

## Chapter 10 – Teaching Tricks

Some of the very first trick dogs were dogs who performed in circuses. As early as the 1700s and 1800s, dogs were performing in shows across Europe. They danced, carried trained monkeys on their backs, stood on their hind legs to box, and walked on tight ropes.

Later, from the 1920s through the 1950s, trick dogs such as Rin Tin Tin and Lassie appeared on television and in movies and won peoples' hearts. Since then, trick dog training has become one of the most exciting new areas in dog training. The popularity of trick dog training is growing by leaps and bounds and millions of people at a time watch dogs performing tricks on television shows such as "America's Got Talent."



### What is a Dog Trick?

Tricks are simply behaviors that are taught to the dog and in most cases, they



*Tricks are a fun activity for all dogs and trainers.*

are designed to entertain. Often, there is a story line. For example, in a trick demonstration for seniors in assisted living, "Buffy," a Cocker Spaniel, might do a tricks routine where she shows some of the activities in her day starting with sitting at a small desk at school, carrying the flag, dropping a basketball in a toy hoop, and at the end of the day, going to her bed and covering herself with a blanket. At dog events in past years, spectators were delighted to watch "Norman," a Briard who

# 4-H Dog Project Manual

was a nationally recognized trick dog, as he rode a bike and scooter and amazed the crowd.

## Why Do Tricks Training?

Guess what!?! You *can* teach an old dog new tricks! And, you can teach a young dog new tricks. Tricks are a fun activity for all dogs and trainers. Teaching tricks to a dog can actually make someone a better dog trainer. How do you get a dog to jump through a hula hoop? It's easy, of course. Just put the dog on one side, hold a treat on the other, and call the dog through. But let's make the trick harder. How about this task? Now put the hula hoop on the ground. How do you get the dog to run across the yard and flip the hoop up and run through before it falls? When you teach tricks to your dog, you will learn to solve training puzzles like this one. Tricks are for every dog, and pet dogs aren't the only dogs who benefit from tricks training. Competition trainers often teach their dogs to do tricks to relieve stress. Tricks can also be used to entertain others in places such as nursing homes and assisted living centers.

## Trick Dog Titles

*Do More With Your Dog!*<sup>®</sup>

You can always teach your dog tricks at home for fun. But if you want to formalize your trick training and earn titles, there are



You can earn tricks titles at 4-H classes or events, or at AKC Trick Dog tests at dog shows.

two titling organizations that can help you. *Do More With Your Dog!* (DMWYD) was started by Kyra Sundance in 2005. DMWYD certifies instructors, awards titles, and holds education events and seminars. For information on DMWYD or training materials, see [domorewithyourdog.com](http://domorewithyourdog.com)

*American Kennel Club (AKC) Trick Dog Program*

In 2017, the AKC added trick dog titles to its rapidly growing list of training options for pet dogs. AKC's trick dog titles are noncompetitive and the program is administered by AKC Approved CGC Evaluators. Because 4-H dog leaders can

## Chapter 10 – *Teaching Tricks*

become AKC CGC Evaluators, this means that your 4-H leader can test and award AKC Trick Dog titles at 4-H classes and events. Of course, other options are you can attend classes by a CGC Evaluator and get tested there, or you can participate in AKC Trick Dog tests at dog shows.

### Levels of AKC Trick Dog Titles

There are five levels of AKC Trick Dog titles. These are:

#### 1. Novice (TKN)

The dog performs 10 skills from the Novice list. Some of the Novice tricks include: walk on a balance beam, bark on cue, crawl, get in a box, high five, jump over a bar or through a hoop, paws up, shake hands, and spin in a circle.

- CGC + 5. If a dog has a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certificate or title on record at AKC, it only has to do five Novice Tricks (CGC + 5) to earn the Novice title.

At the Novice level of AKC Trick Dog, the handler may use food (or toys) as a lure, and food may also be used after a trick as a reward. A lure (food or a toy) is used to guide the dog into position.

#### 2. Intermediate (TKI)

The dog must have the Novice title, plus perform 10 Intermediate tricks. Some of the tricks on the Intermediate list include: balance a treat on nose, carry a basket,

catch, go to your place, hand signals, leg weave, paws up, roll over, weave poles and wobble board.

#### 3. Advanced (TKA)

The dog must have the Intermediate title, plus perform 5 tricks from the Advanced list. Sample of tricks from the Advanced list include: back up, roll a barrel, bow, cover your eyes, go hide, jump into handler's arms, turn on a light, play dead, scent articles and take a tissue out of a box.

#### 4. Performer (TKP)

For Trick Dog Performer, the dog performs at least 10 tricks. There must be at least 3 Performer tricks in the routine and at least 3 of the tricks must have props. Props are equipment that helps tell a story such as a toy phone, a baby stroller that the dog pushes, or a toy piano. The Performer routine may have a story or theme (such as "Princess Goes to School"), but it is not required.

#### 5. Elite Performer (TKE)

The Elite Performer is the highest level of the AKC Trick Dog titles. Elite Performers must perform a routine that has a story and script. At least 5 props are used and at least 5 tricks must be from the Performer level.

The annual AKC Trick Dog Elite Performer Virtual Competition is a fun event in which videos are submitted and

# 4-H Dog Project Manual

judged to determine the leading Elite Performer Trick Dog.

