

# Laying a Foundation of Obedience for Natural Ability and Utility Dogs

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Our chapter's mission is to help you develop your versatile dog into an efficient, well-adjusted hunting companion. Remember that you are the primary trainer - and we can provide the tools and support to ensure that you reach your goals. This work list is one of those tools. It provides a training regimen to lay a solid foundation of obedience in your dog - all exercises can be completed in your home and yard. **Consider this your homework**; use it as guidance in the coming months. Once your dog masters all these exercises, it will be well on its way to future success in both field and water!

**Recommended:** At least 3 practice sessions per week, 15-30 minutes long. End each session with success (keep this training fun!). Use more sessions, of shorter length for young dogs/pups - and remember, stop immediately if dog's interest lags.

## 1) Recall

- a. On-leash, with dog a few steps from you, call its name, followed by "come". If dog comes toward you, praise AFTER dog arrives at your side (repeat). If dog does not come to you, a short tug on leash as you repeat command (praise when dog gets to your side, not before). If dog continues to ignore, issue "come" command and pull in dog to your side calmly; praise when dog is at your side. Repeat as needed till dog comes on first command.
- b. On-check cord, repeat steps in (a) above, but with dog at increasing distance, until dog is coming every time. Start this in a calm setting without distractions; gradually, work in distractions. Some trainers use small treats to reward dogs at this stage, but not necessary.
- c. Off-leash, when dog is reliable on check cord, repeat program as in (a, b) increasing distance slowly; praise lavishly for good work. Note: we will discuss enforcement of this command at a distance, including throwing noisy object and e-collar use.

## 2) Learning leash manners

- a. On-leash walk few steps, if dog tugs, quick tug back (do not let dog start steady pull; reverse direction and keep moving; dog learns to catch up, walk with you. Praise for no tugging (indoors, without distractions, then with distractions).

### 3) Heeling on/off leash

- a. Heel on-leash - indoors, without distractions, with distractions - stopping/starting, entering rooms
- b. Heel on-leash outdoors - in yard without distractions, with distractions, sidewalks, stopping/crossing streets, increase exposure to people/crowds.
- c. When dog has mastered all of above, repeat above off-leash ONLY indoors, and outdoors in fenced/secure locations

### 4) Whoa

- a. Get dog accustomed to table - walk up and over repeatedly.
- b. For young pups, stop with leash on table; hold dog calmly for few seconds, release and praise, walk off table - repeat until dog stops with you.
- c. On table - practice till dog stops with single calm “whoa” command and no leash pressure; release *-use same release command for whoa, down, sit: “free” works!*
- d. On table - practice stopping/starting several times across table, until perfect (with single command/no leash pressure)
- e. Extend distance of dog from handler using check cord; practice till perfect
- f. Use slight pressure on check cord to have dog resist moving - practice till perfect
- g. Off table - no distractions, return to leash/dog at side; practice till perfect
- h. Off table - add distance with check cord
- i. Take outdoors/with distractions; back up to (b) with leash till perfect; then extend with check cord
- j. Indoors, remove leash and practice stopping dog with single command near handler’s side; when perfect move to (i).
- k. Indoors, no leash/check cord... extend distance from handler, practice stopping dog at distance. When perfect, move to (j).
- l. Move outside, extend distance, introduce distractions.
- m. NOTE for future work: If dog slips up at distance... will discuss enforcing with e-collar later. Also, introducing birds on “whoa” will begin steadiness training.

### 5) Down

- a. On table or floor: place dog in down position - hold till dog accepts for few seconds; praise and release.
- b. Repeat, extend time slowly till dog will remain down longer; praise and release.
- c. Move a step/or 2 away from dog; praise and release after a few seconds.

- d. Repeat c) gradually increasing distance from dog, and duration of time. Sit/stay
- e. Place dog in “sit” position (no “stay” needed). Release after few seconds, praise.
- f. Repeat, gradually increasing time before release.
- g. Repeat, and begin to distance handler from dog; reduce time before release at first... extend gradually.
- h. Place dog in “sit”, walk out of room for few seconds, return and release. Repeat, gradually increasing time handler is out of dog’s sight.
- i. Introduce distractions.

6) Beginning of **trained retrieve**: hold and carry; release (on table)

- a. Whoa dog on table, then place bumper in dog’s mouth, command “hold”, have hold for a few seconds, remove (no commands)
  - i. NOTE - No chewing of bumper allowed - if dog wants to roll/chew bumper, keep on leash, hold collar/jaw in one hand and bumper in other... use “no” and prevent additional mouthing. As soon as dog quiets have it release bumper and praise. Repeat until the behavior stops.
- b. Repeat, until dog accepts/quietly holds for a few seconds. Praise/release.
- c. Repeat, lengthen time of holding - “hold”...introduce release command “out”, “drop”, “give” or whatever works for you... but be consistent with word!
- d. Once dog is willingly accepting, holding, and releasing after several seconds, begin having it move. Dog may drop bumper when it starts to move forward... stop dog, replace bumper, and hold in mouth while the dog takes a few steps... this should cure the dropping of bumper. If dog takes a few steps down the table, stop with “whoa” and release bumper.... Praise!
- e. Supplemental homework: Have dog hold bumper for handler off table - this can be done with dog sitting or standing... most dogs get this very quickly, and willingly accept a bumper to hold for few seconds.... Gradually lengthen the time of hold.
- f. Have dog walk with bumper; stop and release indoors - no distractions.

7) **Drags** (Only for dogs that are reliably retrieving to hand - WAIT on this exercise until your dog is retrieving well). Only work a few drags 1-2 times/week - quit if dog appears bored with the work. Most dogs progress on this work very quickly, and can be extended to 50 yards or more within 2 weeks.

- a. Dog should follow short (25-foot) drag to bird at start of this exercise... if not, shorten drag until dog is successful in locating bird.

