

There's Nothing Like a Well Trained Dog (a guide to beginning to train your Greyhound)

By Barbara Masi

When adopting a retired racing Greyhound, you will find there has been little discipline except for what applies to their racing career. They are athletes and very regimented along those lines, but they do not have what we would consider the “normal” manners of a puppy / dog raised in a home.

When you adopt your Greyhound we recommend you sign up for class at one of the pet stores near your home. Why do we recommend this over private lessons? Only because your Greyhound needs socialization and distraction during training from other breeds of dogs – not the one-on-one training you would get with private lessons. The beginning training can be done successfully at one of the pet stores.

Beyond that training, private lessons are encouraged – if you want to go further with training. I have a list of trainers in different areas of our adoption area that you can call upon for excellent training for a Greyhound. Since there is no specific licensing for trainers in the state of Florida, it is important you hire someone who has the proper training and experience to work with your dog.

There are many things you can teach this magnificent creature, as he/she is a very smart animal. (Consider that some have earned more money in their lifetime than you have!) Don't confuse your dog – use the same word for the same desired result and the dog will adapt. One word commands are best.

“Greyhounds don't / can't sit” is the comment you will hear from most people – and I agree – most Greyhounds do not like to sit. But they CAN be taught to sit – some feel comfortable sitting when you get them. These are the easy ones to train to sit as you catch them when they do it and tell them “good sit” so they know what it is you are happy they have done and they connect the word sit with the action. A treat helps re-enforce the command. You should also use the hand signal at the same time you use the word, and eventually your dog will sit with just the hand command. (This is so for all of the commands you teach your dog.) Training a non-sitting Greyhound to sit is a little harder and should be done with the assistance of a good trainer. Do not push down on their back end to make the dog sit.

The main thing you want your Greyhound to learn is to “come” when called. That is the most important command as it will keep your dog from getting into trouble. This can be taught with a training lead if desired but often just the hand signal, a pat on the head when he arrives and a treat will get the dog to “come” – thus the dog will learn that good things happen when it comes to you. Don't ask the dog to “come” when you are going to do something the dog doesn't like – for example: giving medicine. You want the dog to relate the word “come” to something good that happens all the time.

Teach the dog “off” – when it is jumping on you, when it is on the furniture and not supposed to be, when it is on the kitchen counter, jumping up on the fence – whenever you want it to get off what it is on. “Down” is another command to teach – for the dog to lie down on its bed, on the floor, wherever you want the dog to “down”. Do not confuse the “off” and the “down” command.

Next use the “wait” command – excellent for when opening the door of the house and for when the dog is in the car and you want him / her to remain in the car when you open the door until you get hold of the lead. This command is also used for having him / her “wait” until you tell it to go to its dish for dinner and for leaving the dog and then calling him / her to “come” to you.

Teach the dog to “stay” but remember not to use the “come” command after telling the dog to “stay”. When asking the dog to “stay” you must return to your dog before releasing it.

Next I like to teach “drop it” and “leave it” – in case the dog picks up something he / she should not have (or goes for a snake or something in the yard). “Drop it” means let go of it and “Leave it” means do not touch it again as I am going to put my hand there and pick it up. “Leave it” is also used for walking by smaller dogs – cats and other animals you do not want the dog to approach.

A well trained dog is a magnificent creature. Train yours and it will make for a happier owner and a more contented dog as he / she will know what you expect from him / her and will know how to please you. And that is what your dog lives for – just to please his / her owner. (Copyright – Barbara Masi)