



Your Smart Dog

New Year's Resolutions from a Dog Trainer

January 2006

You've heard the usual resolutions: get in shape, eat better, and get organized. This year, my dogs are going to revel in the resolution spotlight – all my resolutions will involve them. You've heard about the cobbler whose children don't have shoes? That story applies to dog trainers as well... sometimes we neglect to train our own dogs as well as they could (or should) be. So this year my dogs and I will brush up on some rusty skills (nail trimming and ear cleaning), and also introduce some new behaviors and complexities. I'm looking forward to getting started – it'll be fun for both the dogs and for me. If you want to include your dog in your resolutions, read on for ideas and inspiration...

Working with your dog, whether it's for tricks or for nail trimming, is fun. If it's not fun, you're doing something wrong...

Nail Trimming and Ear Cleaning

I was really good at this when my dogs were little puppies, but somewhere around the time they turned six months I just quit practicing with them. They've now grown quite fond of being left alone. I'll need to go "all the way back to kindergarten" with them and teach it to them as if they've never had their nails trimmed or ears

cleaned. It's not a difficult process, just takes time and regular practice.

I'll make this process fun and exciting for the dogs by using toys and food as rewards. I'll also start at the very beginning and progress only as fast as my dogs tell me. With a little bit of patience, lots of good rewards, and plenty of practice, I think I can have this project licked in a month or two.

I want my dogs to know that I am the most interesting thing out there. And I have to work hard to do that!

Attention in the Face of Distractions

We do just fine when there's not a lot going on, but their attention could be better, especially when we're around other dogs. This is another fairly easy one to accomplish, but one that will take lots and lots of practice and monitoring on my part. It's important that the distractions be large enough that they notice them, but not so big that they can't pay attention. Lots of big rewards on my part – I want my dogs to know that I am the most interesting thing out there. And I have to work hard to do that!

Entertaining Behaviors (Tricks!)

Tricks are fun to teach your dog, fun for your dog to do, and really help to get you



and your dog “on the same page” and working together. Some fun ones to try are: roll over, roll half way over (“play dead”), wave a paw, give a high-five, speak, shhh, whisper ... You are limited only by your imagination.

Working with your dog, whether it’s for tricks or for nail trimming, should be fun. If it’s not fun, you’re doing something wrong – even trimming nails can be fun if the consequences are really, really good for the dog. The key to success is breaking each element down into its tiniest pieces. Download a [helpful worksheet](#) to help you meet your goal.

We’re the ones with the larger brains, it’s up to us to figure out how to make it fun for our dogs – brute force will get the job done (maybe!), but it’s so much better to work with cooperation, not coercion. The end result is a dog that’s **happy to work with you**. And in the end, isn’t that what we’re really after?

Happy New Year to you and your dog(s)!

Laurie Luck
Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT)
Smart Dog University, LLC
Box 1111
Mount Airy, MD 21771
(240) 848-3468
laurie@smartdoguniversity.com
<http://www.SmartDogUniversity.com>

Helping good dogs become great dogs.

If you know of others who would like to receive *Your Smart Dog* for FREE, please forward this copy so they can subscribe at

<http://www.smartdoguniversity.com>

Your Smart Dog is sent monthly only to those who have opted-in to this list. If you do not wish to receive *Your Smart Dog* or have received it in error, simply reply to this email with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

© 2006 Smart Dog University, LLC. All rights reserved.