

# Verbal Communication



## How Dogs Communicate

Dogs have 3 top ways they communicate; physical touch, scent and body language. As you notice, verbal is not in the top 3 list which is why verbal commands are the hardest thing for us to teach a dog but the easiest for us to use.

1

### Keep It Simple

A small set of fundamental one-word commands (such as come, place, sit, down, heel and markers) suffices for everyday functioning at home and in various environments. Anything beyond these commands serves recreational purposes rather than essential functions, and it's perfectly acceptable, but it's crucial to recognize this distinction.

2

### Check Your Emotions at the Door

Dogs don't instinctively respond to emotional leadership. When issuing commands or providing feedback on their behavior, the objective is to be assertive and emotionally balanced—neither excessively excited nor upset. Your dog won't understand you any more if you keep repeating the cue in a more escalated tone. Maintaining a calm and confident demeanor is crucial.

3

### Say It Once, Then Follow Through

Commands are requirements, not casual suggestions. If you are inconsistent in your expectations, your dog's compliance will also be inconsistent. When your dog exhibits "selective hearing," they are essentially following the expectations you've established through your inconsistency and latency.



# How to Teach Verbal Cues

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A 4-Step Guide for teaching effective verbal cues. These individual steps are crucial to ensure your dog can fully concentrate on and absorb each part of the process.

## 1 Verbal Cue

**Definition:** Any sound that we make which will be associated with a behaviour to follow it. This might be a whistle or the word "sit".

1. Start in a neutral position with your hands by your side (free of food).
2. Ensure your dog is focused on you or they will not hear the cue you are about to give.
3. Say the cue before moving onto the next step.

## 2 Visual Cue

**Definition:** Any body movement that we make which will be associated with a behaviour to follow it. This might be a hand gesture.

1. Add your visual cue after the verbal. NOT at the same time. If your dog is new to the behaviour lure them into position for their visual cue OR If your dog is familiar with the behaviour simply give them the gesture (ie. palm up for sit).

## 3 Marker

**Definition:** Any sound that we make which will mark if the behaviour is correct or incorrect.

1. The instant your dog does or doesn't complete the behaviour mark them with a reward marker or *no* reward marker.

## 4 Consequence

**Definition:** Either a reward or correction. Depending on the dogs response will depend on the consequence.

1. If your dog was successful with completing the behaviour give them a reward.
2. If your dog fails go back a step and lure them into the behaviour to show them what you want. Withholding the reward until they are successful.