



Welcome to Day Two of the SitStayFetch 6 Day Course

Why is my Dog Ignoring Me?

So your dog is ignoring you and you don't like that. Nobody likes being ignored. It even makes some people very angry. They are the ones that tend to get ignored even more as a result.

It's quite common for dogs to ignore commands. Often owners give dogs very few reasons to listen and a lot of reasons not to. A typical scenario might go something like this:



An owner is calling to their dog to "come," the dog ignores them; they call louder and with more venom; the dog continues ignoring them; they start marching angrily toward the dog, clenching their teeth with all the determination of someone not willing to tolerate this degree of disrespect (especially in public); the dog begins to crawl reluctantly toward the owner, knowing their number is up; finally, the owner takes the dog forcefully by the collar, maybe even throws in a smack or two for good measure, and issues another reminder of who the boss is around here.

Words cannot convey how backwards this is!

This "technique" may eventually get a result, but it obviously goes about doing it in all the wrong way. In the short term, it stresses out your dog (which is to say nothing about the potential harm from physical punishment, which I assume does not need to be said to anyone subscribing to a dog training newsletter series). In the long term, this form of discipline establishes a relationship based on fear and threats, rather than a healthy serving of respect.

Your dog needs a leader, and needs to be able to recognize and respond to what we call "commands." But that doesn't mean that you should be "ordering" your dog around. We create short, simple, and direct "commands" for dogs because dogs don't speak English, not because they love to be ordered around in this way. Even though you need to be the top dog, you don't have to make everything sound like a threat to establish your position in the hierarchy. If everything sounds like a threat, you'll get nowhere fast.

We like to say that a dog disobeys commands mostly for one of two reasons:

1) They don't understand you.

Because dogs are responding more to your tone than the actual words you are using, if your tone contradicts your command, you may not be giving your dog a clear idea of what you want him to do.

For example, let's say you have a dog named Bob that jumps up on you all the time. If you say "Get Down Bob, get down" while at the same giggling and pushing him gently, almost playfully away, you have just communicated to Bob the following: "Get down" equals "this game is fun, let's keep playing."

I see this mistake ALL of the time with dog owners.

Another related mistake is the practice of asking a dog to do something rather than telling. So, if you say, "Bob, come here" in way that sounds more like "Could you please maybe come here please???" Then you are effectively giving Bob a choice. So tell Bob to come. You don't have to yell or demand, just make it clear that you mean business.

Also, make sure your commands are simple enough. If you are blessed with a dog who understands "Bob, bring me a beer from the fridge," then you don't have to worry too much about this one. Most of us, however, do. Keep your commands short and simple. Make sure they don't sound too alike.

Lastly, it is always much better to pair hand signals with your verbal commands. In *the first part of this course* on problem jumping, I talked about using a simple extended hand gesture to tell your dog to "stop" before jumping up on you. My adult dogs are all to the point where I mostly use my voice when I want to "talk" to them. But when I want them to DO something, I can make eye contact and use a hand signal to get them to come, sit, lie down, get in the car, go inside or outside, wait at the curb, etc. Ideally, you'll get to this point as well, but you need to establish those hand signals, and use them.

If you've worked through all of these possibilities and your dog still does not seem to understand you, then you likely need more training. For older dogs, there is the added possibility that the hearing is going, so do consider that if it applies. It's another case where hand signals can go a long way.

2) They are ignoring you.

When your dog ignores commands, it means they understand what you want them to do but are deciding not to do it.

But, you ask, how can you tell? How can you tell if your dog is in fact understanding the exchange but has no intention of obeying?

The answer depends a lot on the body language of your dog. If they are showing signs of fear when you are giving training commands (submissive posturing, avoiding eye contact, ears back, tail tucked), then it is more likely that they don't understand. In these cases, owners can make the situation worse by being more forceful. By contrast, if your dog is posturing confidently, and they do not appear stressed, then it is more likely that they have opted not to listen. They may even be defiant - making direct eye contact, even barking at you, and running away when you approach.

This suggests a dominance issue. You will have to take active steps to establish yourself as the top dog, in addition to being a fun person to play with. But there are also a few immediate steps you can take to have more success with a stubborn mutt. Let's return to that all too common scenario of a wayward dog and the heard but unheeded command to "come."

Always:

- use a positive, happy, even excited tone of voice.
- try squatting down when calling. Open your arms as if to suggest an embrace or praise when they arrive.
- if you can, try walking the opposite way. This forces your dog to make a decision: Stay and get left, or go home with you and get dinner.
- Praise your dog whenever they come, no matter how long it takes.

- Praise your dog when they come to you without being asked. Create an environment in which they absolutely love coming over to you.

Never:

- chase after a dog that won't come, unless safety is an issue.
- call your dog to you to reprimand them.
- call your dog over for something they clearly do not enjoy (getting their nails clipped, taking a bath, etc.).

One final word of advice: if you are still struggling with your position as leader of the pack, I highly recommend naming your next dog "Boss"... "Come here Boss!" "Sit down, Boss!" "Go fetch Boss!" It's a most empowering remedy I assure you!

Well, that concludes the second installment of your SitStayFetch 6 Day Course. Join me next time for a comprehensive newsletter on problem **barking**, where you'll find out how to get the final word with a barking dog that never seems to stop.

Until then,

Daniel Stevens

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SitStayFetch

http://www.kingdomofpets.com/dogobediencetraining/6day_special.php

P.S. Did you know that we've got a Special Offer for Subscribers to the SitStayFetch 6 Day Course? (That's you). Check it out at:

http://www.kingdomofpets.com/dogobediencetraining/6day_special.php

P.P.S. Here's what some of our customers have said about SitStayFetch...

Success Story: Miki Skelton

"...She would listen to me, but ignore the commands of my husband."

"I love your SitStayFetch program! We had one truly unruly Chihuahua. She would listen to me, but ignore the commands of my husband. She was also extremely aggressive (as Chihuahuas usually are) in public. I knew she was sweet, but no one else would believe me. Strangers would come to pet her and she would go nuts. I just knew I was headed



for a lawsuit. After going through your program, she now is much better behaved. We still have a long way to go, but with your help I know we will acheive our goals. Thank you!"

-- Miki Skelton (Georgia, USA)

P.P.P.S. About SitStayFetch...

With over 25,743 customers (and counting), SitStayFetch: Dog Training to Stop Your Dog's Behavior Problems is the premier product of Kingdom of Pets. This comprehensive guide is written by renowned dog trainer Daniel Stevens, who currently heads the Kingdom of Pets dog training and obedience team.

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