



How to teach your dog to

AUTOMATIC SITS

Whether you want to do formal training and possibly go into competition or whether you just want an obedient companion, all our obedience exercises will make your life with your dog easier. The Automatic sit is the most basic exercise. Quite literally, when you stop moving, the dog immediately sits in the heel position (left hand side). There are many occasions when an Automatic Sit will make your life easier and in “real” life this could save your dogs life. For example, when you come to a kerb and stop to check for traffic, you don’t want your dog to plow on without you and possibly get hit. If you drop something you were carrying, when you stop to pick it, you can be confident your dog will stop with you. If you have someone with you, if your phone rings in the bottom of your pocket, if you lose the heel off your shoe in all these situations, it is helpful to know that when you stop, your dog will sit.

A reliable Sit will also help in so many other exercises. Once your dog is used to sitting calmly next to you when you stop, you can progress to Sit Stays, which helps when greeting people, to Shake hands, to Change of Position, to Retrieving and Recalls. And for tricks like balancing the treat on the nose and for health checks like cutting toe nails.

One of the easiest methods to us is this:



With the dog in the heel position (left hand side), hold the lead in the right hand and place the LEFT hand on the dog’s rump right at the base of the tail. Push gently down on the rump while at the same time pulling up and back on the lead. This combination – pulling the head back and pushing the butt down – is the easiest way to get your dog into the sit position.

Of course you mustn’t be harsh – it only needs gentle pressure to push his rump down. Use the verbal command SIT at the same time and when his butt hits the floor, use lots of praise.

Remember – one verbal command only. Even later when they know the sit, if they don't do it on the first command, go back to basics, put the hand on the butt and put them in position.

Be careful not to push down in the middle of his back or on his hips as this could hurt your dog and cause later back problems. Put your hand right on the top of the tail and basically fold his rump under him.

If you are using treats as rewards, your dog might sit wide so it can watch you to see if you are getting the treat for them. If you want a nice tidy sit, lean down and just “scoop” them back into position beside your leg. Then praise.



If your dog is standing in front of you and you want him to sit for a treat, move the treat towards the dog but then up over his face so he has to crane his head up and back to reach the treat, effectively putting all his weight on the back legs. Give the verbal command SIT and keep the treat out of reach until he sits.

Once your dog has learned the sit, you can try the above exercise without the treat or try other “distance” work – that is getting the dog to sit when he's not next to you, but for this you will need to add a hand signal to go with your verbal command.



Put your arm straight out in front of you – palm up – and then raise your hand up from the elbow. If the dog is watching your hand signal, his head will go up again forcing his weight back so that the rump goes down. Remember to use the verbal command as well so that he knows what this new signal means. If you need to, in the early stages, while you carry out the hand signal with your right hand, you can lean forward and use your left hand on this rump to give him a gentle reminder.

Good luck with your Sits.