
S U N D A N C E R E T R I E V E R S

30 Day Guide For Success with your Gun Dog

Items you will need :

18' - 20' fine/medium metal choke collar

Six foot Leash

E-collar and Transmitter

Bumpers

Crate

You have just pulled into your driveway. Whether you picked up your dog from the airport or have made the long drive home, your new companion and hunting partner has arrived to his/her's new home.

By following this (humorous and at times very,very boring) guide, you and your partner will quickly be off hunting together but, first, you need to learn how to work together...

Day1: Welcome Home!

This is your dog's first day home.

After your dog (let's call her Sam) has gone to the bathroom, put her in a crate in a quiet yet central area of the house. Tell her that she is a "good girl" and go unpack your bags.

This allows Sam to take in her surroundings in a safe,neutral way.

She can listen to the sounds of the new house , take in new sights and smells, all from the safe place of her crate.

While you are unpacking, let's go over some examples of " being a bad adult":

- * Leaving your new dog alone, uncrated, while you go to work. Not only will your house be destroyed there will be a least one unpleasant mess for you to find.
- * Free feeding your labrador. Your new dog has always eaten his or her allotted amount , once a day. Leaving the bowl full all day long will make your dog pig out, get sick and possibly become overweight.
- * Allowing your three year old child to walk the dog down a busy street. There is no positive outcome for this; someone is going to get hurt.

Now that we have covered being a " Bad Adult" go and be a good one; you can do it!

When you are ready, open the crate and put the choke collar and leash on Sam, then invite her out.

With the leash on, take her out to the yard again to do her business. Once she had gone you can invite her back in the house (sitting before and after going in the door).

With the leash still on, allow Sam to explore the house for a little bit and then put her back in her crate.

When she is walking with you she should be at heel. When not walking she should be sitting or lying down.

Your tone with her should be calm and conversational.

(Please put down the bumpers and the dummies.... put them back in the closet.)

The First Week:

Your first week should be very much like your first day. Sam should be very comfortable and used to a routine by now.

(The bumpers, dummies , shotgun and hunting clothes should still be in closet)

- * She knows which door to go to when she needs to go out.
- * She knows that in your home, she should be quiet and well behaved . She knows that she should be calm, because in the house you have reminded her that " here, heel and sit" still apply.
- * She looks for you to guide her because that is what you have done from the moment you brought her home.

Day Six

It is 9am and the phone is ringing.

Your friend Marvin is on the other end;he is just as excited about hunting with Sam as you are!

In fact he is so excited he booked a preserve hunt for this afternoon....

You look at Sam, she wags her tail and you take a step towards the gun closet.

STOP! FOR THE LOVE OF DOGS AND ALL THAT IS AWESOME, PLEASE STOP!

Consider the next second a "defining" moment. Common sense prevails and you tell Marvin, " Hey man, I just got the dog a few days ago and she is still settling in"

Marvin is disappointed but he will get over it.

You have spent a considerable amount of time and money on a dog that NEEDS TO GET TO KNOW YOU AND LEARN HOW TO BECOME A TEAM before you head out to the field.

Congratulations! You just passed your first " Excited Friend" hurdle.

End of Week 1

By now you and Sam are comfortable with the foundation of Here, Heel and Sit. In fact, hopefully, you are so bored with the words Here, Heel and Sit that you never want to read them again.

(Sorry.... you'll read the words a few more times and please put the bumpers back in the closet)

Week 2

Sam is comfortable. You can see this in the wag of her tail when she greets you, the soft unworried look in her eyes.

When you get up in the morning, her tail is beating so hard and fast against the crate, the whole box wobbles.

She scampers outside to do her business and runs back to you when she is done. She enjoys riding in the car and you even left her alone (windows cracked a bit) just long enough to grab a few groceries at the store yesterday.

She rests quietly in her crate or at your feet (still on leash) while you watch BlackList on TV.

You have worked on the foundation of Here, Heel and Sit (sorry) and you are very confident that when you say " Here" she comes , " Heel" she heels and " Sit" she sits.

* Day 10

It is 7am, you are having a second cup of coffee and you think...

" I wonder what would happen if I just tossed a few bumpers"

If the words " I wonder what " or " Let's see" cross your mind dismiss the thought immediately. You are not training, you are not building a bond, you are testing.

If you are not 99% percent sure what is going to happen..... DON'T DO IT!

Instead today you are going to review " Hold"

(Yes, I know, it's very exciting. Please go to the forbidden closet and get one bumper)

With the leash and collar on , have Sam sit next to you. Open her mouth gently and place the bumper inside, being careful that the bumper is not pinching her lips against her teeth.

Once she is holding the bumper say " Sam, Heel Hold" in a nice conversational tone.

(You are telling her to heel and hold the bumper at the same time)

After a few seconds of her heeling and holding, tell Sam to "sit" and then " leave it" taking the bumper from her.

Do this exercise for the next week , slowly extending the time and always ending before she gets tired of it.

A few minutes a day , a few times a day.

Remember we are not teaching Sam a new skill; we are teaching the two of you how to work together.

Week 3:

By now you should be sick and tired of obedience. You are so bored with hold drills that your eyes are a bit blurred.

Marvin has called twice, wanting to know when you are going hunting and you growled a response.

Great, you are doing wonderful! You are taking the time to build a solid relationship with your dog.

Keep up the good work...

By now:

- * She knows which door to go to when she needs to go out.
- * She knows that in your home, she should be quiet and well behaved . She knows that she should be calm, because in the house you have reminded her that in the home "here, heel and sit" still apply.
- * She looks for you to guide her because that is what you have done from the moment you brought her home.
- * Here, Heel and Sit lessons have become as easy as breathing (for both of you)
- * Hold lessons have become so boring you have switched to having her hold your slippers, a newspaper, or your rubber sided coffee mug.
- * The only disagreement is what show to watch on TV at night.

In three short weeks, you have successfully brought your new dog home, acclimated her to her new environment and have had pleasant "conversations" using a language that her foundation of training was built on.

Week 4:

With leash and collar on, you are ready to start doing a very simple mark (we are putting all of our formal obedience blocks together now, to form a chain.)

Please (don't run) grab a bumper from the closet. Any one will do...

In the yard, with Sam sitting next to your side, remind her to " Sit " and toss the bumper (about twenty feet)

Say her name in a soft whisper...

(She has been doing obedience for a while, so you may need to tell her " Hup Sam" to get her moving)

Sam should shoot out to the bumper once she has it in her mouth, say quietly, " Here" as she comes in to you (about five feet away). Tell her to " Heel" and once she is by your side " Sit". You can also remind her to hold by saying " Sit Hold"

At this moment the pain, suffering and endless boredom that you have endured for almost a month should now begin to make sense.

Congratulations! You have " spoken" successfully with your hunting partner.

She knows how your body moves and how you expect her to behave, and you know how to" read" her as well.

You can now start doing more complicated things, single marks, doubles, handling drills...

Because you took the necessary time to get to know your dog , there are no limits to what you can teach each other.

I would now refer you to the numerous books listed on your dog's personal journal or on the FAQ page of the website.

You can take each book step by step and have fun learning how to work together on the more complicated drills.

As always please feel free to call anytime. My cell phone number is 814-790-2643.

