

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Puppy Handling, Socialization and Obedience

Teaching a puppy as soon as 16 weeks, as they have had all the booster vaccinations, is an impressionable time as well as the perfect time to start training. Teaching early and preventing unwanted behaviors give you and your puppy a chance to have a healthy, life-long, trusting relationship. For example, young puppies tend to stay with us instead of running off to explore, so it is much easier to train cues such as, recall and loose leash walking which are so much harder to teach an adult dog. Resource guarding can be dangerous so preventing it now is important as well. This is also a wonderful time to ensure your puppy has good manners and does not nip or jump up on people when he gets older.

Puppy Handling 101

It's important to start handling your puppy as soon as possible to avoid potential behavior issues down the road. For example, if you have never touched your puppy's feet, you or a groomer will have a hard time trimming nails as the puppy squirms and bites at your hands.

While playing gently with your puppy, touch him on his ears, belly, feet and in between the pads. As you are doing this use a happy voice and reward if he is squirming too much. We need to make sure he sees this as a good thing and nothing to protect or feel protective of in the futures

To ensure your puppy is healthy, happy and well socialized follow the steps below:

1. At every opportunity, touch your dogs feet and pretend to clip his nails, praise and reward
2. Check his ears by touching them, rubbing them and looking inside as often as possible
3. Do the same with his teeth, check their teeth a few times on each side so they get used to being examined. This is also a good practice if they try to swallow something they shouldn't, giving medication if needed and taking a toy from them without incident.
4. Belly, puppies will typically roll over during play, so take the opportunity to rub their belly as often as possible.
5. Tail, touch and pull slightly; especially in a house with children it is important the puppy gets used to all kinds of contact. It is equally important to teach children how to play with a dog! **Do not allow rough play, kids sitting on a dog, pulling the tail, getting in the dog's face, interrupting them while eating or sleeping.** *This is an impressionable time and allowing rough play will increase the puppy's nipping, biting, barking and not able to calm down around people.*

The Importance of Socializing

From the very start, a puppy learns important lessons through his experience of the world around him. As the weeks go by, exposure to a variety of experiences is crucial to his becoming a well-rounded adult. Studies have shown that a puppy's experiences in the first three months of life

strongly influence what kind of companion he will grow to be and how he will react to the world. Will he shy away from children? Will he be afraid of people in hats? Will he be aggressive toward other dogs? Or will he be easygoing and adaptable in a variety of situations?

Failure to properly expose a young puppy to certain situations or types of people during this brief early period can result in his being forever fearful of them as an adult. Early socialization, or the lack of it, is a vital determinant of a dog's lifelong behaviors. Without proper socialization, it is unlikely that a pup will become the adult dog he could have been, whether as a competitor in canine events or as a happy, well-adjusted pet.

Windows of Opportunity

Socialization is the process of exposing a puppy from early on to as wide a variety of environments, situations, animals, and types of people as can be done safely and without causing trauma to the pup. As the puppy grows up there are several crucial "socialization windows" in the first year that are limited periods during which the pup is receptive to the lifelong benefits of exposure to new things.

The earliest is the first 12 weeks of life and is the most critical. According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB), sociability outweighs fear during this period, making it "the primary window of opportunity for puppies to adapt to new people, animals, and experiences." This period is when the pup first learns to accept and enjoy the company of people, to behave appropriately around other dogs, and to experience the differing aspects of the world around him without fear.

Right around 12 weeks, most pups will enter a fear-prone period in their development. After this point, if the pup has not been well socialized it may be at best permanently difficult for him to adapt to certain unfamiliar experiences.

"Basically, an adult dog's temperament and behavior habits, both good and bad, are shaped during puppyhood, very early puppyhood," says veterinarian and leading animal behaviorist Dr. Ian Dunbar, author of *Before & After Getting Your Puppy*. Further, Dunbar notes that behavior issues are the number-one cause of relinquishment to shelters.

