

In case you train alone: A sample CGC session training plan

As you know, there are many different approaches to teach a dog to perform desired behaviors. If possible, attending training sessions with a knowledgeable trainer, other dogs and people is desirable; however, our schedules don't always allow for the best case scenario. The ideas provided below are in case you aren't able to train in a training class and you would like to pursue the CGC title.

The most commonly asked question regarding dog training is, "How long will it take for my dog to be ready?"....and the answer is...*It depends*. "It depends" on many factors such as your dog's current level of "training", your skill as a trainer, your dog's desire to train, the time you can commit to training, etc...

In the pages below, we will offer an outline based on the skills necessary for the CGC test. We will assume that your goal is to be ready for the CGC test at our April 2013 specialty. We believe that most people and their canine partner will be ready to take the CGC in April 2013 if you practice these skills 5 times a week and are consistent with your sessions.

Skills for CGC Test

Item 1: Accepting a Friendly Stranger

Item 2: Sitting Politely for Petting

Item 3: Appearance and Grooming

Item 4: Out For a Walk

Item 5: Walking Through a Crowd

Item 6: Sit and Down on Command/ Staying in Place

Item 7: Coming When Called

Item 8: Reaction to Another Dog

Item 9: Reaction to Distractions

Item 10: Supervised Separation

Recommended Training Plan

TRAINING SET ONE:

Your first sessions should focus on the skills: Walking on a loose lead and learning how to sit.

Sit: If your dog doesn't know how to sit, you may want to teach the sit in the following fashion: Start in an area with limited distractions that your dog knows well. Place your dog on a leash. Hold a treat in your hand between your thumb and your index and middle fingers. Hold that treat in front of the dog's nose. Slowly lift the treat above your dog's head and the dog will look up. As the dog looks up, continue to keep the cookie slightly out of her reach. As your dog continues to look up, she should sit. As soon as her bottom touches the floor, give her the cookie and praise her. Note: don't say sit yet. Once the dog has mastered the "cue" of you luring them with the cookie, then you may add the command for sit. Once the dog sits there, begin to change the environment to the front yard, drive way, dog class...etc.

Walking on a Loose Lead: If your dog doesn't walk on a loose lead, you may want to teach this skill by breaking it up into two main parts. Part One: Stand beside you without pulling on the leash & Part Two: Moving with you without pulling on the leash.

Part One: You may wish to have some treats (or kibble) handy for teaching this skill. Stand with your dog on leash in a familiar area. When the dog stands without pulling near enough that you can touch the dog's head without moving, then you may praise the dog and give her a treat. If she pulls on the leash or is not paying attention to you, say nothing and wait her out. As soon as she looks at you and is not pulling praise her and give her a treat. Note: if the dog pulls on the leash, don't say anything. Wait until the dog releases the tension on the leash and then praise.

Part Two: Moving with a loose leash. You may wish to have some treats (or kibble) handy for teaching this skill. You will want to have the dog on a leash and in a familiar area. Say the dog's name and your walk command. If the dog walks beside you without pulling, for one or two steps, stop and praise the dog. Gradually work up from one step to 10-15 steps on loose leash walking with limited distractions.



Don't progress until your dog will sit in an area with limited distractions 75% and you can walk 10 steps without the dog pulling on the leash.

TRAINING SET TWO:

In your second set of training sessions, you should continue the focus on the sit and the walk on the loose lead....and add in the following behaviors: allowing the dog's ears, feet and body to be touched, sit/stay and down.

Down: If your dog doesn't know how to down, you may want to teach this skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on leash and in a sit. Hold a treat between your thumb, index and middle fingers with your palm facing the floor. With the dog in a sit, take the treat and move it down the dog's body from the nose to the underside of their belly. This action will cause the dog's nose to move towards the floor and then the dog will scoot back into a down—or—to pop her hind end up. If your dog pops her hind end up try the next approach. Instead of pulling the treat from the nose to the underside of the body, pull the treat from the nose straight down to the floor and then across the floor away from the dog. This will cause the dog's nose to drop towards the floor and she will lower herself toward the floor and fold forward into a down.

