

Spy Kids

Training New Behaviors, Part 2

By Nancy Gyes, photos by Marcy Mantell Photography



This month's article continues Sweep's training adventures during the period from just shy of 12 weeks to 14 weeks of age.

Angel or Tiger?

If you are following these articles while raising your own three- to four-month-old pup, you probably have a pretty good idea of what kind of pup you have. That will change with time as your dog matures physically, mentally, and *hormonally*, but you still should recognize your dog's particular behavioral tendencies.

Is your dog sweet and soft-tempered, and worries a bit in new environments? Or do you have maniac tugger with the food drive of a shark and the countenance of a tiger? Your focus will depend on the nature of your pup and differ for each set of personality traits. You may already need to have toy control with your tiger by introducing a release of the toy and a hard and fast rule regarding no puppy teeth making contact with your body. The soft pup will need to be encouraged and care should be taken not to intimidate or control him too much while teaching toy play. How you play with your pup will either start shaping a great relationship or have you tearing your hair out a few months from now.

You need to train the dog you have, not the dog that you want to have. If you do that you *will* have the dog you want. Consider if your prior experiences training dogs is coloring how you work with your new puppy. Do you have the "my *other* agility dog" syndrome? If your last agility dog had control issues with no stay and no recall, how is that affecting your training? You cannot use a cookie-cutter approach to training. If you had a dog that was overcautious and had no play drive, that will also influence your view of this pup. Just because you didn't have toy drive in your last dog does not mean that you should let this dog rule your life with his desire to dump toys in your lap or to grab them out of your hand when you hold them. You are not going to destroy this pup's toy drive just because you institute rules of play.

If you control the toy and the games your dog wants to play, you will be more in control of the dog. For example, you have a pup that likes to play with toys. He occasionally connects one of his teeth to your hand when tugging. If you have a real shark of a puppy you need to end the game momentarily when your pup touches you with his teeth and perhaps scream, "Ouch." Alternately, if you've been working hard to get you pup to tug with you and he finally grabs hold of the toy and his teeth touch you accidentally, swallow the scream and keep tugging. But that is *now*; once he is a good tugger you will need to change gears and think about control.

Toy Control 101

Teach your pup where you want him to grab the toy. I hold the toy in both hands at the edges and target Sweep to the center of the toy. I give the *Get It* (or *Take*, *Tug*, *Hold*, and so on), command every time I hold it out in front of me as well as when I toss the toy or move it to encourage tugging. Sweep has nice drive to a toy, and he will sit and wait to be given his release word and cued to *Get It*; but I could not guarantee in any environment that he would grab the toy on my command as our adult dogs do. Sweep retrieves for Jim almost 100% of the time in our home. If we are in the field or around people and activities, Sweep is on leash to insure he does pick up the toy when asked as well as bring it back. We can follow him on leash to the toy after it is thrown and move backward to encourage him to return. Once he has a lot of toy drive anytime/anywhere, we will add more control and a release command.





Current Objectives

We keep signs on the fridge with reminders of current objectives. Here is today's training poster and an explanation of our goals:

1. Car rides
2. Dremel
3. Restrained recalls
4. Handling games
5. Grab a pup



Car Rides

We live on top of a hill, with three miles of major curves to get down to our neighborhood village. Sweep got sick after a few adventures to town, and that caused a Pavlovian response to car rides. He started to salivate as soon as the car motor started, and then he refused to take cookies in the crate in the vehicle. We stopped going to town and started the following regimen.

We put him in his crate in the car and gave him a tasty meal and juicy bone that he ignored for the first few practices; then we took him out after a few minutes for a fun walk. That transitioned to turning the car on before he was put into the crate. Again he would not eat for a few sessions, so those times in the car were very short. Then we began turning the car on after he was in the crate, and eventually we drove the car 20', stopped, and got him out to play. At today's writing he has no reaction to driving slowly for a quarter mile in the car. At the end of the quarter mile Jim stops and gets him out for a walk and some tug games; then he drives the quarter mile back home again. I have ordered some holistic meds to ease car sickness and we will add that to the program when we receive them. The car ride training is at the top of our training list because socializing off the property cannot be started again until we get this solved, or we risk making it worse.

Dremel

Sweep is not yet fond of the Dremel tool that we want to use to trim his nails, but he gets fed cookies daily with the motor turned on and the Dremel held close to his body. He does get his nails clipped with regular nail scissors weekly and he is happy to allow us to do so.

Restrained Recalls

I hold Sweep across his chest or on leash, and Jim takes off running. Jim stops, turns, and calls. Sweep screams in excitement and flies across the yard to Jim, who plays with a toy or hands out multiple treats. Jim begins to praise Sweep the moment he drives away from me. When using food as a reward he gives out four or five cookies, one at a time, while he sneaks his hand under Sweep's collar. By the time the cookies are eaten, Jim has his hand in Sweep's collar. Sweep is dragging a leash during the recalls and I follow him to Jim's side where I pick up the leash. Then Jim runs and the game begins again.