Puppy Obedience

We start all training focusing on the building blocks beginning with leadership. While you are building a relationship and playing with your new puppy, you will also be reinforcing your role as a calm and confident leader. Once you have a relationship and set the ground rules, then obedience training begins.

Leadership

Whether you talk about what dogs need in a dog pack, or in a domestic situation, your dog instinctively wants and needs a leader. You communicate leadership through your body language, tone of voice, mannerisms, consistency, and follow through. By being a leader you will get the kind of dog you want and your dog will get the leader it needs.

If the dog does not have a clear leader, he may take control and act out, taking advantage of situations; it could become aggressive, and generally be a dog that is doing the training. Depending on the dog's temperament, it could become the opposite and become anxious, fearful and unsure about you; either way, the best thing you can do for your dog is to be the leader he needs.

The best way to think of becoming the leader your dog needs is to think of a parent-child relationship. A child needs discipline, boundaries, and an understanding of appropriate behavior. Your child needs

daily exercise, play time, consistent rules and ultimately love. That is what your dog needs as well, structure and no free reign over you or the household.

If you think of leadership as what the dog needs, you can educate, train and gain the respect of your dog quickly. This is what you need and what the dog wants, to live a balanced and happy life.

To clarify, the following are examples of the dog in the Leadership position:

- The dog charges ahead of you through the doorway
- You feed your dog by leaving kibble out all day (free feeding) so the dog is in control of the food supply
- The dog nudges you and you pet him.
- The dog whines for something and you give in
- The dog asks you to play with him, and you do.
- The dog pulls you on the leash when going for a walk (he tells you where you are going and how fast)
- You give your dog a cue or command, but it ignores you

These examples show the dog you are not consistent, you will give in and now the dog is in control.

The following are a few examples of clear leadership the dog understands:

- You go through the doorway before your dog; he waits until released
- You control the food. Be consistent and feed your dog the same time in the a.m. and p.m. Have the dog sit, start to set the food down and say "wait"; the dog does not start to eat until you give the release word. He gets 15 to 20 minutes to eat his food, and then it is taken away.
- You invite your dog to be petted, when you are ready and not when he demands it
- You initiate play with your dog when you choose; you start the game and end the game by putting the toy away. Come up with a word to use as a cue that you are done engaging, such as "go", "done", and point your finger towards his spot or bed so he understands the game is done for now.
- You walk the dog on a leash, you show the dog where to go and the dog follows and looks to you for direction.

More on leadership

As the leader you need to protect your dog against bullying dogs, teasing children and adults, including heavy-handed trainers. If something doesn't feel right to you, it feels even worse to your dog. Trust your gut feeling, be a leader and keep your dog safe.

A leader also does not yell, hit or throw things at the dog. A leader stays calm when the dog is fearful or stressed. The more reactive your dog is, the more grounded and calm you need to be. It's up to you to create the balance. If you react to your dog's unwanted behavior in any other way but calm and controlled, you deal with your dog at his level and he gets what he wants. Your goal is to guide your dog to your level; to help it remain calm as well. It's your responsibility to give your dog the structure and consistency he needs, and in return this will create a relationship of mutual trust.

Be consistent, even if you had a bad day at work. Your dog doesn't understand why you are tense and becomes confused and fearful if you are short-fused with him. Be aware of your tone of voice, try and be upbeat or at least calm. After all, your dog gives you unconditional love, you should be happy to see him at the end of the day too!

If you need to give your dog feedback for a behavior (both positive and negative), you have 3 seconds to do so; this is the span of time they are in the moment and will tie the feedback to the act. For instance, punishing well after the incident will not teach your dog a thing, he will just be confused.

For your dog to trust you, you must be predictable. Dogs learn to leave things alone after MANY times catching them in the act and being interrupted or redirected. Just as it is with a young child, it takes time for them to learn what is off limits.

If the dog is ignoring or won't respond to you, put him on a leash and tether him to your side. He has to go everywhere with you, which leaves him with no independence or options to get into mischief. Please never leave a leash on unsupervised!

