



September 6, 2011

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**'Max, I said sit!'**

Learning through repetition  
By **Dianna Young**  
Special to the NEWS



Give immediate enforcement every time a dog does not comply to a known command.

You are probably already aware that whatever your dog learns from you, he learns through repetition. What you may not be aware of is that he may learn a lot of things from you that you had not intended to teach.

Take, for example, Max. He's a pleasant, intelligent, medium-sized dog with a winning personality. He's lived with his owner for several years, and she knows that he has a clear understanding of the command, "Sit."

His owner decides this is an appropriate moment for Max to hunker his hind-end down on the ground, so she looks him in the eye, makes sure she has his full attention, and says: "Sit."

Max stares back, his long, pink tongue hanging endearingly out the side of his mouth, a good-natured doggie grin on his countenance. And he ignores the command. "I said, 'Sit!'" his owner says.

Max continues to grin.

Her frustration is growing now, because she believes that Max is disobedient. She raises her voice. "Max! I said, 'Sit!'" She takes him firmly by the collar, but before she can force him into the "sit" position, he does it himself.

They've been through this scenario before, and it invariably makes her angry. She doesn't want a disobedient dog. But Max isn't necessarily a disobedient dog. He's an intelligent one, because he's just shown her that he can count.

What Max's owner doesn't realize is that she has taught him – through repetition – that she will not enforce her command until after the third or fourth time she says it. That is the only time, Max has learned, that she will follow through and compel him to carry her wishes out. So, why should he sit any sooner? Apparently, she's not serious the first several times.

What Max's owner should have done was correct him immediately after the first command by pulling up on his collar, pushing down on his hindquarters, and putting his fanny in an actual "sit."

She should have given immediate enforcement every time she didn't get compliance. She needed to teach Max – through repetition – that if he didn't

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comply on the first command, a correction always would follow.

Always.

The handler changed her handling technique. Before long, Max was complying on the first command.

Dianna Young is a certified dog trainer and canine behaviorist from Camano Island, where she operates Camano Island Kennels Dog Boarding and Training Facility.

She can be reached at (360) 387- DOGS or at [info@camanoislandkennels.com](mailto:info@camanoislandkennels.com). Or visit her at Facebook.



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We have a great event happening on Thurs., Oct. 6, 2011 at Dianna Lane's Arlington Chevrolet (21015 Hwy 9, Arlington) from 5:30-7:30 pm. Members from the Stanwood, Arlington-Smokey Point, and Camano Chambers are invited to network, build relationships, build business, and build awareness of what they do. There will be food and door prizes, too! We hope you will join us!

**SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN!** Save the date! An Old Fashioned Christmas in Stanwood Sat., Dec. 3, 2011, 10:00 am-2:00 pm Floyd Hargreaves Center, 27108 102nd Ave NW, Stanwood. Enjoy music of the season, photos with Santa, activities for children, museum tours, gift bags from Santa, coffee, cocoa and cookies. Thanks to Stanwood Chamber of Commerce members and the Stanwood Area Historical Society, this entire event is free, even the photos!

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