

■ Training Your Pet

Learning to Focus

by Pat Muhammad, Carolina Dog Training Club

As a dog trainer at Carolina Dog Training Club (CDTC), I have heard the phrase, “My dog always does this at home,” thousands of times, but at home it is just you and your dog in your normal surroundings. The benefits of training classes is that your dog will be in a group with other dogs and because dogs are social animals, they can learn from each other. In class, your dog must learn to pay attention to you (focus) in a group situation which includes distractions of other dog’s scents, barking and even treats or toys. The fact that your dog pays attention to you with all these distractions can give you a real feeling of accomplishment. We help you achieve this by using a command to help your dog focus on you. We provide distractions, as well as how to accomplish this feat with your dog.

Having your dog focus on you when you are away from home can be very important. Consider the trip to the dog park when your dog is much more interested in another dog than he is in you. By giving your dog the command to focus on you, you might be able to eliminate a confrontation. If your dog happens to get loose, your dog will know the command for focus and this might keep him from getting run over.

In a class, you have the support of fellow classmates who are doing the same exercises that you and your dog are. In a class, you don’t feel like you or your dog stand out with any problems since others have some of the same issues. Not only do you learn how to take care of your problems, but you’ll also hear explanations on how to handle other problems that people experience with their own dogs. A class also gives you and your dog a chance to be around all types of dogs, large and small.

Originally, CDTC classes were oriented toward individuals wanting to show their dogs

in Obedience trials, but in the past few years our classes have moved more toward the “everyday” or “family” dog. We want our dog owners to learn what is necessary to co-exist with their dog so that both the dog and the owner are happy. We always hope that our students will go on to compete, but are happy with whatever they decide. Our main objective is to have a happy, well-trained dog.

Dog obedience is a team sport, the team being you and your dog. Obedience exercises are a great way to spend time with your dog and get a real feeling of accomplishment as you bond with your dog. We as a Club are always as excited as the owners when our “four-legged” students graduate along with their “two-legged” owners. Your dog will always be your best friend and favorite teammate. Following are a few of the classes that we offer:

Our Puppy classes are designed to learn appropriate puppy socialization while also covering the basic obedience commands.

The Beginner I classes are for older puppies and dogs that have not had prior training. This class focuses on building the bond between owner and dog by learning how to get and keep your dog’s focus, as well as a series of obedience commands.

Manners class is for dogs that may need a bit more individual attention and a lower stress environment in order to forge the owner/dog bond. This is a wonderful course for people who have acquired an older dog from a rescue or shelter and are having difficulty gaining their new addition’s trust and building a bond. It is also good for owners that are having some mild behavioral issues such as a nervous or shy dog.

The Beginner II class is a continuation of the basic obedience skills learned in



Beginner I class. It is always fun to return to the Beginner II class and see your fellow classmates from Beginner I.

The Canine Good Citizen class is designed to cover the exercises required for the AKC Canine Good Citizens certification. This class also addresses situations we run into in everyday life, such as meeting another person and their dog in the park and what to do in that situation, or taking your dog to be groomed or to the veterinarian without them being anxious.

Rally class is an introduction to AKC Rally obedience where a handler reads signs set out at different places around the ring and shows their dog what to do at each sign.

We also offer advanced classes oriented toward qualifying in different areas of AKC obedience trials.

CDTC has been in existence for over 75 years. We have worked with all types of breeds including pure breeds and rescues in all sizes and ages. We have had thousands of individuals and dogs participate in our classes. CDTC is an AKC affiliated club and holds a two day trial in March each year. We also offer a fun match each year, which allows dog handlers the chance to practice with their dogs as if they were at a real Obedience or Rally trial.

CDTC offers classes four times a year. Our next session begins on October 2, 2012. Applications are currently being accepted. You can obtain an application, as well as additional class and event information at our website, www.carolinadogtrainingclub.com. We look forward to seeing you in one of our upcoming classes.