

## Tips for Clandestine Training

*Most of us, pet owners and trainers alike, intend to practice and train our dogs more than we actually do. We have busy, complex schedules and good intentions. But actions count more than intentions, as we all know.*

*To help change intentions into actions, consider these “Tips for Clandestine Training”. They provide many practical ways to ‘sneak’ training and practice into your normal routines. These are activities many of us do in an average day. By taking just a little more time with them, we can turn them into opportunities for clandestine training.*

**Use dog meal times!** Require a “sit” while you prepare the meal. Build to a long “sit” (sit/stay) until the bowl is on the floor and you are standing fully upright again. Add “Watch” (or “Look at me”). Add seconds slowly.

Consider stepping away from the bowl before you release the dog. Your distance from the food bowl makes the food appear more available to your dog. This makes sit/stay harder. Build toward it at the rate your dog is successful.

Vary where your dog sits for this exercise: on a mat, by the bowl, across the room.

If feeding multiple dogs, add individual release cues.

Always RELEASE your dog to get the food – YOU decide when the dog can get up, but be fair and kind.

**Train your dog during TV commercials.** Instead of finding commercials annoying, be prepared with clicker and treats and a plan. When each commercial starts, invite your dog to another short training session. Decide ahead what behavior you will train so you don’t waste precious commercial time! Consider: name game (say dog’s name, c/t when dog looks at you), freeze and go wild games, hide and seek, train a trick, or play tug and practice “give” (or “out”) on cue. Keep a special tug in the living room on the bookcase or in a drawer (out of dog’s reach) for this. Also keep a little bowl of treats and a clicker there for spontaneous training moments.

Remember to let your dog know when each mini-session is over by using a cue to indicate “all done” or “free”.

**Emptying the dishwasher?** Great training time! Ask for a sit or down or go-to-your-mat in the kitchen. As you move around putting dishes away, remember that this is highly distracting for the dog. Cabinet doors opening and closing are exciting to your dog, as is your moving around. Reinforce the behavior you want!

**Do you pull your shades at night?** Do you open them again in the morning? This is a great chance to invite your dog to walk nicely with you, on or off leash. Consider asking for a sit or down at each window while you work the shade and then...off you two go again! Mix it up – sometimes ask for a sit/stay until you recall your dog to the next window; sometimes ask for nice walking at your side. Remember to reward and to keep it fun for both of you!

### **Going for a walk?**

Cue your dog to sit for the leash to be put on.

Cue your dog to sit to be released to go through the doorway.

For town walks, train an automatic curb behavior such as some combination of these: sit/stand/down/watch/stay/wait. Or mix it up and ask for different positions at each curb!

Train for the sight of rollerblader, skateboarder, bicyclist, squirrel, etc. to be the cue for looking at you.

**Getting the mail?** If you and your dog walk to your mail box (rather than have it delivered through a door slot or a box hanging on your house), then of course you can do nice leash walking to the mail box and some combination of these at the mail box: sit/down/stand/stay/watch. Consider putting a zip lock baggie with dry treats inside your mailbox so you can make rewards appear magically! Then practice nice leash walking back to your door, ask for a sit or down before going thru your door and remember to reward well once inside! Take a moment to play with your dog inside – you want returning home to be rewarding too.

**Pills?** No more struggling to get your dog to take pills! Request a well-known behavior (for example, sit, down, paw, touch, or watch) and reward with a treat followed quickly by the pill delivered just as the treat was. Let the dog see the third reward (a real treat) ready to be delivered as the dog takes the pill/treat decoy from you. The dog will gulp that middle 'reward' (the pill) in eager anticipation of the next reward. You'll have practiced some clandestine training while obtaining the dog's cooperation in taking pills.

**If you have a long hallway** in your house, it's a good place to practice a more formal "heel" if the dog is accompanying you anyway. Or a stay and recall. Or a retrieve. If your bathroom is at the end of a long hall, your dog is likely to accompany you down that hall many times a day. USE IT! (What is it about bathrooms that makes most dogs feel driven to accompany us?)

**Car time:** good for wait, get leashed, and release practice, both in and out of the car. Don't just open the door. It's a good training moment.

**Crate release:** also good for wait and release practice, both in and out. Don't just open the door. It's a good training moment.

**If you have two or more people** in the household, you can play a "bring" game. One person has the dog "take" something and other person calls them to "bring" it to them. They then give the dog something else to "take". The first person calls "bring" again. Like a recall relay only with taking and bringing an item. Fun and easy! Remember to cue your dog when the game is over.

*Sit, Stand and Down can be interchanged in most exercises to add variety and to strengthen each behavior. Watch and Touch are other behaviors you might interchange.*