

If none of these techniques works, consult a dog behavior specialist or experienced trainer to determine if there is some problem that needs to be addressed. (Remember: Always choose an experienced professional who uses positive reinforcement training.) Talk to your veterinarian to rule out any underlying medical issues that may be affecting your dog's behavior.

Luring to Sit

Since *sit* is the most fundamental dog training cue, let's begin with that. Your dog will learn many other basic behaviors—such as *come*, *stay*, *down*, and *standing pose*—from the sit position. You should think of *sit* as your dog's ready position. If this were military training, *sit* would be like standing at attention. If this were a ballet studio, *sit* would be first position. My dog Brieo, foster dog Boz, and all dogs that board with me are required to sit for *everything* from the moment they get up in the morning to the moment they go to sleep at night. They sit when I open or close doors, when I come home and greet them, at mealtime, when it's time to go on a walk, when they get in and out of the car, and before and after playtime and training. Having your dog sit for everything emphasizes that you are your dog's benevolent leader, and that he takes his direction from you. Your dog will also learn that sitting is how he says “please,” for which he is often rewarded with a treat. I don't like to anthropomorphize dogs, but in this case it's instructive to put words in your dog's mouth. “When I sit, the food bowl appears and I get to eat,” he might say, or “When I sit, the door opens and we go for a walk.”

As you teach your dog to sit, use only the lure at this stage, and don't say anything at all, like “sit” or “sit, Brieo.” This may be challenging at first, because language is, of course, the primary tool we humans use to communicate. But the natural canine orientation is not verbal, it's visual. Verbal cues will just sound like noise to your dog and will get in the way of his acquiring the lure concept. You will be tempted! But, for the time being, your focus is on getting your dog used to following the motion of the lure. Also, if you have a rehomed dog that already understands verbal cues, I want you to stop using them, and retrain him, starting by luring with your hand signals. This will encourage him to watch you. I want your dog's attention focused on you while he is acquiring each new skill. In later lessons, we will add the verbal cues (a process we call naming the behavior).

1 LURE HIM TO YOU To begin, hold a lure in your fingertips. Touch the treat to your dog's nose and let him sniff it, as in the basic luring exercise (page 66).



1.

2 RAISE THE LURE Now raise the lure slowly, straight up above his head. When his head begins to tilt up, continue slowly raising the lure. As he continues to follow the lure, his head will tilt up and his rump will lower to the floor. It's simple physics. The moment his rump touches the floor, say “good” as you feed him the treat and pet his collar with your other hand. Give him five seconds of joyful verbal and physical praise. I typically say “What a good puppy, good Brieo, what a good dog.” I want your dog focused on you and, ideally, staring at you. You're also teaching him to make eye contact with you, which will further strengthen your bond and keep him highly focused on you. If he seems distracted, increase your enthusiasm: You need to be the most interesting thing in the world to your dog.



2.

Some dogs will get this cue right away. Not so for others. If your dog seems to have trouble figuring out what you're asking him to do and won't sit for you even after several training sessions, you want to dissect the whole action into smaller parts. We call this breaking down a cue, or rewarding for the smallest successes, even for simply lifting his head. If his nose goes up in the air, treat him. Little by little, get your dog to move his nose a half inch higher on each subsequent repetition. Once you get his nose pointing toward the sky, his rump will automatically start to lower. Treat him as his rump starts to