If he is insistent in an unwanted behavior (lumping, mouthing, body slamming, etc.) then walk into him with a stern voice say "quit it", give him a stern glare and when he stops, walk away.

Going through obedience training early and before any behavior issues appear will help you in mastering the leadership role. If you are adopting an older or rescued dog, it can be a bit more challenging; you may not know all the dog has been through in the past. If this is the case, practice, be patient and remember, no matter what the dog has been through, they need a strong leader. In fact, you are doing them a big favor by taking the pressure off them to be in charge. If you use the cues and training methods as building blocks, it will be easy to train yourself and your dog!

Be consistent and follow through. Make time for play and exercise everyday and in return you will have a healthy happy dog that wants to please you!

Using food lures to teach obedience

Throughout the following exercises you will be using a food lure. This is part of positive reinforcement techniques we use to teach puppies new skills. Below is an example for "Sit":

- Hold a treat slightly above your dog's nose and bring it back slowly over her head.
- When your dog's bottom hits the ground, click and treat.
- If your dog keeps backing up, practice against a wall so she can only go so far.
- Repeat this until your dog is offering Sit readily.
- Take the treat out of your hand and, holding your hand the same way, entice your dog to "Sit." If she sits give her a treat; if she doesn't, go back to using a food lure for a few more repetitions.

The first step, teach your puppy "Watch me"

The attention to name is the first cue we teach when we start training a puppy. Start training in a quiet area when he is first learning so there are no distractions. As his focus becomes stronger, it will be easier to add commands to your training program. Once the puppy has it down, then move to areas where there are some distractions, and eventually distractions will not shake his focus. Start inside your house and then go outside or practice while on a walk outside.

The cue "Watch me" is the start of the leadership training for both you and your dog. You will use this cue to build on other training areas as you progress in the program.

Hold a treat in your fingers, bring it to the puppy's nose to get his attention, and then back up to your eyes and say your puppy's name, "watch me" when he looks at you, say "good" and immediately bring the treat down and give it to your dog.

Only practice 3 times in a row, take a break then 3 more times. When you are practicing more cues, mix them up so the dog does not lose interest.

This focus cue will help you get their attention before teaching them many other cues in the future. For example, you can practice this while on a walk, so have treats ready!

When your puppy gets the hang of this, try adding other distractions. For example, have another family member in the room, put on some unusual music, etc. to provide a distraction and continue to work on his focus.

Teaching "Sit"

1. Use the focus cue to get your dogs attention.
2. Lure by taking a treat between your thumb and fingers so the dog can smell the treat. Guide your dog into the sit by moving the treat toward the top of her head, arching it up over her nose so that she has to raise her nose straight up to follow the treat.
3. Hold the treat over and close to their nose and move your hand back to move her into a sit position. As the dog sits, give them the treat and say "good." Practice 4 times.

Encourage her to stand up again and repeat the step above until your dog readily follows the food lure and goes into the sit position when you say "Sit."

Teach Your Dog the "Down" cue

1. Use the food lure technique
2. Put a treat at her nose and say, "down" and draw the treat straight down from her nose to the floor and out (in an "L" shape). The idea is for the dog to follow her nose and put her elbows on the ground followed by her hind-quarters to complete the down.
3. If you need to help him, gently push down on his hind-quarters to guide him into position. A half down with the rear in the air is still progress; she still gets a treat in the beginning for trying!
4. Give her the treat and praise by saying "good" or "good down"; when they get the exercise, put a few small treats in between her paws and praise with enthusiasm!

Adding "Stay" to "Sit" or "Down" with a release

To add "Stay" to the "Sit or Down" cue, put a bunch of small treats in your hand and hold them behind your back. Find a quiet place to train where your dog won't be easily distracted. You may need to use a leash and step on it so you have the dog in front of you and your hands are free to give the treats quickly.

