



BOWMAN & CO. CANINE TRAINING

## WEEK 1: COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

*Instruction Sheet • Keep this page at home for reference*

**Goal:** Teach your dog exactly what your communication means before expecting reliability. Keep sessions short, clear, and successful.

### YOUR MARKER WORDS

| MARKER  | WHAT IT MEANS                                      | WHAT YOU DO                                                                                                                                             |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| YES     | "Exactly right — you earned the jackpot."          | Mark the exact correct moment, give a jackpot/high-value reward, and release the dog from that command/position. YES does not end the training session. |
| GOOD    | "You're doing it right — keep doing it."           | Use as a duration marker while the dog remains in position. Reward while the dog stays there.                                                           |
| NO      | "That choice was not correct — try again."         | Say it calmly and neutrally. Reset or guide the dog, then give another chance to succeed.                                                               |
| CLICKER | A precise marker that means the same thing as YES. | Click the instant the dog gets it right, reward, and release the dog from that command/position. The click does not end the training session.           |

### FOUNDATION EXERCISES

#### 1. Follow the Lure

Place a treat at your dog's nose and move your hand slowly enough that the dog can follow it. Reward for staying connected to the lure. Use this to guide positions without pulling or forcing the dog.

#### 2. Sit Calmly by Your Side

Lure or guide your dog into a sit next to your leg. Mark YES when the dog reaches the correct position and reward beside your leg. Build calmness before adding movement or distractions.

#### 3. Reward Calm

Notice quiet, relaxed choices. If your dog settles, stands calmly, or sits without demanding attention, mark and reward it. Calm behavior becomes stronger when it pays.

#### 4. Reward Focus & Check-Ins

When your dog looks at you or voluntarily checks in, mark YES or CLICK and reward. You are teaching your dog that paying attention to you is valuable.

#### 5. Clear Communication

Give one cue, allow your dog a moment to respond, then mark the result clearly. Avoid repeating cues over and over. Your marker should happen at the exact moment the correct behavior occurs.

### PRACTICE TIPS

- Complete TWO intentional training sessions each day.
- Each training session may be up to 15 minutes maximum. Shorter is fine if your dog is losing focus.
- Start somewhere easy with few distractions.
- Use small, high-value treats and reward quickly.
- Do not worry about perfection. We are building understanding first.
- End each session on a successful repetition whenever possible.



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## **WEEK 1: GOALS FOR NEXT CLASS**

*Bring this page back with your homework tracker*

By next class, we are looking for understanding and progress — not perfection.

### **TRAINING GOALS**

My dog can focus/check in with me in a low-distraction area.

My dog can sit calmly by my side for a short period.

My dog can follow a food lure with their nose/body.

My dog is beginning to understand YES marks the exact correct behavior, earns a jackpot reward, and releases them from that command/position.

My dog is beginning to understand GOOD means keep doing what you are doing.

My dog is beginning to understand the CLICKER means the same thing as YES: exact correct moment, reward, and release from the command/position.

My dog is beginning to understand NO means that choice was incorrect and they should try again.

I am getting better at rewarding calm behavior instead of only reacting to unwanted behavior.

I am getting better at marking and rewarding voluntary focus/check-ins.

I can give a cue once, pause, and communicate clearly instead of repeating myself.

### **QUICK SELF-CHECK FOR THE HANDLER**

|                                  |            |           |                   |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| <b>Marker timing</b>             | Needs work | Improving | Feeling confident |
| <b>Reward placement</b>          | Needs work | Improving | Feeling confident |
| <b>Two sessions / 15-min max</b> | Needs work | Improving | Feeling confident |
| <b>Clear, calm communication</b> | Needs work | Improving | Feeling confident |

### **WHAT I WANT TO ASK NEXT WEEK**

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## **WEEK 1: HOMEWORK TRACKER**

*Saturday through Friday • Bring this sheet back to class*

Dog: \_\_\_\_\_ Handler: \_\_\_\_\_

| SKILL               | SAT | SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| YES                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| GOOD                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| NO                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| CLICKER             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Follow lure         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Sit by side         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Reward calm         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Reward focus        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Clear communication |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

How to use this tracker: Complete two training sessions each day, with each session lasting no more than 15 minutes. Check the skills you intentionally worked on that day. You do not have to practice every skill in every session. Quality and clear communication matter more than using the full 15 minutes.

### **NOTES, STRUGGLES & QUESTIONS FOR NEXT CLASS**

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**Bowman & Co. Canine Training • Better Dogs. Stronger Bonds.**