

*An Owner's Manual for:*

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THE FIVE COMMANDS  
EVERY DOG SHOULD KNOW

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*by the*  
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



## **ABOUT THIS SERIES**

At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can't be treated like a car or an appliance, but we've named this series "An Owner's Manual" because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!



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We probably don't need to tell you which commands every well-behaved dog should be able to perform. Or do we? It's OK, we get it.

The "Basic 5" commands will give your puppy a strong foundation for future training. They are: **Come, Heel, Sit, Stay, and Down**



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Before we call your dog in, a word about your approach. How your dog feels during training will mean the difference between success and frustration. Is he afraid of you? Eager to play this fun new game? Hesitant or happy? Always be positive: Never scold or punish him during training sessions. All you'll do is make him want to avoid you. Keeping it fun is the key! Now we're ready for your buddy.



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## COME

This command could save your dog's life. Start indoors in a place without distractions. Squat down, open your arms, say "Come," then praise him as soon as he starts moving toward you. Use an enthusiastic tone so that coming to you seems like the most exciting thing he could possibly do.

Don't grab for the pup when he gets near you. Let him walk up close, then reach out and gently rub his chest, praising him the whole time. You may also give him a treat.



*Sealyham Terrier/Mary Bloom ©AKC*



If your puppy doesn't come to you, go slowly to him, attach his leash, then guide him to the spot where you called him. Praise him the entire time you're leading him. This shows him that he has to obey, but that you're not angry with him.



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## HEEL

Some trainers prefer to say “Let’s go” or “Forward” when they train this easy way of walking together. Whatever command you choose, always use the same word.

Start with your dog standing next to you. Hold his leash in your left hand and a squeaky toy in your right. Place your right arm across the front of your body so the toy is above and slightly in front of his head. Encourage him to look up at the toy as you give the command and step forward with confidence. Your puppy should step forward with you as he follows the toy.



*Weimaraner/Mary Bloom ©AKC*



Keep his attention on the toy as you walk forward together. If he gets distracted, squeak the toy, get his attention, and praise him. After your puppy has given you about 20 seconds of attention, give him the toy and play with him a bit, then try walking again. Gradually increase the time you walk together during your training sessions, then slowly stop using the toy. Eventually your dog will walk happily at your side whenever he's on his leash.



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## SIT

There are two different ways to show your pal what “Sit” means.

### METHOD #1

Get down in front of your puppy, holding a treat. Put it right in front of his nose, then say “Sit” as you slowly lift the treat above his head. He will probably sit as he lifts his head to nibble at it. If he backs up instead, put your other hand on his rump and gently guide him down into a sitting position the first few times. Be sure to praise him—and give him the treat—as soon as he is sitting, even if he needed help.



*Cavalier King Charles Spaniel/Mary Bloom ©AKC*



## **METHOD #2**

Squat down next to the pup, place one hand on his chest and the other just behind his rear legs. Say “Sit” as you apply gentle upward pressure to his chest and against his rear knees, guiding him into a sitting position. As soon as he is sitting, reward him!



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## STAY

A puppy who knows the “Stay” command will remain sitting until you let him get up by giving him the “release word.” (Something like “OK!” or “Go.”)

Begin with your dog sitting by your left side. Keep the leash loose while you pivot around to face him. Say “Stay” while holding the open palm of your hand in front of his face. Take a step or two away from your puppy, keeping the leash loose. After a few seconds step back to him, putting one foot on the leash—don’t pull it too tight, just enough to keep him from jumping up. Give your release word, then reward and praise him.



Weimaraner/ Mary Bloom ©AKC



If your puppy gets up before you release him, just walk back calmly without saying anything. Use your hands to put him back into the sit position, then give the open-palm hand signal for “Stay” and walk away again. Don’t repeat the oral command; it’s important that he learns to respond immediately to a single verbal command.

You will gradually increase the distance between you. You can also increase the time he remains in the stay: Three minutes is a good goal to work toward. If your puppy repeatedly breaks the stay, you’re going too fast.



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## DOWN

Begin with him sitting next to you on your left. Kneel down and place your left hand on his shoulders. Put your right hand just behind his front legs. Say “Down” while pressing gently on the puppy’s shoulders; at the same time, scoop his front legs out until he is lying down. Stroke his back for a few seconds to encourage him to relax and stay in that position. Then praise and reward him.

Use your release word, let him get up, and praise him again. Put him back into a sit, then repeat the down command.



Bull Terrier/Mary Bloom ©AKC



If your puppy is extremely shy or fearful, he may freeze in place during this exercise. If he is very playful, he may squirm and not want to lie down. In either case, try this method: Begin as before, kneeling beside your sitting puppy. Put your left hand on his shoulders while holding a treat in your right hand in front of his face. Say “Down” and slowly lower the treat straight down to the floor between the dog’s paws, then slowly pull it straight out and away from him. (Imagine making an “L” shape.) Once he’s down, praise him and give him the treat.



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## AND REMEMBER ...

- Train your puppy with mild oral correction and lots of praise and rewards.
- Keep training sessions short and fun. End each session on a positive note.
- The “Basic 5” commands will give your puppy a strong foundation for any future training.



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WHO AND WHAT WE ARE:

*The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.*



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*But the AKC is so much more! Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families. We:*

- Created the [AKC Humane Fund](#), which supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.
- Offer the [Canine Good Citizen®](#) program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 725,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program's merit and importance.
- Founded [AKC Reunite](#), which has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.
- Created the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#), which funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over \$24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)
- Conduct thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.
- Offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.
- Support one of the world's largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the [AKC Museum of the Dog](#), and we have the world's largest [dog library](#) at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.



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### THANK YOU FOR READING!

*We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner's Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.*



5 TRICKS TO SHOW OFF



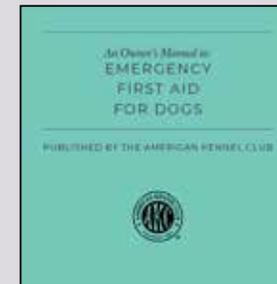
AGILITY FOR BEGINNERS



CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



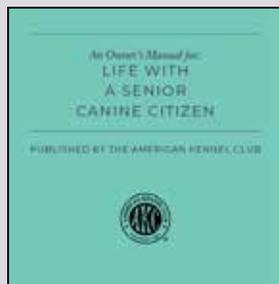
CANINE GOOD CITIZEN



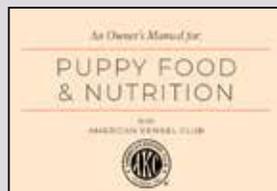
FIRST AID FOR DOGS



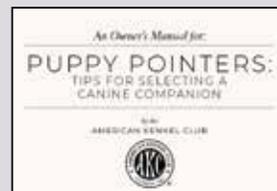
HOW TO CRATE TRAIN YOUR DOG



LIFE WITH A SENIOR DOG



PUPPY NUTRITION



SELECTING A PUPPY



5 BASIC COMMANDS



RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNER TIPS



WHY DOES MY DOG DO THAT?



WHAT'S HE THINKING?



PUPPY SOCIALIZATION