

The Structure of Training



Here's how you will teach your puppy to understand and follow through with Cues. You will want to be familiar with this by the time you get your pup and start training.

Pick a different cue word for each action, and make sure they aren't similar. A "Lay Down" for puppy to put their belly on the floor and a "Down" for them to get off of people would confuse them. Once your cue words are chosen, make sure everyone always uses the same word for the same action! Then you're ready to follow the structure of training: the Cue, Praise, and Reward.

Cue

Give the verbal or physical cue (Sit, Lay Down, etc.). And *don't give the cue again*. We want to teach puppy



to respond on the first ask, not to wait for you to say Sit, Sit, Sit, SIT, and only respond when you use your “very serious or angry” voice. That would only teach your puppy to ignore you, and we don’t want that!

Praise

As soon as your puppy performs the behavior you’re looking for, mark it with a “Yes!” Puppy will quickly come to identify this word as praise for doing the right thing, and will eventually be happy with getting just this affirmation and not a treat.

When we train by marking correct actions with a word like “Yes!”, the mark must be given *at the moment* puppy offers the action you want, not several seconds later, and not before completing what they’re supposed to do.



Reward

This is usually food or a treat, or sometimes a toy. It always comes at the end. You typically want to reward within 3 seconds of a completed command.

So: Give the cue. Wait for puppy to complete the action. Praise with your marker word “Yes!” immediately. Then give your puppy a treat.



As training starts to advance, a release word will be introduced into the structure of training for some cues. I typically use “Free” or “Okay.” This word will let your puppy know that they have completed the action you asked for and it is now okay to move. The release word happens after the praise of “Yes!” and either before or instead of the reward.