

Say Hello

The "Say Hello" command is useful for a variety of reasons. It is taught so that your dog will look to you as his "leader" so that you can decide when and if he should "say hello" to a person or another dog. It also gives your dog the opportunity to decline meeting another person or dog if they do not feel comfortable. A dog forced to "Say Hello" may display aggression, the "Say Hello" command tells the dog to acknowledge the other person or other dog to the degree that the dog feels comfortable. It may be a simple glance, it may be a walk-by, a sniff, or a tail-wagging greeting. All of these choices are appropriate responses to the "Say Hello" command, so your dog should be rewarded for which ever choice he makes.

The only inappropriate choice for your dog to make is to display aggression. If your dog simply glances at the person or other dog, but does not approach them, your dog will be learning that he had the opportunity to Say Hello.

It is important that you do not position your dog so that he can only approach the person or other dog head-on (face-to-face). The proper approach from a dog is a slight circle or from the side. Proper dog-to-dog greetings are nose-to-butt, so be sure you give your dog the opportunity to greet appropriately.

The "Say Hello" command can be taught formally or informally.

To teach it informally, just begin saying "Say Hello" every time your dog meets a new dog or person, or approaches (or is approached by) an old doggie or people friend. Over time, your dog will learn that "Say Hello" means to greet someone. When he has "Said Hello" long enough (10 seconds - 1 minute, depending on the situation), then release him by saying "OK," or "Enough," or whatever release command you choose to use. You can also instruct your dog to stay with you using "Stay Close," "With Me," "Heel," or "Wait" until you decide it's OK for him to "Say Hello."

To teach your dog to formally "Say Hello" begin commanding your dog to sit about 3-5 feet from the door whenever someone knocks at the door. Let the dog bark to inform you that someone is here, then say "Good Barking" or "Good Speak" and instruct the dog to sit about 3-5 feet from the door. (You need to be right next to him until he learns this, so have someone else open the door). He is to stay seated until instructed to "say hello," at which point the people can come to him (or he can go up to the people) and let him sniff their hands or whatever. This takes a long time for a dog to learn to do by himself dependably, but it can be done. Give yourself 3-6 months of consistently having him sit 3-5 feet from the door with you by his side. Also, have EVERYONE who enters the door (including you) knock first. This is his "I'm supposed to sit by the door cue."

The "Say Hello" command gives you more control over your dog in new situations and meeting new people and dogs. If he acts timid, it may also encourage him to "Say Hello" to new people he may otherwise shy away from. The more confidence your dog has in himself and in you as "leader" in meeting new people and dogs, the more reliable he will become at the "Say Hello" command. Remember, never force your dog to approach another person or dog, the "Say Hello" command gives your dog the choice to

greet the new person or dog by glancing their way, walking by them, sniffing them, or tail-wagging around them.

After your dog understands the command with people and dogs they are familiar with and liked, began using the command with strange dogs. When you approached a strange dog tell your dog "Say Hello" and let the two dogs sniff for about 3 seconds. Then immediately call/pull away in a happy voice saying "Good Say Hello!" and give your dog a food treat. The trick to being successful at this exercise is to take your dog out of the situation *before* they show any sign of aggression. If your dog growls or snaps then pull your dog away, and say "No Growling" in a non-emotional tone and do not give her a food treat. Then immediately let her say hello to a dog that she likes (if there is one!), with praise and a food treat. Some dogs can not begin meeting strange dogs by sniffing. They may need to "Say Hello" at a distance of 3 - 10 feet. But if no aggression is displayed, they are successful and should be awarded. In order to shape this difficult, new behavior, your dog needs to succeed as many times as possible.

Because you are the leader and your dog needs to trust you, you need to become very aware of the other dogs around and what they're doing at your dog's level. Don't allow other dogs to put their face in your dog's face. Even on a "Say Hello" command, don't hold the lead so tight that the two dogs can *only* sniff noses. Proper doggie etiquette is to sniff backsides, so that they are side-by-side when greeting. Intentional face-to-face greetings among dogs usually is a ploy for dominance and at worst will result in a fight. Unfortunately, many people "make" their dogs meet face to face and I believe it can sometimes instigate the "dominance" ritual to take over, resulting in aggression.

Tell people that your dog is friendly but needs her "personal space." They should ask permission (as everyone should for every dog) before they allow their dog to say hello to yours. Remember, even if the other dog seems fine to you, if your dog *perceives* a threat, she will react instinctively with aggression. She needs to learn to trust that you, on the other end of the lead, won't let her get "clobbered" with nowhere to run, or even make her stand close to a dog she detests for her own reasons. Your behavior is very important and you need to make sure that you are not unintentionally making matters worse. For instance, if you tense up and tighten your grip on the lead when you see another dog, your dog will also tense up and will probably take your tightened grip as a sign for aggression.

Say "Say Hello!" in a happy manner as you walk by a dog. If she sniffs at the dog without hackles up (for a maximum of 3 seconds), then praise her and give her a food treat for a good "say hello!" Gradually let her sniff the other dog for longer periods, always calling/pulling her away in a happy manner *before* she shows signs of aggression. Avoid (as best you can) dog-to-dog confrontations, and *praise* any non-aggression when around other dogs. Again, your "say hello's" should start at about 3 seconds in length. You want to praise her *before* she shows aggression, so don't even give her the chance! Make it as easy as you can (and I know it won't be easy) for her to **do good**. This will take a long time to master. Figure at minimum about 4-5 months of going to doggie class once a week before your dog will stop their consistent aggressive behavior.