Handling Games

Kiss your pup: Kiss your pup all over the face and reward him for kissing you back instead of nipping or growling. Teach him to kiss on command.



Rock-a-bye Baby: Carry your pup around like a little baby in your arms. Reward him with cookies and cooing and tickling his belly gently.

Lifting: Condition your pup to being lifted onto and off different surfaces. Pick your pup up, then set him down

and throw a toy or cookie. If he hates it, first pretend to lift him by putting one hand under the belly and the other between his front legs, say yes or praise, and then feed or play. Eventually lift him just a few inches from the ground, say something silly, then put him down and have a game of tug.

Kick a pup: Sit in a chair with your leashed pup on the floor; play tug or feed him cookies for hanging out with you. Gently move a foot toward him, then remove it and do the



same with the other foot. Do multiple sessions while playing or rewarding your dog for allowing you to actually push him from side to side with your feet and legs.

Tie 'Em Up: Tie your dog to something immovable, wall or fence or post. Reward him for hanging out and not panicking about being tied. Do not leave him unattended, and *never* tie him any obstacle like a chair that is not secured into the ground. Reward every few seconds at first, and then over time move farther and farther away from him, returning to reward with toy play or treats.

Beach Blanket Bingo: Get your pup to jump on a blankie or a big soft dog bed and then reinforce him for staying on while you gently pull his chosen chariot a few feet away.



Susan Garrett's "Smack da Baby Game": Open-palm "patting" of your dog's body while you play tug.

Bang It: Bang your hand on the floor, encouraging your pup to chase your hand. Switch to banging the opposite hand when your pup gets to your hand. Transition to banging a toy noisily on a hard floor surface while playing. Try to get your pup to grab the item being banged. Transition to using two different toys, with your dog moving to grab the toy that is making noise on the floor.

Never go above your dog's threshold and scare him with these games. Start with tiny actions or motions and find out what your dog will tolerate, what he thinks is cool, and what kinds of handling you'll need to condition carefully.



Grab a Pup

Sweep decided last week to take a step backward when I reached for him, which is not unusual for a pup this age. To condition him to enjoy it when we reach for him, I started by holding a cookie at my knee. I called his name to get him started, and as he reached for the cookie, I reached out for him while holding my hand like a claw just above his head. As he walked under my hand I marked it and let him eat the cookie. We've progressed to holding a hand out like a claw while he walks forward under it; I mark/reward and he gets cookies at my knee. The cookie is no longer visible; I hold it behind me until he comes forward and under my hand. Occasionally I take hold of the collar or lay my hand on the back of his head as he eats the treat. I remove my hand from his head or collar, then repeat a few more times. My friend Sandy calls her version of this game "London Bridge" because the pup is walking "under the bridge" of your hand to get a reward.





Daily Training for Household Manners

Besides the special training we are doing with Sweep, practicing door manners, ex-pen and crate training, walking on leash, grooming manners, and recalls are all part of Sweep's daily life.

Grooming

We brush Sweep almost daily. We place him on a grooming table or other high table for brushing and nail clipping. We condition him for visits to the vet by having friends pet, examine, and feed him while he is on a table.

Door Manners

Goal: When we approach a door and reach for the handle, Sweep should sit and wait while we open the door and go through ourselves. When I stop at the door, I wait for him to sit, then mark or praise and reward with a treat. I keep marking or praising him and feed multiple cookies while he remains in a sit; and I open the door, step out the door, then step back in to reward and release. I never say *Sit* or *Stay* at the door because I want him to learn to sit and wait without a command. His cue is that I am at a door reaching for a door handle. In the beginning I marked and rewarded any tendency toward not pulling or lunging at the door, and then I started waiting for him to sit. I fed him with

the treat presented high over his head so he was encouraged to drop his rear. I gave him multiple cookies while sitting, then called him out of position with his name while turning away from the door. Then I returned to practice the door approach again.

Once Sweep was sitting every time when he approached the door, we moved on to opening the door, stepping through the door, returning, stepping out again, and so on. Sweep is released to come through the door to us on his name so that we can release multiple dogs individually to go through a door or gate by saying their name. We always reward the dog for coming to us once he gets through the door. The name or release does not mean "head for the hills," but pass the door threshold and come to me. We also reward by playing tug after crossing the threshold. In the morning when he has to tinkle after all night in the crate we either carry him across the door threshold, or do one really fast sit and release.

Don't practice door manners when you *need* to go out the door with your pup to do something. Practice when you *don't* need to go anywhere. The same rules apply for all the gates your dog must go through in the course of a day.

Ex-pen and Crate Training

This week we started training Sweep to stay in a short, 18" high ex-pen. If he can learn not to jump out of that, then staying in one of the 36" ones we use at shows will be easy. He gets lots of clicks and treats for being in the pen, and specifically, he is rewarded for being at the back of the pen away from the gate. Sweep spends at least an hour each day in the ex-pen, when we are in the room to monitor his behavior. He has jumped

out of the pen a couple times, and we lifted him up and put him back in. Then we stayed close to reward him for keeping his feet off the sides of the pen or for offering to lie down. We practice door behaviors and releases when he goes in and out of the ex-pen gate.

