

How to Make a Sighthound Puppy Obedient



A sighthound, being a hound, has a somewhat different inner organization compared to other breeds. Hounds are considered "thinking" dogs. Their function is to catch prey independently, without the help of their owner, and sometimes this "prey" behaves quite cunningly. Hounds have to make decisions on the go by themselves. This is always important to remember when raising a small, important, and restless sighthound puppy.

TIP #1

It's more beneficial to talk to your sighthound rather than command it. Some commands like "come" and "no" are naturally convenient and necessary to teach the puppy. However, some commands can simply be rephrased into a more conversational form. Instead of "forward," say "let's go," and instead of "come," say "come here." Up to about 4 months, a sighthound puppy is developing physically. Later, the "mental" aspect develops, if you can put it that way. This is related to the nature of the hound dog. Therefore, when raising a sighthound puppy, remember that inhibitory processes are much weaker than excitatory ones. And commands like "stop" and "sit" won't be understood immediately. This requires time and a lot of patience. The most important commands to teach your sighthound puppy are "come" (or "stop") and "no!" These are crucial and can save the young dog's life on the street.

TIP #2

As the puppy gets used to you as its owner, you become the most important thing in its life. Your attitude serves as a measure of good and bad for the puppy. Your personality will inevitably leave an unforgettable mark on the puppy, whether you want it to or not. Sensible discipline based on love and respect for the puppy is the strongest and most effective training tool. Commands are just your helper—a clear and unambiguous signal to the sighthound puppy about your attitude towards events. Don't forget this!

TIP #3

Reward is something that evokes pleasant emotions and always follows an action by the dog or stopping an action. Rewarding a sighthound puppy beforehand, before it has done something (or stopped doing something), is absolutely pointless; the puppy simply won't be able to connect the two events. Rewards can be treats, praise, or a favorite toy. Naturally, rewards can also come from the dog's own actions. For example, if the sighthound finds something tasty while digging through the trash or successfully scares off an enemy by showing aggression, these serve as natural rewards. In puppyhood, before the sighthound puppy learns the "no" command, avoid situations where unwanted behavior might be naturally reinforced. Prevention is better than punishment. There can never be too much reward, but when it comes to punishment, great caution is needed. You must be very careful about when and how you punish the sighthound.

TIP #4

Remember: punish any dog, especially a sighthound puppy, only at the moment of the "crime" or immediately afterward. If even five seconds have passed and the puppy has switched to something else, it won't understand you and will associate the punishment with the other action. If you must resort to punishment, avoid aggression. A sighthound, like any dog, never does anything out of spite or to get back at you. Their minds are straightforward, and they can't think that way. The first and often most effective punishment is a stern, low voice (similar in tone to a growl) and an unwavering look in the eyes. Not every adult sighthound can withstand this. A stern, unblinking, threatening gaze is very powerful, and you should hold it until the sighthound looks away. Usually, this is followed by guilty tail wagging and attempts to make amends. If you look away first, there will be no effect. Another effective measure is a strong slap of a rolled-up newspaper against your palm (not the dog), knee, or any nearby object. Remember, never on the dog! Whatever the puppy has done, if it stops, you must also stop. Don't shout loudly at the dog; they have excellent hearing. Your shouting is seen as clumsy aggression. Better to avoid such measures, especially since sighthounds can be sensitive and often have weak nervous systems. Remember, sighthounds have thin and very sensitive skin.

TIP #5

It's better to prevent than to punish after the fact! Punishment is a last resort, and any unwanted behavior is partly your fault for not preventing it. Yes, it's a constant effort to prevent all potential unwanted actions, but it's crucial. Strive to achieve the desired behavior through encouragement—punishment should always be the exception. Never coddle the sighthound immediately after punishment; it's better to deprive them of attention for a while as this is also a form of punishment.

TIP #6

Communication is as important as food or walks. The most important form of communication for a sighthound is not affection but joint participation in any activity, even if it's just play. So even training, if done correctly, is not seen by the sighthound as coercion but as a shared activity, and that's why the puppy gets immense pleasure from learning.

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