion.

- 6. When your dog cooperates, introduce the trick command, “Bang!” as you “pull the trigger” on your hand gun.**

Now, put the “Put ‘em up” and “Bang” commands together:

- 1. Put your dog in a “Sit-Stay.”**
- 2. Stand 3 feet away and command “Put ‘em up” as you take aim.**
- 3. Pause a few seconds and say “Bang!”**

Mission accomplished! Now practice at progressively farther distances.

As outlined, this trick would be considered politically incorrect. You can always insert new words for the same actions to change the flavor of the routine. For example instead of “Put ‘em up” you could say “Did you wash your paws?” and then “Go to sleep,” rather than “Bang, you’re dead.” So instead of sending your 3-year-old to bed with nightmares, you’ll be encouraging her to wash up before bedtime!

Chapter 7

Ten Tips to Keep Fido Fit and Spiffy

In This Chapter

- ▶ Feeding a healthy diet
 - ▶ Sprucing up your dog
 - ▶ Caring for your dog's facial features
-

You've seen dogs bouncing down the street at the end of a leash or streaking across the park after a tennis ball. Nails clipped, coats gleaming, white teeth flashing . . . can dogs actually *sparkle*?

If your dog looks a little unkempt compared to these wondrous creatures, don't despair. This kind of radiant health doesn't require a full-time staff of groomers, nutritionists, and fitness coaches. With a little time, effort, patience, and love, your dog can sparkle with the best of them!

This chapter shows you the top ten things you can do to maintain your dog's health. You discover the healthiest foods, the tastiest snacks, and the best grooming tools to manage the job efficiently and easily. Best of all, you find that canine health and fitness can be fun — you can bond with your dog while you care for her.

Wet Your Pooch's Whistle with Water

How much water your dog needs depends on her physical activities and the type of food she eats. Panting is your dog's way of sweating, and if your dog is sweating, she needs a drink.

Dry food also encourages thirst. Because dry food contains only 10 percent moisture, your dog needs about one quart of water for every pound of dry food. On the other hand, canned food or home-cooked diets contain more water and require less to rinse and wash down.



Water is vital for survival. Make sure clean water is always available for your dog. Provide clean water in a stainless steel dish and change it regularly. Each time you fill your dog's bowl, rinse it to clean off dirt and other nasty particles that don't belong in a fresh bowl.

Choose Quality Dog Food

Aren't all dog foods basically the same? No, Virginia, they're not. The only true similarity is in the percentage of components required to meet a dog's daily allowance, which is governed by the AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials). To pick the right food, you need to know how to read ingredient labels. You may discover that the most costly, aggressively marketed, or cleverly labeled food isn't necessarily the best.

To pass regulatory standards, dog foods must contain six essential elements: protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and water. I cover water earlier in the chapter. Here's what you need to know about the other elements:

- ✔ **Protein:** Protein is the most expensive ingredient in dog foods, and its source often determines the quality of the food. Animal sources of protein are superior to vegetable protein. Vegetable protein is often harder to digest, and the dog has to consume more of it to meet her needs. More food equals more stool. My advice is to find a food that uses more animal protein than vegetable protein.
- ✔ **Carbohydrates:** Some dog-food manufacturers meet the minimum daily requirement for protein by using primarily vegetable matter. Vegetable sources of protein also contain high levels of carbohydrates — not necessarily good for a dog. Humans digest carbohydrates well because they start digestion in their mouths, chewing and breaking

down the food. Dogs don't chew, they gulp, and their digestion doesn't begin until the food gets into their stomach.

- ✔ **Fats:** Fat gives your dog energy and keeps her cool when it's warm and warm when it's cool. The recommended amount of fat is 15 to 19 percent, and many nutritionists say that for dogs, more fat is better! Why? Because carbohydrates are what add bulk for dogs, whereas fat is used for body functions in dogs.



Please don't ever buy fat-free dog food. I know it sounds tempting, but your dog needs plenty of fat to keep her skin and coat healthy and for overall body functions.

- ✔ **Vitamins and minerals:** Vitamins do two things to keep your dog healthy: They unlock nutrients from food and make energy. Minerals help the body maintain its normal daily activities, such as circulation, energy production, and cell regeneration.



Do not supplement your dog's diet with vitamins and minerals unless directed by your veterinarian. Too many vitamins or minerals can cause health problems.

Encourage Regular Exercise

If your dog hasn't been out for a good run in a long time, you need to ease her in slowly. Conditioning for dogs is like conditioning for people: a necessary evil. To preserve your dog's good health, you need to make sure she's in shape or has a program to get her there. Just like humans, pushing your dog too far too fast can lead to trouble.

If your dog has been off the training wagon for some time, do the following:

- ✔ **Keep the lessons short and upbeat to start, no more than 3 to 10 minutes.** She doesn't have to master a trick a day. You can have practice sessions three times a day if your schedule allows, but short lessons are best.
- ✔ **Start with tricks that are easy for her to master and that make you laugh.** Laughter is great encouragement.

