

Pawsitive Commands Guide



Introduction to Pawsitive Commands

Puppy host families and handlers are vital to the Paws4People mission of empowering and educating individuals to use Assistance dogs to transform their lives. Paws4People provides highly trained, customized, and insured Assistance Dogs to people with disabilities. We also provide Facility Dogs who are trained, certified, placed, and insured with a specific individual to use within his/her profession and/or volunteer activities to provide educational instruction or therapeutic interventions, medical or environmental aid, methodologies to students with “special needs,” or support to individuals with physical, neurological, psychological, or other medical related disabilities.

Paws4People works to exceed industry training and utilization standards for all of our Assistance and Facility Dogs, and to increase the public’s knowledge about the important roles these Dogs serve within society.

This guide provides quick reference as you introduce and practice commands.

- This booklet is to assist you in preparing the puppies for the next step on their journey. You will find this guide handy as a quick reference as you introduce and practice commands.
- It is important for dogs to have consistency as they don’t generalize well and they don’t really understand verbal language. We can help them out by giving them commands the same way every time and being consistent about our training.
- As you wean your physical cues from your training session you will use commands.. It is fine to help the dog from time to time with a physical cue to make sure the dog is eventually successful. The intention is that the dog will learn as it understands what is expected.

1. Attract the dog's attention

- Get your dog's focus by using its name or making a kissing noise. The "Look" command is effective for getting the dog's attention.

2. Give the directive

- Assume the role of the pack leader. Instead of asking, command the dog firmly and clearly by saying "look".

3. Maintain uniformity

- a. If the dog responds correctly, offer praise.
- If the dog doesn't respond appropriately, say "nope" and repeat the command. In case the dog seems unsure, provide gentle physical cues or encouragement. Repeat the process until the dog gets it right.

4. End on a positive note with praise

- Once the dog successfully follows a command, reward it with treats and positive reinforcement such as "That's it!", "Yes", or "good boy/girl!" This method will ensure that learning is a positive experience for the dog.

Commands Quick Guide

- **DOG'S NAME:** Used to grab the pup's attention, without moving towards you, and should not be used for corrections.
- **BETTER HURRY:** Directs the puppy to go to the toilet.
- **SIT:** Instructs the dog to sit down.
- **DOWN:** Commands the dog to lie down, implying a stay.
- **KENNEL:** Orders the puppy to go to its kennel or crate and remain there.
- **WAIT:** Asks the puppy to wait before being released from the kennel, or before eating or drinking.
- **EAT:** Grants the puppy permission to eat.
- **WATER:** Grants the puppy permission to drink water.
- **QUIET:** Instructs the dog to stop whining or barking.
- **NOPE/A-AH:** A verbal correction, demanding the dog to stop immediately.
- **OFF:** Commands the dog to get off something or out of the car.
- **JUMP ON:** Instructs the dog to enter a car or get onto a surface.
- **LOOK:** Redirects the dog's attention to you.
- **DRESS:** Calmly guides the puppy to place its head through the collar, harness, or vest.
- **UNDRESS:** Instructs the puppy to back out of its harness or vest.
- **LEAVE IT:** Directs the dog to ignore a specific object and focus back on the handler.

Commands Quick Guide

BACK: the pup to walk backward or back up.

- **PLACE:** Directs the pup to go to its bed.
- **DROP:** Commands the pup to stop what it has in its mouth and make eye contact with the handler.
- **COME:** Tell the dog to come directly to you.
- **COME HERE:** A casual command primarily used at home.
- **LAP:** Instructs the dog to place its front legs across your lap, resting on its elbows.
- **LET'S GO:** Used to prepare puppy to move.
- **ROLL:** Commands the dog to roll over on its back and show its tummy.
- **SHAKE:** Directs the dog to place either of its paws in your extended hand.
- **STAY:** Commands the dog to hold its position until released, should practice staying in place despite distractions like being petted or loud noises.
- **TURN:** Instructs the dog to make a 360-degree turn.
- **GO IN:** Directs the dog to lie down under something like a chair or table.
- **UP:** Commands the dog to place its front paws on a counter, table, wall, etc.
- **VISIT:** Tell the dog to rest its head on your lap.
- **Implied stay:** The dog should remain in the given position (sit, down, stand) until a new command is given; the "stay" command is not necessary.

