

Does your Dog know Yes?

Most dogs who have attentive owners have taught them the basic words: sit, down, touch, look, leave it, drop it, with me, go lay down, stay, off, come and of course the number one used word: no. But would it surprise you to learn that your pup knows many more words and phrases than just these few?

It's estimated that a typical dog knows between 150-250 words and phrases, while working dogs or dogs who have been really exposed to the world know more like 1,000. Don't believe it? Consider this, a dog knows every person's name in the family. They know the other pet's names and anyone who comes to visit regularly or treats them particularly well.

But they also know so much more. Where's daddy? Momma's home. Who's a good boy? This way. Let's go. C'mon. Who did that? Go get it. Who's here? Is it dinner time? Who's hungry? Hello? It's a puppy! Time to eat! Let's go for a walk. Want to go for a ride? Who wants to go swimming? Where's your ball?

And of course if your pup accompanies you on a boat or a weekend get-away, they'll also have that built into their repertoire and anything else you do regularly. A couple more that I tend to use are: Seriously! I'll get it. You got this. That was sexy. It was me. You ready? And the one I use the most; Yes!

So let me ask you this, your dog has learned so much of the human language just due to exposure – do they know when they're doing something right? Do they know Yes? Have you exposed them to it enough times that they get excited when they hear it? If you're like most people, the answer to that question is no. Our dogs tend to know the word no – and so many others – but not the word yes. They haven't yet learned an expression for “you're doing it right”.

So take the time to teach it to them. It doesn't take long. Ask for a behavior, say Yes and give them a treat (it could be a piece of their own food), repeat over and over and over again. As I drop treats out of the equation, my Yes! comes out with just as much emphasis and value as it did when it included a treat.

Dogs are crazy smart and learn a ton without any instruction or guidance so why not be sure they learn a word that makes them happy? A word that says; you're doing it, you rock. A word that can have so much power even when not accompanied by a treat.

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