

The Seven Cues

Your Puppy Training Wall Chart

One word. One hand signal. Everyone in the house doing it the same way.

Stick page two on the fridge. The whole point is that the eight-year-old and the grandparent give the cue exactly the way you do — because a puppy who hears five versions of “sit” is learning that none of them are real.

The pattern behind all seven

Lure → mark → pay. Then drop the lure fast.

Lure means a treat at her nose, moving her body into position. It works beautifully, and it becomes a trap if you leave it in. Three or four lured reps, then the same hand movement with nothing in it — and the treat comes from your pouch after she’s done it. That empty-handed movement is your hand signal. It always was. You just used food to teach her to watch it.

Add the word only once the gesture is working. Get the signal reliable first, then start saying the word just before you make it. The word attaches to a pattern she already understands.

Why signals first

Because if you stop right there, you’ve still got a trained dog — one who works in wind, across a field, through a noisy kitchen, and for the quietest child in the house.

The two rules that make every cue work

RULE ONE: ASK ONCE.

Say the word one time, then wait. Three seconds feels like a year — give it anyway. “Sit, sit, siiit, SIT!” teaches her the first one isn’t the real one. Neither is the second. She isn’t being stubborn; she’s being accurate. If nothing happens, don’t repeat and don’t scold — make it easier, then pay her for getting it right.

RULE TWO: MARK THE MOMENT, THEN PAY WITHIN A SECOND OR TWO.

Her rear end touches the floor for a fraction of a second. The marker word — ours is a bright, short, always-identical “yes!” — tells her which fraction earned the food. Behaviour → “yes!” instantly → treat within a second or two. A treat that lands five seconds late rewards whatever she was doing five seconds later, which is usually wandering off.

The seven cues

ONE WORD · ONE SIGNAL · EVERYONE THE SAME



Sit

"SIT"

Flat hand rising, palm up

Treat at her nose, move it slowly back over her head. Head up, bottom down. "Yes!" — pay.



Lie down

"DOWN"

Flat hand lowering, palm down

From a sit, treat from nose straight to the floor between her paws. Mark the instant her elbows land.



Come

"COME"

Both hands to your chest

Crouch, open arms, happy voice, run backwards a few steps. Pay enormously — this is the one that saves lives.



Stay put

"WAIT"

Raised flat palm

One second, mark, pay, release. Then two. Build from one second, not from ten.



Get off

"OFF"

Thumb flicked away

Four paws on the floor gets marked and paid. Never a knee, never a shove.



Leave that

"LEAVE"

Open palm low, blocking

Boring treat in a closed fist. The moment she stops working at it — "yes!" — pay from the other hand with something better.



Give it up

"TRADE"

Point at the floor

Offer a better swap. Mouth opens, "yes!", she gets the upgrade. Never chase, never pry.

Two words families collide on

“**Down**” **only ever means lie down** — not “get off the couch.” That’s “Off.” One person means the floor, another means the sofa, and the puppy stops trusting the word. And “**Trade**” **means a swap, never a fight** — the day you wrestle something out of her mouth is the day she learns to run off with it and swallow fast.

Then the hard part — the three D’s

A cue performed in a quiet kitchen is about ten percent of a trained cue. The rest is proofing:

Duration

two seconds, then five, then fifteen

Distance

one step back, then three, then across the yard

Distraction

kitchen, hallway, yard, yard with a ball in your hand, beach

Turn one dial at a time. If you add distance, drop the duration back down. Two failures in a row means you’ve turned a dial too far: go back, get two wins, stop there. **Always end on a win.**

The family scoreboard

Two minutes each, once a day, beats one long session on a Sunday. Tick a box when someone runs a block — kids included.

CUE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Sit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Down	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Come	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wait	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Off	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trade	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

From *The Whole Family Puppy Training Book* by Michael Petitpas • nsducktoller.com

Yours to keep — print as many copies as your family needs. The full book covers potty training, crate and alone time, biting, jumping, socialization, leash work and emergency recall: amazon.ca/dp/B0H9PXXHQN1