Name

- The dog's name is used to direct the puppy's focus towards the handler.

Learning

- To teach, utilize food, movement, or noise to prompt the puppy to look at you when its name is called, and praise the puppy for doing so.
- Initially, the puppy only needs to glance at you briefly.
- Progress by delaying the reward until the puppy maintains its attention on you for a second or two.
- Gradually extend the duration the puppy focuses on you until they can consistently do so for a few seconds at a time.

Proficient

- Once proficient, the puppy should respond to its name by looking at you even in distracting environments and sustain its attention on you for a few seconds. Avoid using this command to call the dog to you; it's solely for gaining the dog's attention.



EAT or DRINK

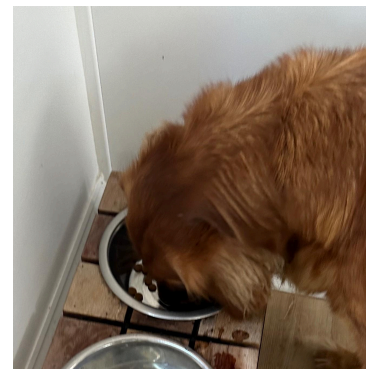
- This command instructs the puppy that it may eat or drink.

Learning

- Monitor the puppy's water intake as there should be no free water source available for it.
- The puppy should not eat food off the floor and should only eat from a bowl upon receiving the "eat" command.
- Use the food bowl to guide the puppy into a sit, then say "eat" to allow it to eat. Increase expectations gradually until the puppy can hold a sit or another position for up to 15 seconds before receiving the "eat" command.
- When on a leash, the puppy should wait for the "drink" command before drinking.

Proficient

- The puppy will maintain the commanded position until given the "eat" command to eat. On a leash, the puppy will not drink from a bowl or bucket until instructed with the "drink" command.



BETTER HURRY

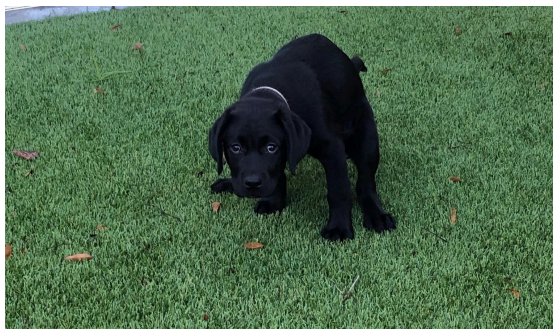
- This command teaches the puppy to go to the toilet.

Learning

- Introduce the phrase "better hurry" while the puppy is toileting to associate the word with the action.
- Practice with the puppy both on and off leash in a securely fenced yard.
- Praise the puppy for toileting appropriately as they connect the word with the action.
- Practice toileting on various surfaces, ensuring the puppy toilets within the length of the leash without pulling.

Proficient

- The puppy will toilet on command "better hurry," on or off leash, on any surface, without lunging towards an area to toilet, waiting for the handler's command.
- The handler can stand at a distance, and the puppy should toilet within the leash length without pulling.



KENNEL

- Kennel commands the puppy to enter a crate and stay until given the exit command.

Learning

- Guide the puppy into the crate with a treat or hand cue, and praise it. Use the door to prevent the puppy from exiting until commanded.

Proficient

- The puppy will enter the crate from a distance and remain until instructed to exit, even if the door is open.



QUIET

- Once the puppy is proficient with the "quiet" command, use it as a reminder after correcting inappropriate vocalization.

Learning

- After the puppy barks, say "quiet" and praise the puppy once it stops.

Proficient

- The puppy will stop barking upon receiving the "quiet" command.

RELEASE

Release indicates to the puppy that it is free to move out of the previous command if it chooses. While released the puppy must still follow appropriate guidelines such as not jumping on or licking people, not eating off the floor, etc. but is free to move around as they wish.