Sweep loves to run to his crate where he hangs out when we are not doing something with him and where he sleeps at night. He runs at full speed down the hall to his cage to practice "ins and outs" on the command *Kennel Up*; and he stays inside on a down when the door is opened and exits on our release command. All parts of those behaviors are rewarded multiple times daily.



A Note on Bones and Food Toys

Training Sweep would be difficult without the aid of tasty bones and toys with food stuffed inside. We give Sweep huge bones that he cannot totally consume each time we leave him in his crate or ex-pen. We also have marrow bones and Kongs that can be stuffed with cheese or meat, and we also use some of the hard rubber toys with kibble in them to occupy him. The bones and toys keep him happy about spending time confined in his cages. We do not give him small bones that he could swallow whole or get caught in his mouth, or anything that can be eaten very quickly.

Recalls

Expectations or criterion: Sweep should stop anything he is doing and turn his head toward us when we call his name. That is what we mark. He turns his head, we say “Yeah,” in an excited tone of voice, then he runs in to get the treats—multiple treats. Usually



he gets five or six cookies, one at a time, discouraging “dine and dash syndrome.” The cookies are presented at our side, right next to our leg, in a position that will eventually encourage him to stay at our side and swing into line with us when we move forward. We never expect him to do another behavior like sit when he comes to us before we reward the recall. We are marking the head turn and speedy run to our side with immediate cookies at our leg or a game of tug. While Sweep is eating the treats next to our leg, we slide our opposite hand under his collar, so that when he has finished the cookies, we have his collar in hand. In the house or on the patio we “reset” the game, by dropping a few pieces of kibble for him on the ground or tossing them a short distance away for him to chase. While he is eating the kibble we move to a different location and call again just as he is finishing the kibble. We have a higher value treat than kibble for the recall, which is rewarded at

our side. We don’t throw “reset cookies” on the grass; we only do so in locations where Sweep can see the cookie being thrown onto the floor.

Walking on Leash

Sweep is rewarded constantly for choosing to stay at my side while walking on leash. If he hits the end of the leash, I stop moving forward and wait for him to return to my side. He is not immediately rewarded for coming back; he must stay by my side for a couple of my steps before he is marked and rewarded. If I rewarded him for returning, he would just learn to hit the end of the leash and come back for a reward. Neither Jim nor I will move forward when the leash is pulled taut by Sweep. I often train with him dragging the leash on the ground, or no leash at all, rewarding every couple steps for either his looking at me or for staying at my leg on a loose leash. Jim has taught Sweep a *Close* command, which is his come-to-heel cue on Jim’s left side that Sweep performs with great flourish. Sweep is also learning a *Side* command, which is Sweep’s come-to-heel cue on Jim’s right side. Until Sweep really understands how to find his position at our leg, it will be difficult to explain how to stay in that position while we are walking.

Next month I will tell you all about “square heeling,” and how to teach your puppy to find heel position and to swing his rear end to get lined up with your leg. Until then, have fun with *your* pup; we are certainly enjoying ours! 🐾

Nancy Gyes and her husband Jim Basic run Power Paws Agility in San Jose, California. The AKC World Team Coach for 2006 and 2007, she has been on the AKC World Team seven times, four years with Scud and three with Riot. Nancy and Riot finished 1st in 2002 and 2nd in 2001 in Individual Agility classes at Worlds. Nancy also won the USDAA Nationals four years in a row, 1998 to 2001, with three different dogs, Scud, Riot, and Wicked. In 2001 and 2002, Nancy and Riot were the 24" jump height AKC National Champions. Scud retired in 2001 after winning the USDAA Veterans Championship. Contact Nancy at www.powerpawsagility.com.

TAKE CHARGE WITH THE NEW AKC VISA AGILITY CARDS!



APPLY NOW AND SEE WHAT ALL THE EXCITEMENT IS ABOUT!

- Earn a full 1% back on qualified purchases with no annual fee *
- Earn 1000 bonus points after first card purchase **
- Redeem points for a check, gift card or gift certificates at pet supply stores, hotels, gas stations, restaurants and more!

4 new designs to choose from

To apply for the card call

1-800-350-6861

or log on to: www.chase.com/AKCVisa

* REWARDS INFO: As a cardmember, you will earn one reward point for each \$1.00 of Net Purchases. Cardmembers do not earn Points on balance transfers, cash advances, any checks that access your account, finance charges, and unauthorized charges. Points are not earned for fees of any kind, such as late payment fees, annual fees, overlimit fees, balance transfer fees, cash advance fees, fees for checks that access your account, and fees for products that protect or insure the balances of the cardmember's account. Points will appear on your monthly statement in the month after they are earned. Maximum point accumulation on purchases is 60,000 points Annually. Certain restrictions and limitations apply. Full details, terms, and conditions of the AKC Visa with Rewards program will be provided when you become a cardmember.

** You will receive 1,000 bonus points with this offer. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks after your first purchase for bonus points to post to your account. Bonus points are contingent on account opening and first purchase.

