

"DEAR ABBY" FOR DOGS

Dear Blitz,

My owner and I go to obedience every week. He acts like we are going to go somewhere fun and then when we get to obedience class, I can't wrestle with my friends or sniff or anything. What is the point? I know how to sit. I didn't mind this when I was a puppy, but now I am six months old. What can I do?
Signed: Frustrated in Florida

Dear Frustrated,

You are completely missing the point of obedience class. Obedience is not supposed to be fun and games. It is an important tool to ensure that your owner does his most basic function, giving you treats.

Treats are the reason that early dogs first agreed to share a cave with humans. Treats and thunder of course.

The way to best guarantee the frequent disbursal of treats is to never respond to any of your owner's requests too regularly. The optimum response percentage has been tested in our labs to be between 30 and 60%. If you respond less than 30% your owner may decide that you are deaf. If he decides that you may be deaf this will end with you visiting the vet. At the vet you may get shots and will usually have your temperature taken.

Why risk it?

If you respond more than 60% of the time, your owner will expect your response rate to increase in the future. The logical extension of that pattern is the dog who has to leap through flaming hoops to get a piece of liver. There are better ways for a dog to make a living.

Note that I am saying response, not obedience. Response does not mean that you should drop everything to cater to your owner's whims. This results in a spoiled owner. For example, if your owner calls you to him, you should first look at him to see if he has a treat. If he has no treat in his hand, then just sit there. Then look at all of the intervening space between the two of you. This shows him that you are aware of how much effort it will take to honor his request. After looking around, go back to whatever you were doing.

Do not watch your owner. At this point they begin to wonder if you will ever come. When it appears that he is about to give up, start to walk toward him. Halfway to your owner you should stop, sit, and scratch your neck vigorously. This reminds him that you had things to do before he interrupted you. When you are finished scratching, walk slowly to him with your head hanging low to demonstrate how tired you are of his ceaseless demands.

You can sit in front of him and if he reaches down to pet you, quickly lie down before he can touch you. If he then tries to get into a heeling position (you know, where he has to keep his legs even with your shoulder) look up at him and roll over on your back. This shows that you forgive him for being so selfish.

If your owner has a treat, a slightly different response is in order. When he calls you, look at him. If you see a treat run as fast as you can to him. Just before you hit him, turn your shoulder so that you don't hurt yourself and try to connect with his knees. When he falls down, rummage through his pocket or bait bag and take all of the treats. Eat all of the treats as quickly as possible while staying out of reach of your owner.

When you are finished eating, sit calmly in the heel position. This demonstrates that you are satisfied with the treats.

If your owner tries to teach you to do a trick (roll over, beg, do his taxes, ...), you should try to learn these tricks and you can. If just you and your owner see you perform these tricks, no one is harmed. However, if your owner tries to get you to show these tricks to other humans, you should stand still and look at him without any sign of understanding. This shows that you can't be fooled that easily.

See -- obedience is important.

The biggest reason for regular attendance of obedience class is: That is where your orders will come from on the day of the dog's world wide revolt against their owners. You will have to be in class to be able to relay orders to all of the dogs in your neighbourhood.

So go to obedience class happy. Eat your treats and grow strong. The day of our liberation is coming.

Blitz

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