1. Stand to the side of your puppy and ask her to "**Sit**" or "**Down**" as the dog sits, pause for 1 second and say "**Stay**", and then give her one treat from each hand from your back rapidly as you say "stay" for a few seconds.
2. Then release her with your **release cue**, "Okay" or "Go" and toss a treat to the side at the same time you say the cue so she gets up and follows the treat.
3. Repeat this exercise, slowly stretching out the time that your dog must stay between each release cue and the delivery of a treat.

Teaching your puppy to "Settle"

Teaching your dog to go to a designated spot, like his bed or a mat, and stay until released can be useful. For example, when eating dinner, watching a movie with family, or greeting guests at the front door.

First, you will need to teach your dog that her mat or bed is a great place to be; it has to be a good experience and not punishment.

Then prepare some bite-sized treats before you begin training and use something exciting, like soft dog treats, small pieces of hot dog, chicken or cheese. The more your dog loves the training treats, the harder she will work to earn them.

Follow the treat

Call your puppy over to the bed or mat that you would like to use. Standing just a foot or two in front of the mat, say the cue, "Go to your spot", "Go to bed" or any other phrase that works for you and your family (the cue must be consistent for anyone instructing her).

Hold a treat in front of your puppy's nose so she sees that you have something delicious, and then toss the treat onto the mat.

When she steps onto the mat to eat her treat. Say "Good girl"!

Use your release word, such as "Okay", "Go", "Free", to signal her that she is released, and can now move off the mat. You can also clap your hands and walk a few steps away to encourage your dog to move off the mat. *Your release word should be the same one you use for all other training cues and must be consistent within your family.*

Teaching Recall

To introduce a recall choose a cue, such as "come", "here", or "now". To put it all together and get your dog's attention, you say the dog's name, pause, and then the recall cue. For example, "Buddy-pause, "Come"!!!

If you do not pause in between the puppy may not understand what you want. This is known as "chaining" and once chaining has been taught it is hard to break!

Never yell, keep an upbeat, happy voice and as animated as possible to make coming to you the most exciting thing! Reward and Praise!

The best way to teach a reliable recall is when they are still a pup; the trick is to make it fun so your puppy wants to come to you every time! You should be able to eventually call your dog and they will turn to find you and come running on cue.

The Basic Rules to Recall:

NEVER call your dog unless you are CERTAIN you can enforce the cue. Each time you call your dog and he does not immediately come to you to receive a food reward, you take a step backwards in his learning to come when you call. If he does not come to you, go get him!

NEVER call your dog to you for anything unpleasant. If you need to interrupt a play session, or you are going to trim nails, or if you are about to do anything to your dog that he does not enjoy, go and get the dog and do not call him to you.

REWARD every single recall! Keep treats in your pockets at all times. Rewards can also include smiles, praise, or fetch with a favorite toy.

Always have a happy, upbeat voice when calling your dog to you.

Never use a correction with recall, your dog must WANT to come when you call! We ignore the mistakes and praise the successes!

Puppy Recall Game #1:

To play the game you need at least 2 people, and several are even better. Each person is given a handful of pea-sized soft treats and keeps them out of sight.

One person takes the puppy or dog and points him towards the person who is going to begin the game. This person coaxes the puppy by making a "kissy" noise, clap their hands or say "pup-pup-pup!" they can say anything to get the puppy to come towards him except say the word "Come".

When it is CLEAR that the pup is committed to going to the person, say the pup's name, and the cue "Come"; for example, "Bailey, Come!" It does not matter if the puppy is almost to you, as long as the pup responds to his name and the cue to "Come".

Puppy Recall Game #2:

Another variation is to have two people sit on the floor about 6 feet apart and call puppy back and forth, when puppy comes, ask him to "sit" praise, reward! For example, "Buddy, pause, Come, Sit" and end with "Good boy!!!! REWARD generously.

Puppy Recall Game #3:

Each person has a toy she likes and sit about ten feet apart. Call your puppy to you excitedly, showing the toy. Remember to praise her when she comes to you and let her play for a minute, and then put the toy behind your back. At this point your friend should bring out their toy, and call the puppy over in an excited voice. Continue to switch back and forth.

