



Say Please

‘Say Please’ is a non-confrontational training technique that provides structure and a basic set of clearly defined rules for sharing your home and life with your dog. When your dog has a benevolent leader (you!) and clear guidelines, many common behavior issues can be resolved or prevented.

Why This Technique Works

Every dog needs a leader and that leader should be you! When everyone in the household knows their place it helps to maintain order, reduce conflict, and foster cooperation. Children in the family should practice ‘Say Please’ techniques as well so that your dog recognizes children as leaders rather than equal playmates. This can help to prevent inappropriate play and other behavior problems that may arise between dogs and children.

How to Practice “Say Please”

- **Train** – Use positive reinforcement methods (lures, praise, treats) to teach your dog a few cues. ‘Sit’, ‘Down’ and ‘Stay’ are great basics to begin ‘Say Please’ training.
- **Implement** – Once your dog has learned to do a behavior on cue you can practice ‘Say Please’ in your everyday interactions with your dog. Before your dog receives anything rewarding (a treat, a bowl of food, a walk, access outdoors, play, etc.) ask for a behavior. Give your cue, ‘sit’ or the chosen hand signal, and wait until she offers the behavior and then give her the reward.
- **Troubleshooting** – If your dog does not perform the behavior on cue, walk away, come back a few minutes later, and start again. Have patience! Say your cue only once and wait for your dog to think it through. Give your dog a few seconds to figure out what it is that you are asking.
- **Manage your own expectations** – Do not ask for too much, too fast. Increasing the difficulty of a behavior too quickly will only frustrate you and your dog. Dogs want to make good things happen in their lives, they do not deliberately disobey you. Dogs repeat behaviors that lead to rewards and abandon behaviors that do not. Finally, make sure you attend to your dog’s physical needs before addressing her mental needs. A tired dog is a well behaved dog!

We Can Help! The Training and Behavior Department at the Humane Society of Western Montana has a variety of resources available to help you and your pets live in harmony! The Humane Society has several dog trainers and a behaviorist on staff to provide affordable group and private training lessons and free behavior consultations.

- Contact Jean, our Behaviorist for a free pet behavior consultation by emailing behavior@myhswm.org or calling the Behavior Helpline at (406) 549-9295.
- Contact Mariah, a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, to inquire about private lessons or a group training class. Email outreach@myhswm.org or call (406) 549-HSWM.
- Check out our website at www.myhswm.org for a complete listing of dog classes, rates and additional information.