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Family Friendly Dog Training

A Six-Week Program for You and Your Dog

PMC

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INTRODUCTION

"Lassie! Run down to the barn and get Timmy! Not the small barn, the big one on the north side! And hurry—there's a storm coming!"

If you aren't old enough to remember watching Lassie the wonder dog on television, you've at least heard of her—the beautiful Rough-coated Collie who did everything she was asked, seemingly without any training whatsoever. Lassie always came when called, never jumped up on Aunt Polly, and never had an accident in the house. Ah, Lassie—if only all dogs arrived just like her: automatically understanding English, able to read our minds, and most importantly, always willing to do what we ask, simply because we ask it.

LASSIE WAS AN ACTOR As we all know, Lassie wasn't really a family pet, and her behavior can't be compared to that of our own dogs. The shiny-eyed, four-legged fuzzballs at our feet didn't come with software programs that guarantee obedience, nor did they come with a television director who could make any dog look like a star. We may think of dogs as members of our family, but they aren't short, furry people and they often have no understanding of what we want. Besides, even if they were furry people—how many people do you know who do everything you ask?!

Think of our expectations on dogs from their perspective: Walk quietly down the sidewalk shoulder-to-shoulder with my human? *What? We dogs don't walk together like that, that's just silly.* Ignore a squirrel who dashes across the trail in front of me? *Why on earth would I do that?* Sit down when visitors come to the door? *How rude! Polite dogs greet one another by licking another's mouth, so a good dog should jump up to kiss those inconveniently placed muzzles looming high above them.*

Because dogs don't inherently understand the rules of human societies, and because we expect so much of them, it is up to us to teach them manners, to do what we ask when we ask it, and most importantly, that it's fun to pay attention to us. If you have a dog, that's a good summary of your job description: helping your dog understand what you expect of him, and doing it in such a way that it's fun and rewarding for both of you.

And that brings up the animal at the other end of the leash—you. You didn't come pre-programmed either, and there's no reason you should know how to train dogs just because you love them. If you're a novice, training a dog is a bit like getting on an untrained horse, having never ridden yourself. No wonder things don't always go

smoothly. You weren't born knowing how to train a dog anymore than you were born knowing how to play basketball, so don't be hard on yourself if, at times, the learning curve feels a bit steep. Just like a new sport, dog training takes knowledge, practice and a good coach.

The good news is that dog training isn't rocket science, and just a little bit of practice can go a long way toward creating a joyful, loving relationship with your dog. Happy, well-mannered dogs have owners who are clear and consistent and who use patience and knowledge to teach dogs to behave. The goal of this book is to teach dog lovers how to combine humane, effective training methods with an understanding of dog behavior to create dogs who listen and respond, even when a squirrel dashes across their path. The chapters that follow will help you teach your dog the basics, like sit, lie down, coming when called, and staying when asked, but we hope they do more than that. Our ultimate goal is to help you expand your ability to connect with your best friend in a way that will enrich your relationship for years to come.

This manual is structured around six weeks of training, and is designed to either accompany training classes or to be used on its own. Each chapter follows one week of training, and includes a topic of general interest at the beginning and each week's exercises at the end. The book is designed for you to read one chapter a week, and work on the exercises within it one week at a time. However, don't hesitate to use it in any way you choose—you could read all the general topics in one sitting, or just follow through with one exercise, like coming when called, week to week. Of course, your dog won't be fully trained after just six weeks, but you'll have the tools you need to continue working on the exercises that are important to you. Whether you're involved in a class or home schooling, you'll get the most out of this book if you practice the exercises in short sessions scattered throughout the day, be sure to give your dog lots and lots of treats and praise for doing the right thing (especially early in training), and always be aware of whether your dog is capable of doing what you ask. You'll have a much better behaved dog in the long run if you set her up to "win," rather than creating situations in which she'll fail and become frustrated. Of course, no book can cover everything there is to know about dog training and behavior, but Aimee and I have done our best to summarize what we think is most important, in a format accessible for people who love their dogs—but who can't quit their day jobs and become professional trainers.

So congratulations—by picking up this training manual, you and your dog are embarking on a journey together, an adventure we hope will bring happiness to both of you for many years to come.