

Off Leash Class Goals

By

Beatrice Pludow

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The goals of this class are: To teach our dogs that the ability to enjoy the freedom of exploration of an environment, new or already experienced, is controlled by paying attention, very close attention, to the human that brought them to the environment in the first place! To enjoy a romp, run, or tumble with other dogs, to chase a ball or sniff a bush, to watch wildlife or chase it up a tree or down a hole is only allowed if that human has released them to do so; To have self control when greeting other dogs and humans and to learn how to greet them in a manner that is acceptable to humans and other dogs. This self control must be learned. It allows the well educated dog to enjoy being a dog without aggression or overt dominance in a new environment.

The education of the human to learn the body language of their dog so they can communicate effectively and act on proper or acceptable behavior before it becomes unacceptable. To reinforce acceptable behavior so it becomes a habit in the dog. This is a big challenge to most humans who are more likely to try to only Stop behavior they are not happy with! For the most part, dogs will actually be doing something we humans really want, before they do what we don't want! For example, an uneducated dog will LOOK at a bird before they decide to chase it down, or LOOK at another dog before they decide that dog should be moved out of the perceived space they have decided is theirs! LOOKING is acceptable and needs to be immediately reinforced, before it changes to a chase or other unacceptable behavior.

This understanding of dog behavior is often left out of some training programs, and therefore the dog's natural inclination to predatory or impulsive behavior is met with an equally, sometimes not so equally, forceful punishment that sometimes works, but for the most part teaches the dog nothing except that it is dangerous to try to get what it wants when the owner has control with say, a leash and collar or some other dangerous control. When the owner understands how dogs behave and how to "Positively Reinforce" acceptable behavior, (without force or Positive Punishment, see document on terms of learning theory) they can create a new habit of behavior that is more acceptable. Much of what we are working on is going against the dogs' natural inclination that humans have developed in the first place! A terrier, for instance, is bred to dispatch small fast moving ground dwelling animals, anything that moves fast is going to initiate the dogs predatory gene to CHASE it down. So if you have a dog like this you need to understand the dogs' motivation and look for clues that will help you change, as much as you can, that behavior. If you have a herding breed, the behavior is similar but maybe not as aggressive. It will look a little different and the motivation will be less aggressive but just as compulsive.

So, you as owners need to know what motivates your dogs behavior, how it looks and then if it doesn't work for you on a regular basis in new environments, must **MUST**, be able to catch behavior and reinforce it **BEFORE** the dog becomes out of control. Of course management plays a big part in helping to control behavior you don't want the dog to practice.

I hope to help you teach your dogs the rules and habits you approve of in the world you want to share with your dog.

Here are specific behaviors we will be working on;

1. "Name", dog must respond to its name by looking at you every time you call its name.
2. "Here" or "Come" means to return to you **NOW** close enough to touch a collar and/or the dog sits between your feet! No matter what is happening in the environment.
3. "Wait" means **STOP** where you are until released
4. "Down" means Put your chest on the ground until released.
5. "Sit" means butt on the ground until released.
6. "Leave It" means don't look at it, forget about it.
7. "Say Hello" means touch that humans hand and return to me. Or touch the dog and return to me.
8. "Lets Go" means follow me now we are going this way.
9. "OK or YES" means do what you want for the moment you are released.
10. "Heehaw!" Or some other happy expletive means Keep Going or Coming, a party is happening over here with me!!!!
11. "NO! or Hey Hey" (growlie voice)" What you are doing is **NOT** an **OPTION** , you will lose your **FREEDOM** or the ability to earn reinforcement.

Bea Pludow, CPDT

Canine Behavior Specialist

619-938-2918

HYPERLINK "mailto:Bea@K9sbehave.com" Bea@K9sbehave.com

HYPERLINK "http://www.k9sbehave.com/" www.K9sBehave.com

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