

## - COMMON TRAINING HAND SIGNALS AND VERBALS -



Use the following guide to help establish your Verbal Commands and Hand Signals, for training your dog. This is a guideline only; you can alter the words and signals to suit your liking, just be consistent.



### **THREE COMMANDS to establish first thing –**

- **MARKER WORD:** This word is what tells your dog that what they did is correct. Choose a short, crisp word as a verbal marker. “YES” or “PERFECT” are common choices. Another option is a Clicker. It’s the most commonly used mechanical marker in dog training and gives a short, snappy, instantly recognizable CLICK to the dog. I refrain from using GOOD as a marker, because it's commonly used in all things around your puppy (Who's a good puppy?, Were you good today?, etc.). You can say YES! What a good pup!, but get that YES in there first, embellish later.
- **NON-REWARD MARKER WORD:** Never say NO when you're trying to teach your dog something. Save the NO word for when it really matters. Use a not so harsh Non-Reward Marker Word, such as “OOPS”, “WHOOOPS”, “UT-OH”, something short and kind of gentle because you don't want to shut the dog down. So, for example, if you asked your dog to stay, and they broke the stay, you would say OOPS, and then put them right back into the stay.
- **RELEASE WORD:** Commonly used release words are “OKAY,” “BREAK,” and “FREE.” Often a release word is followed by another command such as “come.” For example, when teaching stay, you should have already chosen a release word. So then if you have your dog in a stay you'll say - OKAY! COME! To release them from the stay position.

I also use my release word at the end of a training session. Just the other day I brought in a skateboard and was teaching my dogs to ride on it. Once they got done training on it, I told them "Okay, we're done!" and I throw my hands up in the air. They got off the skateboard and went about the house as normal dogs because they knew they were off the clock and not working anymore.

- Remember to REWARD what you want, and IGNORE what you don't want.
- NILF - Nothing In Life is Free. Meaning, don't just give your dog treats for being cute and doing nothing! Make them work for it! Whether it's a simple sit or a down, ask them for something before handing them that cookie or toy.
- Save the NO word for the really not so good stuff. Use your Non-Reward Word for the little things.



## **HAND SIGNALS and VERBALS:**

Why is a consistent Hand Signal important? Dogs watch you constantly and typically see the signal for the cue before hearing the verbal. Say your dog gets away from you and crosses the road with the wind blowing and cars driving past, it would be hard for them to hear you say STAY or COME. By giving your hand signal, they'll better know what you want and can respond.

Why is a consistent Verbal Command important? Dogs get distracted, they move away from us, so by saying a Verbal Command, your dog can respond without physically seeing you for the hand signal.

Choose a hand signal and verbal and stick with it. Don't throw your hand up in the air for COME one time, then wave it around the next, and don't say COME one time, and HERE the next. Be consistent! Do what comes naturally to you. If you're unsure what you would like to use, here is a list of some of the popular hand signals and accompanying verbal command.

### **Pair each Hand Signal with a Verbal Command.**

- **SIT:** Hand in front of you. Palm up. Give a slight upward motion. Say SIT as you use this cue.
- **DOWN:** Hand out in front of you. Palm Down. Give a slight downward motion. Say DOWN as you use this cue.
- **STAY:** Hand out in front of you. Palm facing the dog, directly in front of the dogs' view. Say STAY as you use this cue.
- **COME/HERE/RECALL:** Hand down near your thigh. Palm facing forward towards the dog. Slight up and down movement. Say dogs name followed by COME or HERE for this cue.

**HAPPY TRAINING!**