



Beginner Obedience Cheat Sheet

What to Bring:

- A hungry dog – don't feed a meal right before class. This isn't to starve them into working, but to make sure they don't become full within the first half of class. We also want to make sure we aren't giving excessive extra calories on top of their meals.
- A VARIETY of SOFT, SMELLY treats. Keep it interesting for your dog by bringing a variety of different treats. Bring higher value treats than what you use at home - usually the smellier the better. Bring more treats than you think you need!
- A ~6 foot non-retractable non-bungee leash
- A collar or harness that is not a prong, choke, or e-collar
- Something hands-free to hold your treats in that is easily accessible.

What to Remember for Class:

- Give your dog time to adjust to a classroom environment – don't expect them to be able to perform the same way they do at home right away. Just because they understand something at home doesn't mean they will understand it in a brand new environment.
- Feel free to step into a quieter area if your dog is overwhelmed.
- Please don't allow your dog to greet other dogs – we are working on handler focus!
- Don't get frustrated – celebrate the small successes!

Notes About the Clicker:

- The click is a *unique* and *consistent* sound that stands out among all the sounds we as humans make. A verbal click ("yes") works well if you don't have a clicker available.
- The clicker removes doubt for your dog about what they are being rewarded for.
- The click marks a behavior you want to see more of – it doesn't tell them what to do and it shouldn't be used to get their attention.
- Click AS your dog is doing the behavior like you are taking a picture of the moment – timing is important!

Training Techniques:

- Luring – using an object of attraction (such as food or a toy) to guide a dog into position.
- Capturing – reinforcing a behavior that is offered naturally.
- Shaping – reinforcing small parts of a behavior, slowly building up to the final behavior. Reward for closer and closer approximations to the final behavior you want.

General Training Reminders:

- Every moment is a training opportunity. Rewarded behaviors get repeated, unrewarded behaviors decrease in frequency. Make sure you reward the behaviors you want to see repeated (sitting politely, laying down, looking at you, etc.) and don't give reinforcement for behaviors you do not want repeated (jumping, barking, scratching, etc.)
- Pay attention to what your dog actually finds rewarding/discouraging. What seems like a deterrent to us may not be to our dog and vice versa (i.e. pushing your dog off when they jump can be rewarding due to physical contact and attention).
- Show your dog what you WANT them to do instead of telling them all the things you don't want them to do. "Instead of (insert problem behavior here), I want my dog to (insert incompatible behavior here)." Interrupt, redirect, and reward for an alternative, preferred behavior.
- Control your dog's environment to set them up for success in making the right choices. For example, don't leave them unattended within reach of something of interest that you don't want them to have.
- Don't introduce a verbal cue until your dog is consistently doing a behavior. Add the verbal cue right before (or right as) your dog performs the behavior.
- Practice in short 5-15 minute sessions throughout the day. Sprinkle training throughout daily life, not just in set practice sessions (wait for food and at doorways, sit for putting leash on, etc.).
- Practice in multiple locations, moving from low distraction (in your home) to higher distraction environments (on a hike). Don't try to rush the process.
- Use mealtimes and doorways as training opportunities – even if it's just to practice patience.
- Keep training fun, upbeat, and positive! End training sessions while they are successful, don't try to push it to the point where your dog becomes frustrated or confused. End on a high note. Ending with play can help solidify learning!