Nope/A-AH

Indicates to the dog that it is doing an unwanted behavior or it ignored a known command.

Learning

Nope/A-Ah

When used effectively, the puppy will stop whatever he is doing immediately. Should only be given after the handler has tried redirection.

Once the puppy has stopped the unwanted behavior you can redirect them to an appropriate behavior.

Proficient

The puppy stops the unwanted behavior or completes the command given even in busy or distracting environments.

WAIT

Wait instructs the puppy not to cross a threshold such as their crate, doorway, or car door, the top of a grooming table, or anywhere else where there is a clearly defined threshold. Wait does not require the puppy to remain in any particular position, just not to cross the threshold. (NOTE: This is not to be used in place of saying “stay” when a dog is in a position such as “sit” or “down.”)

Learning

To start teaching, approach a threshold while moving. When the puppy nears the edge, step in front of them to block their path with your body. Prompt the puppy to "wait" and offer praise. Repeat these steps in future training sessions and gradually increase the distance between you and the puppy until you reach the end of the leash. Once the puppy is proficient waiting while you are facing them, practice having the puppy wait while you are facing away from the puppy. In a crate, tell the puppy “wait” as you open the door, and use the crate door to block the puppy if it tries to exit the crate before being released. Praise it for successfully “waiting.”

Proficient

When proficient, the puppy should be able to “wait” at a doorway, in a crate, or other threshold while the handler is up to a leash length away.



SIT

Sit instructs the puppy to put its rear on the ground. “Sit” has an implied stay, so when proficient the puppy will remain in a sit until given another command or told “release.”

Learning

Start by offering a treat to the puppy by placing it near their nose and then moving it upward. This action will encourage the dog to look up and eventually sit down. Be mindful not to raise the treat too high, as it may cause the puppy to jump instead of sitting. Once the puppy's rear touches the ground, praise them and give them the treat promptly. Slowly reduce the use of treats and cues, and focus on extending the duration of the sitting behavior.

Proficient

The puppy will immediately assume the sit position when commanded without requiring cues. The puppy will remain in a sit even in highly distracting environments until given another command or



DOWN

Down commands the puppy to lie down (it does not mean to get off of something). “Down” has an implied stay so once proficient, the puppy should remain in a down position until otherwise commanded.

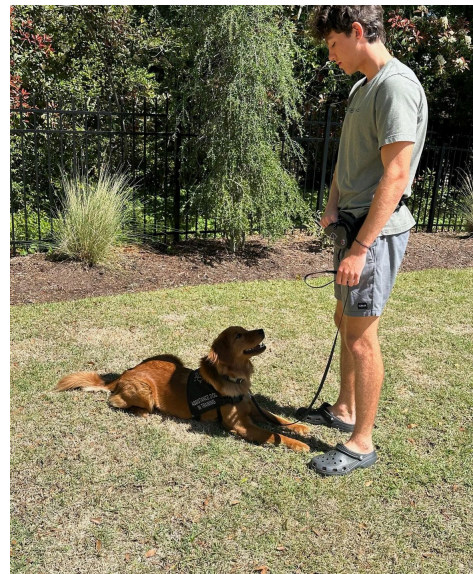
Learning

Start with training the puppy in a sitting position. Place a lure in front of their nose and guide it down between the puppy's feet, then forward along the floor until the puppy's elbows touch the floor.

Reward the puppy immediately with the treat and praise. Over time, phase out the lure and any cues, while increasing the duration the puppy remains in the down position.

Proficient

The puppy will promptly lie down on command from any position without needing cues, and will hold that position even in highly distracting environments.



SIDE(right) and HEEL (left)

These commands instruct the puppy to walk beside the handler either on the left or right side with a loose leash. The puppy should match the handler's pace and direction, avoiding pulling ahead, lagging behind, or sniffing the ground. When the handler stops, the puppy should stop and automatically sit.