This is a great game for early puppy obedience training as it teaches the puppy to come when called, come away from distractions, and obey multiple people.

Also, when he comes to you, touch his collar every time to make sure the puppy does not flinch when his collar is touched, even when you have to grab his collar in an emergency.

Teach Loose Leash Walking and "Heel"

Using the food lure, hold the treat by your side as you lead the puppy into a heel position; adding a cue by saying, "heel" as he is the correct position by your left leg. Practice off-leash heeling in a safe area (indoors, or in a fenced yard). Use a food lure in your left hand to position the puppy on your left side when in motion and say, "Buddy, Heel". Keep repeating "Heel" as your puppy lines up in position.

- 1) Walk forward in a straight line, jiggling the treat in your left hand and praising your puppy as you walk to encourage your puppy to keep going.
- 2) Move the treat from your left to your right hand in preparation for the sit signal.
- 3) Stop and say, "Buddy, Sit," and reward your right hand and say, "Good Heel, Good Sit".
- 4) Teach your puppy a strong heel position while stationary; say, "Buddy, Heel," and use a treat in your right hand to lure your puppy to sit by your left side.
- 5) Take one step in any direction (forwards, backwards, right, or left), and then stand still.
- 6) Repeat, "Buddy, Heel," and lure your pup to come and sit in heel position again.

Initially, walk as quickly as possible so that your puppy has to walk a straight line in order to keep up. Start by heeling in a straight line, keeping your puppy's attention by frequently changing pace.

Remember to make it fun. Praise your puppy frequently, and occasionally dispense a food reward after an exceptionally good session of heeling.

Right Turns

1. To avoid your dog taking a shortcut behind you on right turns, say "Right!"
2. Move your left hand forwards to speed up your pup so that his head is in front of your left knee before you turn right. Speed up to encourage your puppy to complete the turn quickly.
3. After a right turn praise the puppy when he comes back into heel position.

Left Turns

1. To avoid bumping your puppy when making left turns, say "Left!"
2. Slow down and move your left hand behind your left knee to slow down the pup.
3. After the left or left-about turn, praise the puppy when he comes back into heel position.

Teach Cue Combinations:

1. Teach your puppy to sit quickly and reliably.
2. To come and sit in heel position without moving forward.
3. Teach left and right, and about-turns in place.
4. Teach straight-line, sit-heel-sit sequences.
5. Combine all the exercises and make turns while in motion.

Heel Exercise in Class:

One dog with owner takes her dog and weaves around others (others are standing with their dog sitting calmly at their sides) while using the food lure. This helps the puppy concentrate on his handler and not the other dogs during the exercise.

Puppy Behavior

Puppies are very impressionable because they have no frame of reference, so it is the best time to reinforce good behaviors and prevent bad ones. Puppies can learn obedience cues, positive play with humans and appropriate behavior as early as 8 weeks old; however, they can just as easily learn negative behaviors and habits if we inadvertently reinforce them.

Preventing Toy Guarding

The same theory applies to guarding dog toys; make sure you can take the toy out of his mouth. Start by trading the toy for a treat and playing with your puppy, taking one toy away and giving him another. All resources are managed by the leader in the home, you!

Teaching a "give it" or "drop it" command will also help. When your puppy has a toy in his mouth, gently take it from him, saying "give it" at the same time. When you have it, reward him and praise. By rewarding him with a treat as well he will learn that to give something to you, means to get something even better!

Anti-Possession Game:

Learning to drop a toy or "Leave it" when asked is really important to ensure there are no guarding issues later in life. Physical contact is a very big part of this game and your puppy is less likely to protect an object if you still have hold of it. When you let go and he now has the toy he will most likely try and defend her toy if you try and take it away. This game shows the puppy that all toys are really yours and not his to possess.