## How to Teach Basic Tricks

Teaching your dog tricks is fun and you can get started at home. Here are five easy tricks to get you started. You can also watch videos on how to teach tricks at akc.org. See: <https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/>



## Fetch It and Give (ball, toy, bring it to handler)

To teach fetch, start with a toy that your dog is willing to hold. This can be a tennis ball, stuffed animal, or soft toy.

1. Have your treats ready in your pocket or treat bag.

2. Begin by throw the toy a short distance away and in a perky voice, say, “fetch it!”

3. If your dog is a natural retriever and brings the toy back to you, praise him- say, “Good boy!” as you take the toy and give

him a treat.

4. If your dog does not bring the toy to you, start by putting the toy directly in front of you. Say, “fetch it!” and when the dog picks it up, back up only one step. You can pat your legs and encourage the dog to come to you. When he comes to you, praise and give him a treat.

5. Next, you will step back two steps, then continue adding distance to increase how far the dog will go to fetch the toy.

## Kiss on the Cheek

1. Have your treats ready in your pocket or treat bag, and have some peanut butter ready.

2. Some dogs are natural kissers. You can say, “Give me a kiss,” “Kiss, kiss,” or



“Kisses,” and point to your cheek. Keep the verbal cue that you choose consistent. If the dog gives you a kiss (licks your cheek), say, “good kiss,” and give him a treat.

## Chapter 10 – Teaching Tricks

3. If your dog is not a natural when it comes to kissing, you can help him along. Put a small dab of peanut butter (or another favorite taste) on your finger. Let the dog lick it off.

4. Next, put a small dab of peanut butter on your cheek. Say “Give me a kiss,” and turn your cheek so he can get the peanut butter. As soon as he licks the peanut butter, praise him.

5. The final step is you will say, “Give me a kiss,” and the dog will kiss your cheek without peanut butter. Until he does this reliably, give him a food reward for “kissing” you.

### Spin in a Circle

1. Have your treats ready in your pocket or treat bag. Before you begin, try several kinds of treats with your dog so that you have one she is eager to work for.

To teach your dog to spin, the treat is both a reward (after the behavior) and a lure that is used to guide the dog.

2. To teach your dog to spin to the right you can say, “spin” or “circle right”, as you hold the treat in your right hand.

3. Move the treat to the right in a large circle. Keep the treat at the level of the dog’s nose and move it slowly in a fluid motion.

4. Once your dog has completed a circle, say, “Good spin,” and give her the treat.



(© American Kennel Club).

5. Continue practicing and gradually move the lure faster, and make the circles tighter.

6. If you decide that you also want to teach your dog to spin to the left, say, “circle left,” and eventually the dog will learn the difference between right and left spins.

7. The steps above can be repeated by holding the lure in your left hand to teach the dog to circle left.

8. The final step is fading out the lure and simply giving the dog the hand signal for spin.

### Jump through a hoop

Jumping through a hoop is a good first step to teaching your dog to jump through your arms.

Jumping through your arms or a hoop is a trick that works best for small and

# 4-H Dog Project Manual



medium sized dogs.

1. Have your treats ready in your pocket or treat bag.

2. Start with the hoop on the ground.

3. The first step is to have your dog simply walk through the hoop to get the treat.

4. Give the dog the verbal cue you have chosen such as, “Through,” or “Hup.” Don’t say, “Jump,” because this word will be used with other tricks.

5. As soon as the dog goes through the hoop give her a treat and praise.

6. Next, raise the hoop a few inches off the ground. Your dog will do a small hop over (and through) the hoop.

7. Continue to slowly raise the hoop so your dog will jump through.

## **Sit Pretty**

This fun trick will teach your dog to “sit pretty.” If you’ve ever done yoga, dance, or any other activity that requires good balance, you know that sometimes it can take a while to develop the muscles and

control you need to stand on one foot with the other leg in the air. This is the same for dogs, and in teaching “sit pretty,” it may take a while for a dog to be able to do this. “Sit pretty” is an easier for smaller and medium sized dogs because their centers of gravity are lower.

1. Have your treats ready in your pocket or treat bag.

2. Put the dog in a “sit.” (You have already taught “sit”).

3. Hold a treat just above your dog’s nose. Say “sit pretty,” then slowly raise the treat.

4. As the dog tries to get the treat, his front feet will come off the ground. As soon as the front feet are off the ground, give him the treat and praise him.

5. Repeat this process and continue to raise the treat a little bit higher each time until the dog is sitting up. Praise the dog and give him the treat.

6. Next, you want to add time to the sit. Do not try to add too much time at once; add a second or two at a time before giving the treat.

## Chapter 10 – *Teaching Tricks*



### Summary

Teaching your dog tricks is fun for both you and your dog. You can teach tricks at home or your 4-H dog leader can help you get started. 4-H dog leaders who are AKC CGC Evaluators can do the testing for AKC trick dog titles at 4-H classes and events. Teaching tricks will refine your skills as a dog trainer, and if your dog is a therapy dog, you can use tricks routines to entertain and bring smiles to people in therapy settings.

### References

AKC CGC Approved Evaluator Application. See [akc.org](http://akc.org) and type “CGC Evaluator Application” in the search box.

AKC Trick Dog Title Applications.  
<http://www.akc.org/trick-Dog/trick-dog-applications/>

AKC Trick Dog Training (2017).  
Instructional videos.  
<https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/>

Sundance, Kyra (2007). *101 Dog Tricks: Step by Step Activities to Engage, Challenge, and Bond with Your Dog*. Quarry Books, 2nd edition, London, England.