How to Teach 'Sit'

Practical Uses

Sit is the most basic of all behaviours and is useful in a number of situations:

- Teach your dog to sit as a substitute for problem behaviour such as jumping up, door-dashing or leaping out of cars (i.e. your dog cannot 'Sit' and jump on you simultaneously!)
- You can teach your dog to say 'Please' by sitting politely for things he wants
- Teaching sit helps you to have a well-mannered dog that is also socially acceptable in the human world

Method

1. Hold a treat (or toy) in your fingers and put the treat near your dog's nose.
2. SLOWLY move the treat up and over the dog's head and slightly back towards the tail.
3. Your dog should be watching the treat move over his head and as his head moves backwards his rear should automatically begin to go down.
4. As his rear hits the floor, mark (say 'Yes!') immediately and reward.
5. Allow him to move around and repeat steps 1-4 until he offers a sit in response to your hand movement. (DO NOT use a verbal command to sit until you have the behaviour happening CONSISTENTLY in response to your hand signal.)
6. Try using a hand signal (palm facing up, slowly move your hand from your waist in an upward movement) WITHOUT a food treat. Use a treat as a reward rather than a lure.
7. When your dog responds 8 times out of 10 tries to a hand signal alone THEN you are ready to start naming the 'Sit'. Say 'Sit' immediately before you give the dog a hand signal to sit. Mark and reward.

Troubleshooting

1. **Your dog jumps up to get the food.**
   You are holding the treat (lure) too high. Think of the treat as a magnet to your dog's nose.

2. **Your dog moves forward towards you**
   You are not holding the treat close enough to his nose.

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3. **Your dog gets over excited by the food and tries to dislodge it from your hand with his paw or teeth.**
   Hold the food close to your chest and turn your head away (withdraw attention) until he settles down. Repeat until he settles. You may also want to try a more boring treat!

4. **Your dog backs up instead of sitting.**
   Try training against a wall, corner or piece of furniture.

5. **Your dog is distracted and is not interested in the treat**
   Try using a toy instead. Try training in a more boring environment where there is nothing else for the dog to focus on (e.g. bathroom, laundry etc). Try this exercise before dinner when your dog is hungry.

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