



Dog Training — the Basic Steps

Part II

Last month I explained how a dog should be allowed to free walk on the leash for most of the time during its daily walk, also, how the first steps in heelwork should be taught in order to get the dog's respect. Quite simply it was shown how to go forward, walk at heel on a slack leash and to sit several times. The route was about eighty to ninety metres in a straight line. Finally, the dog was dismissed so that it could return to free walking again.

There are a number of basic principles in dog training. I have dealt with two already, namely, always train your dog on the leash, and walk in a long straight line down the centre of a footpath. The next principle handlers should learn, when teaching a dog any exercise, has four main parts to it which must be carried out in this order:

1. **Command.**
2. **Action** carried out by the handler.
3. **Response** made by the dog.
4. **Praise** on the point of response.

A very easy way to remember this sequence is to take the first letter of each key word and it spells **CARP**, the fish. When coming to a halt in heelwork, give the command "Sit", and guide the dog's hindquarters downwards and slightly forwards, whilst holding the clip end of the leash at 90 degrees above its head. As soon as the dog responds, praise immediately and sincerely.

Not only can this principle be given when teaching a dog any exercise, it can also be used when correcting the dog for any unwanted behaviour. For example, if the dog jumped up at someone, give the word of reproof, like "Down" or "Get off", and carry out the appropriate action by seizing the clip end of the leash to jerk downwards and let go of it. The dog will respond by just standing there, whereupon praise should be given slowly and quietly because it has responded favourably. So it is rather good that we can apply this four point principle when teaching a dog an exercise, or correcting it for any unacceptable behaviour. It is quite simple. However, if the dog is not on a leash, substitute the leash jerk correction by taking the dog by the scruff of its neck and give a quick downward shake and let go. This can be done with one hand on puppies or small dogs; use two hands each side of the neck with larger dogs.

The right-about turn

Having gained much respect from the dog in straight forward heelwork, it is now time to introduce turns whereby even more respect and attention is gained. Consequently, the dog will concentrate even better. It is best to start with the right-about turn. In the early lessons you learned how to hold the handle of the leash in the right hand, plus one other

point down the leash in the right hand. You will notice that there are three pieces of leash hanging down from your right hand. Whilst walking in a straight line with your dog at heel, take hold of all three pieces in one grasp with your left hand (thumb and first finger facing the sky). Remove your right hand from the two loops of leash. Put both hands down close to your legs at the same height as your dog's head is above the ground.

Pat your right leg a few times as you say in a very *interesting* tone of voice, "Millie, heel!" Keep your eyes constantly on the dog as you pick your feet up on the spot to turn 180 degrees to the right. Immediately the dog turns its head in response, praise in a very *pleasing* tone, "Good dog!" As soon as you have turned the 180 degrees, walk along the same track you walked on prior to the right-about turn. With the turn completed return your right hand *into* the two loops of leash and let go of the three bits of leash with your left hand.

When carrying out this right-about turn, if your dog is distracted and doesn't respond to your voice and patting noise on your right leg, give the leash a quick, short, *horizontal* jerk with your left hand and immediately slacken the one foot piece of leash, between your left hand and the dog's collar. This is very important. If the leash is kept taut, even for a few seconds, the dog will pull outwards.

The right turn

The same procedure should be carried out when teaching a right turn. The only difference is that it is half the angle, 90 degrees instead of 180 degrees. However, in order to get the best attention from your dog, pivot sharply to the right with both feet together, then proceed. This captures the dog's attention very well. If you turned gradually in a quarter of a circle to the right, you would not get the full attention of your dog.

The left turn

In one respect the left turn is easier than the right-about and right turns, because the leash doesn't have to be transferred from one hand to the other and back again—you carry it in the right hand all the time. When you want to turn left, take hold of the clip part of the leash in your left hand with thumb on the top, say, "Heel" quickly (without the dog's name) and give a quick horizontal jerk back, along the surface of the dog's back, enough to stop the dog proceeding any further forward. As the dog stops in that fraction of a second, spin on the ball of your left foot to the left and the dog, seeing your right foot come across, will automatically turn its head to the left and go with you. Praise on response, "Good dog!"

Many handlers ask when they should or should not use the dog's name with a command. A basic rule to follow is that when you teach a stationary exercise, like: sit, stand, drop and stay in any of those three positions, only use the actual word of command. If the command was preceded with the dog's name, "Millie, heel", on hearing her name she is likely to turn towards the handler and in consequence sit across in front of the handler's feet. But with movement exercises, like: the initial command to heel forward, the right-about turn, the right turn and recall, most certainly use the dog's name, "Millie, heel" or "Millie, come" in the early days of training to capture her attention. Notice that the dog's

name is omitted with the left turn. This is because the dog is in a stationary position for that fraction of a second it is stopped. Interesting, isn't it!

Turns are very important in heelwork. The dog is learning more in watching where you are going, and you are getting more respect and attention from your dog. At the same time you are learning more about keeping your eyes on your dog, using the correct words of command and intonation of voice, learning how to hold and use the leash correctly, both your hands, your feet, how to prepare for each individual exercise, co-ordinate your voice, body movements, etc, and finally develop your correct timing, particularly in giving praise.

The stand

I think it is important to give advice here on this particular exercise, not only for handlers who are teaching basic obedience, but also for those who are showing dogs. With your dog walking at heel, put the clip part of the leash also into your right hand and have your left hand over the dog's body while you still walking along. Give the command, "Stand" in a quietly drawn out tone. In a fraction of a second after the your command, give a little backward, horizontal jerk on the leash, along the dog's right shoulder, simultaneously locking the stifle of the dog's left hind leg with your left hand. You will notice that your left fore arm will be against the left side of the dog's body, keeping your dog straight between your left arm and leg. Praise the dog on its response by quietly saying, "Good dog" and slowly and gently stroke it on the side of its face to keep it calm. Keep your eyes on your dog, (from nose to tail). If it attempts to sit, quickly lock its left hind back again, but not too much. When you first start teaching a dog this exercise, it is best to do three or four stands, a few metres apart, as you walk in a straight line —don't insert any turns, sits or drops. They will break the continuity and repetition of teaching the stand. Don't worry about giving a hand signal. That can be inserted later. You only have two hands, so use them accurately by physically showing your dog exactly what you want it to do.

Michael Tucker