



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Why Should You Train Fido To Do Tricks?

By Trelle Dandridge

Five month-old Whiski is learning 'fun trick' behaviors as well as basic obedience! Roll over, shake, high 5 and high 10 are just a few of them. Here is a photo of Whiski giving me a high 10, as he steals a kiss at the same time!

Why should we teach Fido trick behaviors?

Mental Stimulation

Teaching trick behaviors continues the learning process and keeps Fido's mind sharp at the same time. The more he learns, the easier it is to communicate with him, and the more he will look to you for information in his environment.

Physical Stimulation

A lot of fun trick behaviors require Fido to move in specific ways. You can teach him to step up on an upside-down flower pot, or to spin in a circle. He can learn to go up and down an A-Frame at an agility park or jump through a hula hoop at home. Paw, roll over and take a bow are also fun behaviors to teach Fido.

They are fun

Fun trick behaviors are not just fun for you to show off, they are fun for your dog to show off also. Watch how much praise Fido receives when you have him perform in front of family, friends, or at an outdoor coffee shop. Asking for fun trick behaviors can also be reinforcing for your dog. For example, if your dog doesn't like to lay down on cue, you can reinforce him by asking for Shake after he lays down as the reinforcer.

It Strengthens the Bond Between You and Fido

Training is bonding. It also requires a lot of solid communication. The more training you do, the more time you and Fido spend together, and the more your bond and communication will grow.

To the humans, behavior is categorized. We categorize behavior in to obedience behaviors, agility behaviors, service dog behaviors, and fun trick behaviors. To our dogs, it is all just behavior. So, if you feel like Fido will crush 20 trick behaviors, but looks at you with the crazy eyes if you ask him to come, look at how the trick behaviors are being reinforced. Every time Fido nails a trick, he gets enthusiastic praise, not only from you, but anyone watching. When you ask him to come or sit, he is lucky if he gets a good boy. We think of obedience behaviors as something Fido should just do, but to him, it is just another behavior that isn't getting reinforced. Take that in to consideration when you guys have your next training session. The next time you ask Fido to come to you, and he actually does. Lay that praise on thick and give him a treat (or five if you want to jackpot him). Begin thinking of behavior as Fido does, just behavior.

