



ASK THE PRO

working together to achieve success ...

By Cindy Huff

TRANSFERRING DOGS TO NEW or inexperienced owners/handlers, “the team mentality,” or as a friend and colleague of mine puts it “working together to achieve success.”

If you are considering professional training at inception of a new puppy, contact a pro and request tips and pointers for the development of a puppy until its permanent teeth are in, approximately 6 months of age.

“Practically everything you do with a puppy can ease the path to success. Take the combination of voice and hands at your very first meeting. The voice is soft and happy, the hands are gentle, sure and kind. You may not be aware of it, but you’re showing the puppy right then that you are his refuge, his serenity, his God.” ~A. Rosse

Tips for the development of great retrievers!

- A. Place training by 7 weeks of age using the “toy box” method
- B. Sit by 8 weeks
- C. Back, Over, Three handed casting using the “feed/reward” method by 12 weeks
- D. Introduction to birds/gun, basic marking concepts completed by 12 weeks to 6 months
- E. Hold/carry prior to permanent teeth. Just as soon as permanent teeth in force-fetch. 5-6 months of age
- F. 6 months send to pro



At that time, it’s preferable the puppy should go to the pro for basics. The owner should be involved on some level, however, after the puppy’s initial 2 to 3 month period with the trainer. Advancing

the puppy first serves a two-fold purpose. The dog is acquiring its needed skills to function and develop to a level of learned accuracy and second to facilitate the owner’s ability to learn the technique required to handle the dog without detriment to dog or handler while in the learning curve prior to becoming a fully functioning team.

BASIC PROGRAM

Sequence of Lessons

Novice Level Obedience

Force Fetch

- force hold
- ear pinch to ground
- stick fetch to ground
- walk and fetch

Cast to three piles

Condition to electricity

Pile work

T-pattern on land

Double T on land

Force back on water

T-pattern on water plus swim-by

Cut corners plus swim-by

Pattern blind/land

Diversion drill

Doubles drills

Pattern blinds with marks/land

Taught water blinds

Parallel Field Work

Intro to birds

Intro to gun

Simple single marks

Delivery

Begin to steady

4-5 months training

Simple double marks

6 months + in training

Simple water doubles

Pros need to instruct and coach new owners/handlers in the “will do” aspect. Technique, small word, big consequences! The most difficult aspect for new handlers or individuals learning to run their dogs lends itself to “technique and proper use of an e-collar both conceptually and literally.” For many dog owners and their dog, using corrections and pressure is the first time an owner touches the button of an e-collar, and begins to teach their dogs to “learn how to learn.” Handlers need to know this. How does my dog “learn how to learn?” What are your dog’s responses to correction and pressure? Does he learn with or without pressure and how much pressure does it take to see a response? What type of student do you own? These are questions for your pro and your pro needs to answer them and follow through with instruction and coaching.

Balance comes from teaching first, training (e-collar), enthusiasm and praise, then testing (competition). Last but certainly not least, consistency! Fully understand what you are trying to teach. Not only the conceptual aspect but also the literal and what specific actions are needed to successfully get the outcome you’re after.

Enthusiasm and praise come naturally. Watch for the exact moment your dog responds correctly and praise!

Consistency is one key to success. 5 minutes every day is better than 15 minutes every other day. How long it takes is not as important as being thorough. Dogs learn at various speeds due to individual characteristics. There are no short cuts to thoroughly preparing your dog to be consistently reliable. Visualize a set of building blocks. Good solid basics are your dog’s foundation. Upon those you will enhance your dog’s abilities and attributes. If you are not thorough after adding several additional layers of blocks, the one missing in the foundation will have a cause and effect that ripples throughout a dog’s lifetime. These are defined as “holes.” Not enough

can be said to promote good solid basics. Many “holes” become maintenance issues that are managed throughout the dog’s existence.

Maintenance is very important in the overall progress of the dog’s abilities. Owners/handlers can do a great job maintaining their dogs with a consistent routine of good exercise coupled with drills when properly coached by their pro. Following basics, an area where a pro’s timing and experience lends big payoffs for you and your dog in the future an owner/handler can easily maintain the lining wheel, casting drills, and single and double T’s in addition to more advanced drill work.

Lastly, I quote one of my clients, “When I brought him home in July we were doing the T-pattern which would have been 5 months. The first of September you took him back and started him on the water-T at 7 months. The middle of November he was steady and retrieving limits of mallards at 9 months. During the winter we did extensive training on drinking martinis and cigar smoking. My pup has excelled in all stages of his young life. On the other hand, I need more work!”

A pro’s experience will help in defining the appropriate methods to efficiently and purposefully seek the actions needed to get the outcome the owner is after. Owners need to invest time, a good arm and ear! Work together to achieve success! ■

Top Notch Kennel Cindy Huff

I began training in 1985. I am a member of several retriever clubs, past Board member of the PRTA (Professional Retriever Trainers Association), and am currently the Secretary to the PRTA. I train all sporting breeds for field trials and hunt tests. My specialty is young dogs and basics through transition. I actively compete in AKC field trial and hunt test events. I train all pointing breeds for those individuals who desire a quality shooting dog. I no longer personally compete with the pointing breeds. I specialize (instruct and coach) the individual who would like to handle their respective breed(s) in competition. Email: topnotchkennel1@aol.com

First and foremost it is of the utmost importance for a new handler stepping into his/her dog to understand the principle of balance between attitude, or the “want to” and structure, or the “will do” in a dog. The majority of dogs have an abundance of drive and desire that’s been bred into them. Owners have raised and socialized their companions extremely well, and they’ve developed truly enthusiastic retrievers, dogs that “want to do the work!”