

Ask the Dog Trainer

Editor's Note: In this feature we ask area dog trainers to answer questions sent in by our readers. Please send your questions to editor@animalloversmagazine.com

Our featured trainer this month is Lisa McDonald of Leader of the Pack Canine Institute.

Hi Lisa, my name is Deb. I just got a 12-week-old male German Shepherd and wanted to start training it right away. Do you have any training techniques for teaching him to listen to commands, to be housebroken, no biting, and jumping?

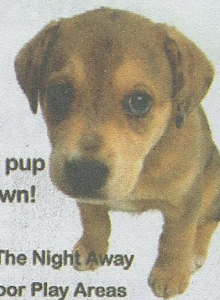
Hi Deb. You absolutely want to start training sooner than later with your puppy. The key to having a happy and balanced dog, who will respond to your commands, is to make sure the relationship starts off right by asserting yourself as the pack leader. Be sure to involve the entire family in setting the rules, boundaries and limitations for the household. When training a dog, the use of re-direction and reward gives the dog a chance to make decisions on his own. This is how dogs learn the fastest. The goal when training should be to create a "conditioned behavior," meaning that your dog hears a command and responds immediately. This concept can be taught through consistent actions and taking your dog through a series of learning stages. As they master each stage the dog becomes conditioned to react to a command to do something, even while distracted. By keeping your dog thinking and looking for the next command you can redirect some undesirable behavior such as mouthing and jumping. House breaking can be accomplished in 7-10 days with our proven 10 day housebreaking program. With any

of the above issues, the key to training is consistency among all family members. It would be best if all family involved with the pet attend puppy classes together to establish consistency at home. Best wishes and have fun with your new pet.

Hi Lisa, my name is Jim: My dog comes when called inside the house but not when he is outside. Sometimes I think he is just ignoring me. How do I get him to come to me when we are in the back yard or at the park?"

Hi Jim: The key to reaching the "reliable recall," having your pet spin on a dime and be at your feet, is to create a very positive association with your recall word. Never call your pet with the word "come" and then do something that your pet will see as "negative" or not so pleasant. Use positive reinforcement at the end of the recall. In addition to keeping it positive, never continue to repeat the recall word if your pet is not responding. By repeating it, you are teaching him that he does not have to "come" when called. Remember, just because he responds to the recall inside the home and not outside does not mean he is being stubborn or is just ignoring you. The outside environment has more distractions than your living room. If you have not achieved a "conditioned response," meaning he hears the recall and spins and is at your feet, he may not know what the word means in the presence of distractions. There are training classes available that focus on the "reliable recall" and will show you how to achieve that "conditioned response." Visit us at www.lopci.com. Remember, the reliable recall may save his life one day.

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