



## 3 CORDS OF TRAINING

**JUST AS A ROPE HAS THREE CORDS THAT** weave together to form one strong rope, there are three cords to your dog that, when properly addressed, weave together to give you a well-trained, satisfied dog that is completely content with life. We call these the Three Cords of Training. Simply put, they are

- **Obedience**
- **Action**
- **Thinking**

The goal of this short article is to give a clear meaning to these three cords, to show how they fit into the overall training picture, and to show why they are so important.

### ***CORD 1 - OBEDIENCE***

This is the disciplined part of training. Every dog needs to learn to be attentive to the leader and to exercise self-control around distractions. If there is no discipline in training, the result will be a dog that doesn't understand consequences and will ignore the leader when distracted by something that is more appealing than anything the leader has to offer. This training is usually thought of as Basic Obedience and will generally include all of the basic commands. Important to this cord of training is to introduce each new skill in a way that the dog understands and allows him to progress through the training in a way



that makes sense to him. Far more important will be the teaching of control rather than the expectation that obedience commands alone will automatically give the leader control. Also important to this cord is to know when and how to introduce distractions into the training in a way that makes sense to the dog and allows him to learn how to behave without the stress and conflict that can be associated with distractions.

**HEEL**

**SIT**

**STAY**

**DOWN**

**COME**

## ***CORD 2 - ACTION***

This is the exercise part of training. Obedience training alone will not satisfy the drives in most dogs. Look at it this way: Imagine Kobe Bryant as a child, running and leaping through the house. Had he been told that all he needed to do to satisfy his inner drive to fly through the air was to run around the track for a few miles every day (the equivalent of taking the dog on a walk), he certainly would have been fit, but would that have been sufficient to satisfy his desire to play basketball? We all know the answer.



It is the responsibility of the dog owner to determine what it will take to satisfy the inner drive of his dog. For a large percentage of dogs, playing ball will take care of that drive. Some dogs love playing tug. Some want to do both. Some love it when their leader hides a toy in the yard, and they get to zip around trying to find it.

Just as the game of basketball has rules, so does play. We do not let the dog determine how the game is played (who is the leader?). If we throw the ball, he must bring it back. If we tug, he must immediately let go when told. If we are going to engage him in play, we must make it a sufficient play session to wear him out. Can you imagine a basketball game that lasts for five minutes? All of these rules of play are training issues that aren't too hard to teach if the overall training picture is being done correctly. And when the play session is done the right way, the dog is not only satisfied and content, but he also becomes more and more bonded to his leader.



## CORD 3 - THINKING

There are many activities that one can engage a dog in that requires thinking. And when I say “thinking,” I mean that the dog has to engage his intellect to problem solve his way to the completion of a task or series of tasks. Instead of allowing him opportunity to figure out how to destroy your yard or rearrange your living room furniture, I want to engage his intellect in a constructive way. There are many organized activities that not only engage a dog’s intellect, but they also address the action cord of training as well. Agility and herding classes are examples of

this kind of activity. The only problem with these kinds of activities is that they are not always easily accessible to the dog owner, and if it isn’t easy to access, it probably won’t get done on a regular basis.



Marker training, especially when teaching tricks and stunts, is easy to do because it can be done anywhere, such as the backyard, and it requires very little equipment and out-of-pocket expense. Done properly, it is very challenging, engaging, and fun for both dog and owner. It is a highly motivational reward-based method of training that uses treats or toys to reward learned skills. In marker training, the

dog is encouraged to figure out everything that the owner is teaching, engaging his intellect in constructive ways that will leave him satisfied and content.

These three cords – obedience, action, and thinking – address different parts of what the dog needs. Any cord done by itself, with no consideration for the other two, will not result in a completely trained dog. Just like the rope, if the three cords are properly woven together, the result will be a well-trained, happy and content member of the family.

*Visit our Facebook page to see videos of the three cords of training.*

