

Training Exercises for New Lisbon Raisers

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Back (as in backing up) from “the Spruce Pets”

Teaching your dog to obey the command "**back**" has practical uses. It's very useful if you need your dog to back away from an open door or to step back when it's crowded

Begin With "Stay"

Start off by giving your dog the **stay** command. If your dog doesn't know how to stay yet, it would help if you went back and worked on that before moving on to the next step.

Back Away

Take a few steps away from your dog, and then turn and face them.

Move Forward

Begin moving towards your dog. Some dogs will take a few steps back the minute you start moving in their direction. If your dog doesn't start stepping back as you move toward it, keep going forward, and try to lean your body forward slightly.

Offer Praise and a Reward

As soon as your dog takes a few steps back, tell them "yes!", and then give them a treat.

Repeat this a few times

Add the Command

Once your dog seems to understand the action, it's time to introduce the command. The next time say "**back**" as you move toward your dog. Continue to praise ("yes") and reward (treat) your dog when it backs up on cue.

Most dogs learn to back up quickly. Practice these steps for a few minutes each day, and your dog will soon be responding to the back command.

Do it with the dog in the "heel" position on your left side

Once they understand the command, ideally the dog will respond to the "**back**" command when they are in the heel position. Start making this transition by walking with a wall, fence or other barrier located along the left side and then give the dog the "**back**" command. It will be harder for them to go anywhere else besides backwards. Praise and reward the instant the dog starts

walking backwards even if it is only 1 or 2 steps back. Practice adding just 1 more step backwards until the dog will walk back several steps.

Once they have mastered doing this against a wall or fence, try it farther away from a wall or in an open area. This is harder and the dog may tend to veer off to one side or the other instead of walking straight back. Start small with just 1 or 2 steps back and praise and reward accordingly. Gradually try adding 1 more step until the dog will walk back several steps straight back.

Practice doing this in different locations (IE: main street, the outdoor track, in the unit, etc).

Problems and Proofing Behavior

If your dog fails to step back, a little more encouragement may be needed. Continue to walk towards the dog and when you reach them, use the part of your leg above your knee to very gently give a nudge backward. Your dog will naturally take a few steps back as you use your body to gently push it. Offer your praise and a treat as soon as the dog moves backward.

Some dogs will get up and move away rather than backward when you attempt to teach this command. In this instance, you may need to move your training sessions to a narrow hallway or other enclosed space. Follow the same steps and make sure that your dog has no place to go except backward.

Don't get frustrated if your dog is still not responding as quickly as you hoped. Every dog learns differently. It's important to keep training sessions short and positive; practice for only about 5-10 minutes at a time.

If backing up is too hard, switch to an easier action that your dog knows, like sit or down. Reward these behaviors and try "**back**" again. If the session has gone on long enough, end with an easy action and reward your dog with treats and praise. You can always come back and try "**back**" another day.

Once your dog is regularly backing up for you, proof the behavior in various situations. For instance, do your next few sessions outside in the yard where there will be a few more distractions. Then, try it in various places inside. A dog who truly gets the command should be able to do it no matter the circumstances.

Even though you may not use this command as often as others, it is important to practice it from time to time. Make a point of adding it to your regular training routine or even just asking your dog to back up at least once a week or every couple of days. This will help keep the command in your dog's memory.