Learning

Encourage the puppy to walk next to you with their ear level with the seam of your pants using a treat or toy. Reward the puppy frequently for maintaining the correct position, and initially keep the training sessions short. Gradually increase the time the puppy can walk in position and reduce the cues and treats required. Teach the puppy to walk on both the left and right sides without crossing behind the handler.

Proficient

The puppy will consistently walk on a loose leash beside the handler, unaffected by environmental changes, distractions, variations in pace, or shifts in direction. The puppy should feel comfortable on both sides and start moving as soon as the handler gives the command, instead of waiting for the puppy to initiate the movement.



SIDE



HEEL

DROP

Commands the puppy to drop and ignore whatever is in its mouth.

Learning

While the puppy has a toy in its mouth:

- Offer it a treat or another toy.
- Give the treat if it drops what's in its mouth.
- Say "drop" as the puppy is spitting out the toy to associate the word with the action.
- Keep practicing until the puppy will drop an item without needing a treat or toy enticement.

Proficient

The puppy will drop any object on command without the need of a lure.



COME

Instructs the puppy to come to you and sit facing you. They should remain with you until given another command.

Learning

Encourage the puppy to come to you by offering a treat or toy as a reward. It's important to consistently train this command with the puppy on a leash or in a situation where you can ensure compliance. This will help the puppy understand the importance of coming when called and receiving a reward. By establishing this behavior early on, the puppy will be more likely to respond effectively in emergency situations.

Proficient

The puppy comes when called even when involved in highly distracting situations and remains sitting in front of you, facing you.



DRESS

Tells the puppy to place its head through the equipment or to calmly hold still while the handler puts on the vest or harness..

Learning

Start by using a treat to lure the puppy's nose through the equipment to get the treat. Reward the puppy for sitting or standing still while you finish putting the equipment on. Gradually wean out the treats.

Proficient

The puppy moves its head forward through the equipment on command without the use of a lure and holds still while the equipment is placed on them.



SHAKE

Instructs the puppy to offer its paw for a greeting.

Learning

The puppy extends its paw towards your hand. To train this behavior, hold a treat in your closed fist in front of the puppy. The puppy will probably raise its foot to touch your hand. Reward the puppy with the treat right away, say "shake," and gently hold the lifted paw for a moment. Repeat this process until the puppy responds by offering its paw upon command.

Proficient

The puppy raises its paw when commanded to shake, even when a hand is not offered. Shaking the paw is just fun for everyone.



ROLL

Instructs the puppy to roll over on its back and remain there, exposing its tummy..

Learning

Starting with the puppy in a down position, entice their head back and over their shoulder using a treat until they end up on their back. Gently stroke them to encourage them to stay in that position briefly before letting them go. Slowly reduce the treat as they learn.

Proficient

The puppy will roll onto its back either in front of or beside the handler and will stay there until given a different command. If beside the handler, it's preferable for the puppy to roll towards the handler rather than away when transitioning into position.



JUMP ON

Commands the puppy to jump on top of something such as a grooming table, bench, or other raised surface. The command implies that the puppy remains on top of the object until given the “off” command.

Learning

Make sure that your puppy doesn't leap onto surfaces higher than a foot until they reach six months of age to avoid putting strain on their developing joints. Guide and motivate the puppy to hop onto a low surface. Ensure the surface is stable, not slippery, and provides enough space for the puppy to feel safe while on it. Slowly raise the height of the surface until the dog can effortlessly jump onto a grooming table or a similar-height object.

Proficient

The puppy obediently jumps onto the designated object when instructed and remains on the raised surface until commanded “off”.



JUMP ON for the car is very similar.

Tells the puppy to get into a vehicle.

Learning

Encourage the puppy to jump into a vehicle by luring it with a toy or treat. Repeated jumping can strain growing shoulder and hip joints, so this is an advanced command.

Proficient

The puppy gets into the car when commanded and remains in the car until given another command or released.

GO IN

Instructs the puppy to crawl under something such as a table or bench and lie down. This command has an implied stay. The puppy should have a reliable down command before teaching “go in” in order to be successful.

Learning

Position a table or bench in front of you.

Use a treat to motivate the puppy to crawl underneath and lie down.