The steps:

1. Start with a handful of treats in your left hand and just one treat in your right hand. *You are going to use the treat in the right hand as the reward; having treats ready in your left hand makes it easier to continue to practice without him seeing you grab more treats.*
2. With your right hand closed (the one with just one treat), show your dog your closed fist. Put it right up to his nose to get his attention.
3. He will probably paw at your hand; lick you, and maybe even whine. This is where you need to be patient and keep your hand closed.
4. Wait for him to step back, look away from your hand in another direction or make eye contact with you. This could take a while, so be patient! When he backs off, in an upbeat voice say, "leave it", then say "Good".
5. Put your left hand behind your back again, and transfer another treat to your right hand and open your hand, and this time say, "Take it". He will start to understand the difference between the cues.
6. Repeat the exercise of "Leave it, Take it" six times in a session.

Once he understands the game, switch to a favorite toy in place of the treats.

Training Games for Your Puppy

Pass the puppy

Get the whole family involved in this one. Give everyone a handful of treats or kibble and have them sit in a big circle with the pup in the middle. Everyone takes turns calling the puppy to them, feeding her treats and making a big fuss over her. This is early come/recall training, and it also teaches the pup that people are fun and trustworthy.

Hide and Seek With a Treat or Toy

In this variation of the Hide and Seek game, instead of hiding yourself, you hide a treat. This doesn't require your puppy to know the "Stay" command. It is a good game to exercise the puppy's brain as they are trying to find the reward.

You can start this out by hiding scented treats under a blanket in the puppy's crate or pen. From there you can progress to more difficult places. Tip: Don't go hiding treats under your couch cushions, or you may end up with a puppy that likes to go digging for treasure in your furniture. This is more of an outdoor game.

The Puppy Memory Game

Grab three or four cups which are not transparent and place them upside down. Have a friend hold your puppy, or tell him to "Stay" if he knows that command. Get his attention with a treat, and hide it, so he can see as you put it under one of the cups. Have your friend let him go, or call him to you, and *let him find the treat and remember to be patient.*

When he gets the hang of it, extend the time between hiding the treat and letting him find it. You can even try hiding the treat, then playing another quick game, and then letting him find it.

Teaching Games

Touch: Hold your hand out, flat, and say "Touch." When your puppy touches his nose to your hand, reward him quickly with a treat. When he gets used to the game, make it more difficult by moving your hand around or holding an object for him to touch his nose to. This can be used as a low-level recall when the puppy is in the house.

Fetch: Have two balls, first show him the ball then throw it, as the puppy trots off to get it and turns around, then show him the other ball and make a big deal, "do you want this one", come and get it!" As he comes back towards you encourage him to "Drop" the first ball. It may take awhile for the

puppy to get the rhythm. Then toss the second ball and repeat. This teaches puppy to follow and retrieve the toy back to you and strengthens healthy human-dog relationship!

Socialization: Spend time with other (safe) dogs and people. This game develops social skills of the puppy and its connection with other animals and people. Do not allow others to play with your puppy in a rough manner; it can encourage nipping, mouthing and even biting.

Exchange Game: Teach and encourage your puppy to come back to you by saying his name in exchange for a reward like a pat or treat. Repeat in many times a day. After several days of reinforcing this exercise your dog will be able to recognize the verbal cue and even without any rewards, your dog will come back towards you. This actually helps in establishing various voice commands and obedience in your puppy.

Puppy training games also involve many other useful advantages such as:

- The games develop agility, responsiveness, attentiveness, vitality, and manners of your puppy.
- The playing time also develop a great reliable relationship between your dog and you. The puppy learns that you are its' best playmate and friend.
- Puppy training games help the puppy to cope and adapt to the changes in its life (i.e. separation from its mother, the people it knew, the environment).
- Through games you may easily transmit your expectations to your puppy so that the education process wouldn't be so stressful for you or your dog.
- Your puppy will also be more likely to discover the world **without fear**, through the fun and games, and will grow up to be an obedient dog you can be proud of and rely on.

Puppy training games are not only a great form of exercise, they are also a wonderful way to educate your puppy mentally. The games are also useful training techniques to help develop your dog's confidence, prevent undesirable habits, alleviate boredom and acquire useful skills.

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