

7 Steps of Praise

■ Tips

- While you can use a somewhat high-pitched and gentle voice when you praise your pup, make sure you change back to an authoritative and deeper voice when you give commands.
- If you're introducing something new to your dog, or you're trying to help him overcome a fear, it's a good idea to give praise while you're trying to make him respond positively. For example, if your pup is afraid of being brushed, petting him while you lightly touch the brush against his fur helps him realize there's no reason to be afraid of brushings. If he reacts negatively, make sure you stop praising him immediately.

■ Warning

- Don't comfort your dog when he's scared. While people might think of comforting and praising as two separate actions, canines don't differentiate the two. So if you hug your shaking pup while he's hiding in the bathtub during a thunderstorm, he thinks acting scared is the perfect response. Speak to puppy confidently / firmly and continue as if nothing is wrong. If he is scared of a object or place use encouragement to get him closer . When there either ask for a sit so he can watch or let puppy investigate. Then praise.

Step 1

Wait for your pup to do something positive. Anytime you reward your little guy with praise, he immediately thinks that the action he just took is what got him that praise. Immediate reward is the foundation for positive reinforcement to change a behavior or help your dog learn something new.

Step 2

Act overly excited when you begin a new step in training and your dog reacts positively. Clap your hands, bend over and slap your knees and tell him he's a good boy with a gentle voice. Making a huge fuss out of even the simplest command, such as sitting, at the start of training—or when he advances to the next step—tells your pup that he just did something wonderful and that he should do it again.

Step 3

Say your pup's name occasionally when you give him praise. While belting out your little guy's name won't help him learn a new command faster, it makes him more willing to acknowledge his name in the future. Many dogs seem to practice selective hearing and blow you off when you try to get their attention. But if you say your dog's name during fun and affectionate times, she's a lot more likely to respond to her name in the future, because she thinks hearing her name called means something good is bound to happen.

Step 4

Tone it down a little after your dog continues responding positively to the training after two or three days. After your pup has adjusted to the training, whether by sitting on command or acting calm around nail trimmers that used to frighten him, a simple "Good boy" with a nice petting will work just fine. Don't forget to say his name once in a while. You can continue to make a huge fuss, but it's not necessary at this point, and it can become tiring for you, especially if you're working on the type of training that requires a lot of repetitions.

Step 5

Keep an eye on how your pup responds after you give her praise. Some dogs flip their lid and act insanely excited if you make too much of a fuss over their good behavior, while other dogs appear timid and even scared. If your dog runs around, jumps, barks, looks for a place to hide or does anything over the top when you praise him, bring your excitement level down a notch or two. You might even have to forgo words and instead just give him a quick scratch on the head or chest.

Step 6

Add treats to the mix. Praise and treats are like peanut butter and jelly: they just go together. While praise alone will certainly help reinforce good behaviors, offering a treat and then giving your dog praise is the perfect combo.

Step 7

Continue to praise your dog occasionally after he completes his training. If you forgo praise and the occasional treat after your dog knows a certain command or isn't afraid of a specific stimulus, he might not be so willing to respond positively in the future.