Slowly reduce the prompts until the puppy can crawl under different objects independently. Before instructing the puppy, ensure there are no obstacles like table legs in the way.

Proficient

The puppy goes into the space indicated by the handler, lies down, and stays there even if the handler moves to the end of the leash or there are distractions.



PLACE

Instructs the puppy to go to its designated bed and lie down on it. This command has an implied stay.

Learning

The puppy needs to master the "down" command before moving on.

- Begin close to the bed or towel and guide the puppy onto it to practice "down."
- Start with short durations and slowly extend the time.
- Transition the "down" command to become a part of the "place" command.

Proficient

The puppy will walk to the bed, blanket or towel from 3-6 feet away, lie down on their place, and stay until commanded to do something else, even in the presence of distractions.



OFF

Tells the puppy to get down off of something or someone. This command is not a correction. It is used after giving the puppy a command that requires the puppy to touch or be on something such as “jump,” “up,” “lap,” “visit,” “jump on,” etc.

Learning

Guide or entice the puppy away from the object they are on, then offer praise once they have moved.

Proficient

The puppy immediately gets off of whatever it was on and waits for the handler's next command.



BACK

Instructs the puppy to walk backwards, either in front of the handler (facing them), or next to the handler (with both moving backwards). This command is only used in narrow spaces where there isn't room for the dog to walk forward next to the handler.

Learning

Position the puppy facing you near a wall or barrier to maintain a straight line. Shuffle your feet and approach the puppy, prompting them to move backward to create space. Encourage the puppy when they stand up and move backward.

Gradually increase the distance until they are able to back up several feet at a time. Then work with the puppy next to you in a heel or side position, and move backwards together. Use a treat to help them move backwards next to you, remaining even with your leg. You can use the knee on the side away from the puppy to block them if they try to move forwards instead of backwards. Gradually fade out your body movement as the cue.

Proficient

On command the puppy will walk backwards from in front of you, or next to you on the left or right in a narrow space



LAP

For the “lap” command the handler must be seated. “Lap” instructs the puppy to put its front forearms across the handler’s lap and remain there until told “off.” This command is always performed from the left or right side of the handler, never from the front.

Learning

The handler should be seated in a stationary chair without armrests. Follow these steps to train your puppy:

- Use a treat from the left or right side to encourage the puppy to place its front legs across your lap, so its forearms lay flat on your thighs.
- Ensure the puppy stays calm and doesn't attempt to lick your face or place its paws on your shoulders.
- To conclude the exercise, instruct the puppy to "off" and assist it in calmly getting off your lap.

Proficient

From both the left and right side the puppy should be able to calmly get into the “lap” position and remain there until commanded to get off. For clients, this command is often used to have the dog deliver a retrieved item or to allow the client to interact more closely with the dog.



UP

Instructs the puppy to place its front paws up on a table, wall, or other raised surface. They should remain in position until commanded “off.” This command is advanced and should be taught when there is no harm on the dog’s joints. The “up” command is used by clients to have the dog retrieve an item off of a tall object, deliver a wallet or other item to a cashier, or to go up on a wall to turn on or off light switches.

Learning

Stand near the stable object where you want the puppy to go up, facing the desired direction. Encourage the puppy to place its front feet on the object. Slowly extend the duration the puppy remains in that position, while maintaining realistic expectations.

Proficient

The puppy readily puts its feet up on the object indicated (without cueing), and maintains the “up” position until commanded “off” even in distracting environments.



VISIT

For the “visit” command the handler must be seated. “Visit” instructs the dog to stand and rest its chin across the handler’s lap from the left or right side. The puppy should remain in position until the handler tells them “off.”

Learning

The handler should be seated in a stationary chair without armrests.

- Use a treat from the left or right side to encourage the puppy to stand and rest its chin on your lap.
- Encourage the puppy to stay calm.

Proficient

From either the left or right side the puppy should be able to stand and rest their chin calmly in the handler’s lap, and remain there until commanded “off.” For clients, this command is often used to have the dog deliver a retrieved item or to allow the client to interact with the dog.



Happy training!