Stay: If your dog doesn't know how to stay, you may want to introduce the skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on leash and in an area free of distractions. Ask your dog to sit or down. Using a hand signal (such as placing your hand in front of your dog's face or swinging your hand from right to left in front of the dog) tell the dog to stay and take one step **LATERALLY** away from the dog. If the dog doesn't move, go back to the dog and praise the dog. If the dog does move, put the dog back into the position it was in and don't take a step away, but move in place....bounce up or down, move your hand, bend your knees....and then praise the dog if she doesn't move. Work up to one step forward, laterally and behind the dog before adding more distance. If the dog moves, then place the dog back in the position it was in before you left it and try again.



Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks:

- Sit/Stay as you take 10 forward steps AND return to the dog
- Down 75% of the time on command
- Walk on a loose lead in familiar places

TRAINING SET THREE:

In your third set of training sessions, you should continue the focus on the behaviors that you have worked on previously and add coming when called.

Coming when called: If your dog doesn't know how to come—each and every time you call her—you may want to teach the skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on a leash (between 6 and 15 feet long) and in an area free of distractions. Ask your dog to sit and stay. Walk to the end of the leash and say your dog's name and using a high pitch voice tell the dog to come. You may want to step backwards until your dog reaches you. When the dog arrives to you praise the dog lavishly. You may want to use the dog's entire breakfast when teaching this skill.

Note: It is important to NOT punish the dog when you call it back to you. If the dog doesn't come to you, use the leash and “reel” her to you while saying “come”. Praise her when she reaches you and try again.



Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks:

- Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog
- Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time
- Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 15-20 feet

TRAINING SET FOUR:

By this session –the fourth training session— you and your dog have been introduced to all the skills tested in a CGC test. However, you are likely not ready yet. Over the next few weeks, you will need to focus on adding distractions and practicing in different areas.

It is at this point in most training programs that owners wish to have tee-shirts made that “say”.....but my dog does it perfectly at home! Unlike people, dogs don't appear to be able to generalize their skills in new areas without practice. So don't be disheartened if your dog will sit and stay perfectly at your house or in your yard and then acts like you haven't ever taught her anything when you try this skill at our club meeting.



Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks well in unfamiliar areas with distractions. Please make sure your dog is on a leash during these exercises. If you don't have one long leash, consider making a longer leash out of a few shorter ones. Additionally, you may wish to return to treating/praising the dog liberally during the next few training sessions.

- Sit on command 90% of the time
- Down on command 90% of the time
- Sit/Stay as you take 10 forward steps AND return to the dog 75% of the time
- Down/Stay as you take 5 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time
- Loose leash walking with distractions
- Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 5-10 feet

TRAINING SET FIVE:

During this session, you will want to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training. During these sessions, you will practice the supervised separation, greeting while seated, and allowing the dog to be touched by someone other than you.

For the supervised separation, you will want your friend to hold your dog on leash and you will want to walk away from the dog. For your first few sessions, you will want to stay in sight of the dog. Over time, you will build up more distance and increase the duration of these sessions. The goal for the test is a 3 minute supervised separation with you out of sight.



Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks with distractions in an unfamiliar area. Don't be afraid to treat and praise liberally during these sessions.

- Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog
- Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time
- Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 15-20 feet
- Supervised Separation (with you in sight) for 90 seconds
- Dog should perform the first two exercises—Greeting a Friendly Stranger and Sitting for Petting—according to the CGC guidelines
- Loose leash walking with distractions

TRAINING SET SIX:

During this session, you will want to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training. During these sessions, you will pick the areas where you and your dog need extra practice and focus on those skills.



Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks with distractions in an unfamiliar area. Don't be afraid to treat and praise liberally during these sessions.

- Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog 90% of the time
- Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 90% of the time
- Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 20 feet
- Supervised Separation (with you in sight) for 3 minutes and with you out of sight for 30 seconds
- Loose leash walking with distractions—MUST INCLUDE—other dogs.

TRAINING SET SEVEN:

During this session, you will want to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training. During these sessions, you will pick the areas where you and your dog need extra practice and focus on those skills. By this point in the training program, you should feel confident that your dog is able to successfully complete each of the activities in the CGC test.

However, as well all know....getting here doesn't mean you are done. You will need to continue practicing and training until the CGC test....but the good news is that you can slow down your training. You should focus on practicing in areas where you have distractions—especially other dogs.

As you start to prepare for our CGC test, here are a few items you might want to consider. The test at our Specialty Show will likely be outside on grass and in the area where the Obedience and Rally tests are held. It is a fully fenced in area with traffic on one side and a parking lot on the other. There will likely be dogs walking by on leash while you are testing.