Distract with Peanut Butter during Grooming Sessions

Grooming can be your worst nightmare or a favorite activity. If the thought of brushing your dog troubles you, try this approach:

1. Start with a soft-bristled brush.

You may use a firmer brush when your dog is more accepting, but soft is better when starting out.

2. Call your dog aside happily and give her a treat when she comes.

3. Take some peanut butter and rub it on the refrigerator at your dog's nose level.

If your dog's not a big peanut butter fan, try some soft cheese, yogurt, or meat broth.

4. While she licks it off, say "Stand" and brush gently.

Praise, too!

Begin with short grooming sessions, quitting once your dog is through licking off the spread. Gradually extend from 30 seconds to several minutes, giving your dog treats or a bone to occupy her while you gussy her up.

Give a Bath

Every dog has to take a bath sometime. Short-coated breeds need a bath less often than long-coats — unless, of course, they're avid excrement rollers.

To make the bath a positive experience, lay a towel on the bottom of the sink or tub for your dog to stand on comfortably without slipping, and spread peanut butter around the edge to occupy your dog while you scrub. You can bathe small dogs in the sink; large breeds fit best in a tub or can be hosed outside on a warm day.



Shampooing a malodorous mutt makes her socially acceptable, but it also strips away natural oils in a dog's coat. Shampooed too often, the coat will dry out and become brittle, so bathe your dog only about once a month.

Trim Your Dog's Nails

If nails grow too long, they can crack, break, or become ingrown. Ouch! Unfortunately, dogs don't relate to the whole manicure thing the way some people do. Using treats or peanut butter can calm the most savage beast.

Nail clippers for dogs look like a downsized guillotine — sharp and defining. The hand-clasp action provides the power needed to cut through a dog's nail. Don't try human clippers — they're not strong enough.

When clipping, make sure you clip the very tip of the nail, just as it starts to curl. If your dog has light-colored nails, you can see the delicate blood vessel inside; that's the part you want to avoid!



Don't overlook dew claws or hind nails. Though they grow more slowly, they still need your attention.



Be very careful to avoid cutting into your dog's tissue! Aside from being excruciatingly painful, the wound can bleed for hours. To prevent excess bleeding, get a clotting solution, such as styptic powder, from your veterinarian. It works like magic.

Look into Your Dog's Eyes

Dogs don't spend as much time on their looks as you do, but that doesn't mean their facial features should go unnoticed. Eye irritations can blur their vision and cause disorientation. Soulful, sweet, comic — your dog's eyes tell it all. It's up to you to keep the eyes healthy, bright, and clear.



If you have a longhaired breed, carefully clip the hair surrounding the eyes — the better to see you with!

If your veterinarian prescribes eye medication, administer it carefully. Use peanut butter on the fridge or a bowl of broth in a friend's lap to occupy your dog while you medicate her. Place your hand under your dog's chin and pull the lower eyelid down until you see the white part of the eye. Squeeze the drops in there.

Clean the Ears

Different dogs require different ear-cleaning schedules, from every couple of weeks to daily. Your dog's activity, diet, and the weather also influence the frequency of cleaning. In most cases, twice a month is sufficient.

To clean the visible surface area of your dog's ear, ask your veterinarian to recommend a commercial ear solution that will prevent infection. Soak a cotton swab with the solution and wipe the visible surface area of your dog's ear.



Never use a Q-tip or poke your finger into your dog's ear. You can do irreparable damage to your dog's inner ear.

Protect the Nose

A dog's nose can become discolored from the sun, from an allergic reaction to a food dish, from hypothyroidism, or from household detergent. In such cases, use a stainless steel feeding bowl and clean house with environmentally safe products. And when your dog goes out into the sun, protect that nose with SPF 45 sunblock!

Tend to Your Dog's Teeth

You must take care of your dog's teeth. Though dogs are less prone to tartar buildup than you are, they're not immune. Sure, they have more concentrated saliva and they chew bones and things, but this doesn't take the place of dental care. Without a little help from you, they'll suffer from tooth decay, abscesses, periodontal disease, and tooth loss.

To keep your dog's teeth healthy, do the following:

- ✓ Provide chew toys.
- ✓ Brush your dog's teeth once a week, using special canine peanut butter-flavored toothpaste. If your dog won't settle for the brush, use your finger.

Avoid human toothpaste; fluoride and dogs don't mix. Many human formulas also contain Xylitol, which is toxic to dogs if swallowed.



Have the most talented dog in the neighborhood!

Want to teach your dog the coolest tricks? This step-by-step guide helps you easily train your four-legged friend using positive reinforcement. By teaching Fido a variety of tricks — from simple moves to more complex routines — you'll fulfill your dog's desire to be the star of the show. And while you're having fun and bonding with your dog, you'll build a mutually trusting relationship.

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- **That's incredible!** — take trick training to the next level and amaze family and friends with more complex tricks like closing doors and fetching a tissue

Sarah Hodgson advocates training dogs through positive reinforcement, family conditioning, and her signature “loving touch.” She is the author of nine books on dog training, including *Puppies For Dummies*, and has coauthored *Understanding Your Dog For Dummies* with world-renowned dog behaviorist, Stanley Coren.



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ISBN 978-0-470-76945-4

