

SIT

DISCUSSION: Sit is the standard preventive incompatible behaviour — dog can't jump on you if he's sitting. Can't get on the couch if he's sitting on the floor. Can't leap on visitors if he's sitting away from them. A behaviour necessary to virtually every dogsport, and a useful default behaviour. When in doubt, sister, Sit!

EASY BEGINNINGS: Kids love to teach this behaviour. It's a great one to lure. With a soft, nibble-able treat in your hand, put your hand right on the dog's nose. Give her a chance to take a little nibble of the treat, then slowly start moving it up and back. Be sure that her nose is coming UP — nose goes UP, butt goes DOWN. As soon as the butt hits the ground, click and treat.

Be careful with luring — lure with the treat maybe five times, then make the same gesture with your **empty hand**. If the dog follows your hand and sits, click and treat. If she doesn't, lure with the treat maybe twice more, and try it without again. You're trying to get rid of the treat in your hand as quickly as possible.

PROBLEM SOLVING:

SHE'S JUMPING UP TO GET THE TREAT INSTEAD OF PUTTING HER BUTT ON THE GROUND — That's because you're holding the treat too high. You WANT the dog to follow the treat, so if you hold the treat high over her head, she's going to jump to reach it. Put the treat right down where she can nibble it at her regular nose-height, then SLOWLY move it up and back. Note that the treat never leaves her nose as her nose follows it up and back..

SHE DOESN'T SIT WHEN I LURE HER BACK, SHE JUST BACKS UP — Hmmm, a very athletic dog! Try starting in a corner where she can't back up!

SHE ONLY CROUCHES HER BACK LEGS, THEN SHE GIVES UP AND STANDS UP AGAIN — OK, for this dog, luring isn't going to work by itself. You're going to have to shape the behaviour a bit. Click the crouch ten times, then wait for a TINY bit more crouch than she gave you before. She's standing back up, as you say, because she tried what you wanted and, getting nothing for her effort, she gave up. You need to tell her that she IS on the right track, you WILL reward her for bending her back legs. Once she's secure on that point, you can afford to wait for a slightly bigger effort from her without her quitting.

ADDING A CUE: The nice thing about luring a behaviour is that it automatically builds in a hand signal. After a couple of days' practise, a short sample of the same gesture which produced the Sit in the first place will tell her you want her to Sit.

If you want a voice cue for the Sit as well, try to separate it from the gesture. Click the Sit often enough that she begins offering it to you without waiting for your gesture. When she's offering it, you can tell her what it's called — almost as if you're saying "Oh, by the way, that thing you're doing there? That's called 'Sit'" Pair the word with her sitting a hundred times, then ask for the behaviour when she's not thinking of it. If she responds correctly, click and treat. If she doesn't, never mind, pair it another hundred times and then try again.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: Where can she Sit? Can she Sit on the floor? On a carpet? On a hard floor? On a stool? On a grooming table? On the floor of your car? On top of her crate?

Under a table? Before you open the door to the yard? Before you give her her dinner? Before she gets petted?