



Gundog training



with Ian Clinton

Having mastered the basics of heelwork, **Ian Clinton** shows how to teach your dog to turn on the heel as well as introducing the sit-and-stay command

This week: heelwork and sit-and-stay

Heelwork practice is a good way of teaching the dog to focus on you, and to be able to change direction when you choose by turning left, right or complete an about-turn. I shall also outline a reliable sit-and-stay exercise. This is key to developing future steadiness. Some may

ask why it is so important to have a dog that is obedient and well behaved; there are a few who may also say that such seemingly strict compliance spoils a dog's spirit and natural get-up-and-go. However, a dog that is well behaved and obedient ultimately enjoys more freedom than one that is not, as there is a high level of trust. The dog will stay close when required, remain steady when desired and come immediately when

called. The opposite of that is a dog which is rarely allowed off the lead in order to stop the habit of free-hunting or is untrustworthy and pegged to prevent it running-in. Remember to keep things calm and controlled; the dog needs to learn the right actions in a positive, rewarding way. ■

Ian is a trainer and director of The Working Dog Company. To contact him, email info@workingdogcompany.co.uk or tel 01462 450830.

Advancing heelwork

If you have been consistent with the approach to heelwork given in the first instalment of *Gundog training* (4 April), by now your dog should be happily walking by your side, nicely at heel and showing no anxiety at being on the lead.

I start by having the dog sitting calmly with its head adjacent to my knee; I give my left thigh a light tap, say "heel" and walk off expecting the dog to follow in the correct position. I hold the handle loop of the lead in my right hand and lightly grip the standing part of the lead with my left hand about 30cm above the dog's neck.

To turn right I let go my left hand, tap my thigh, say heel and turn right, allowing my body to take up the slack in the lead. This eases the dog to follow and teaches it to watch you on command of heel. As I walk on, I take up the lead with my left hand to maintain control. After a few paces I stop



TURNING TO THE RIGHT

Hold the lead in the right hand, taking up the slack with the left



The left hand releases the lead, the leg taking up the slack



Once walking straight, take up the slack with the left hand

and expect the dog to sit in the heel position. I praise the right response with a gentle ear stroke and repeat the words "good dog, heel".

Repeat this until the dog is complying and turning with you without resistance.

To teach the dog to turn left at heel, the method needs to be altered to ensure a dog heeling at left knee does not trip you or get trodden on as you turn across it. Walk on as before, but instead of letting go the left hand gently take up the strain and ease the dog back slightly with a little pressure. At the same time say "heel". Leading with

your left leg, take a deliberate left step and turn your body to follow on. Walk on and repeat the command "heel" in order for the dog to catch up with your position. After a few paces stop, sit the dog up and praise the correct position as before.

For an about-turn, use the right-turn method, but continue all the way around, using your body to take up any slack in the lead. Once walking in a straight line, take up the lead with your left hand for control and after a few paces stop and praise the correct position. Keep practising the heelwork and throw in left, right and about-turns often to ensure the dog keeps its attention on you and learns to follow wherever you choose to go. Always praise the right behaviour and calmly correct the wrong behaviour by taking a step back to the basic heel-training routine.



TURNING TO THE LEFT

Take up the strain with the left hand and ease the dog back



Take a deliberate step to the left and turn your body to follow on

Introducing the sit-and-stay exercises



If the dog is confused by the sit command, use one hand to lift its head, while very gently pushing its rump to the ground with the other hand



Once the sit command has been mastered, you can start to teach the stay exercise: back away a pace or two, but keep hold of the lead while you do this

Once your dog is walking reliably at heel, it is time to introduce a sit-and-stay exercise. My method works as follows: walk the dog along for 20 yards or so, stop, give a short "pip" on the whistle, raise one hand in a policeman's halt sign and tell the dog to sit. The dog should sit without hesitation. If the dog looks a little confused, place one hand under his chin and the other on his rump. Lift his head up while very gently easing his rump down, whistle pip and command "sit" and use a raised hand signal.

In time and with repetition, you will be able to drop the word command and he should start sitting willingly to the sound of the whistle and hand signal. Tell the dog to stay, and with hand raised, take a step or two away from him, keeping hold of the lead in your outstretched hand. Hold that position for a count of five then return and praise the sit-stay. Keep practising this.

As he learns to comply, extend both the duration and the distance while also remembering to reinforce the whistle-sit from the farthest point you stand facing him. To extend the distance you will need to drop the lead on



Extend the distance and the duration of the sit-and-stay exercise and drop the lead as you back away



Reward the dog every time it has complied by making a fuss of him

the dog start to get up and move towards you as you back away, reinforce the sit and whistle and take a short step forward to remind the dog it should stay.

If the dog has chosen to get up, you will need to take control of it and take it back to the sit-stay position yourself to reinforce

the stay command. Completion and compliance of this exercise will have an important bearing for future directional work, so keep practising it regularly as part of your routine. Continue training by mixing the sit-and-stay exercise in with heelwork training to develop greater obedience.

the distance you move away from the dog short at this stage, and only increase it when the exercise is successful. Should

NEXT TIME
Ian will introduce a reliable recall exercise and the first retrieving exercises—the key foundations for every well-behaved gundog