



FOUNDATION SKILLS FOR SERVICE DOG GAMES INTERNATIONAL

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JAMIE ROBINSON
SERVICE DOG GAMES INTERNATIONAL
<https://sdgamesintl.org>

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What are Foundation Skills

According to a new study, both domesticated dogs and one species of wild dog do a better job than human beings and chimpanzees of ignoring bad instructions and eliminating unnecessary steps when trying to solve a problem. It's a difference that says a lot about the social order of all of the species.

Dogs are more efficient learners than you think. In this seminar you will learn how dogs think, how to train them knowing this and what skills they actually need to live actively and easily in our human world.

Foundational skills are the fundamental, portable skills that are essential to conveying and receiving information that is critical to training and real-world success. These skills are fundamental in that they serve as a basis—the foundation—for supporting additional behaviors/tasks and learning. They are portable because, rather than being task specific, they can be applied at some level across a wide variety of behaviors.

Dogs who develop these skills have enhanced understanding of and are more responsive to the human world. Navigating the often confusing and inconsistent rules that humans create, knowing how to adapt instinctive and evolutionary behaviors to living with humans compatibly and working as a team with other animals in the home and the humans are all examples of using foundational skills.

Foundational skills are also necessary to learn more task-specific knowledge and skills. This is true across sports, social encounters, service and even protection. For example, both service dogs and protection dogs must understand when waiting is more appropriate than moving. Agility dogs have much less chance of injury and their speed through the course is increased from knowledge of their body parts and how they move.

Dog training is a lifelong process, but some skills have more effectiveness than others in living life with humans. Helping your dog master these skills lays the foundation and prepares your dog for a lifetime of good behavior and companionship. Whether you just brought home a puppy, adopted a shelter dog, or want to ensure your older dog maintains his sociability throughout life, these are the absolute most important skills to teach your dog (and yourself).

Foundation Level Games

Basic Service Dog Obedience Skills

- Sit: Dog must put its bum on the ground on cue and stay until released. 20 seconds
- Down: Dog must put its entire body on the ground on cue and stay until released. 20 seconds
- Stand: Dog must stop what it was doing and stay standing in one place until released. Or get up from a sit or down to all fours, staying in place until released. 20 seconds
- Stay: Dog must stay in one place in any position on cue (sit, down, stand, etc.) for 60 seconds
- Under: Dog must go under something (table, chair, desk, etc.) on cue and stay until released. 20 seconds.
- Tuck: Dog must go under something less than half the dog's height (from the head) on cue and stay until released. 20 seconds.
- Over: Dog must go over an obstacle. Must use one, two, three or all four feet at the top of the obstacle. On cue. This is not a jump over. It's more a walk over. Object must be at least half the height of the dog.
- Through: Dog must go through some kind of tunnel on cue. Top must be solid; sides may be open. Tunnel to be slightly lower than dog's height.

- Around: Dog must go around an object on cue.
- Stand In Motion: Dog must stop moving on cue and stand in place while human keeps moving away from the dog, until released. 5 steps of the human duration before release. Human and dog walking together with dog at human's side before the cue to stand.
- Down in Motion: Dog must stop moving on cue, lie down, and stay in place while human keeps moving away from the dog, until released. 5 steps of the human duration before release. Human and dog walking together with dog at human's side before the cue to down.
- Drop on Recall: Dog must run to the human on a "come" type cue and the abruptly lie down when cued before reaching the human and stay in the down until released. 20 seconds.
- Back Up: Dog must back up 5 human steps, at the side of the human, while human is also backing up. On cue.

Targeting

- Touch Objects: Dog must touch an object no higher than should height on cue. Nose or paw allowed for the touch.
- Touch Handler's Body Parts: Dog must touch handler's thigh, shin, foot, hand or arm, on cue. Hard enough that the human definitely feels it.
- Touch Target Stick: Dog must touch the end of a stick type object with his nose on cue.
- Say Hello: Dog must approach another person when cued by the handler, but not touch the person. Person is not to feed or touch or talk to the dog.
- Back and Forth: Dog must travel between two identical objects and back to the starting object, or the handler's hands, as cued, 10 times.
- Push a ball: Dog must push a ball 10 feet with his nose on cue.
- Push a wheeled object: Dog must push a wheeled object 10 feet on cue. Dog may use nose or paw or shoulder.

Recall

- 40-foot recall: Dog must come to the handler from 40 feet away on cue. When outside, you can use a 50 foot leash attached to the dog.
- Room to room recall: Dog must come to the handler on cue. Dog must be in a different room than the handler to start.
- Whistle recall: Dog must come to the handler when a whistle is blown. The whistle must be within the hearing range of a human. This task can be done inside or outside.
- Restrained recall: Dog must come to the human after being released by a helper who was restraining the dog with a leash. The cue to come also releases the helper to release the leash. The dog should not be pulling on the leash until after it is released.
- Break free recall: Dog is restrained by a helper holding the collar lightly. Dog must exert enough pressure to break free the collar from the helper's hand. Because this is a foundation tasks, the helper should not attempt to hold on til death do us part.

Focus

- Look At Me: Dog must look at the handler, in the eyes, for 20 seconds on cue
- Look at That: Dog must look at something the handler is pointing at and/or naming, for 20 seconds on cue, then returning to eye contact with the handler.
- Follow That Masked Man: Dog must follow the handler's hand through 3 different patterns of movement on cue.
- I missed it: Dog must follow the handler's hand through a straight-line movement with a quick unexpected reverse of direction on cue.

- Look Over Here Dog must look at the handler, in the eyes, from the side of the handler, for 20 seconds on cue
- Find My Face: Dog starts behind the handler or in another room not in the line of sight. Dog must find the front of the handler and look them in the eyes, on cue.
- Puppy Eyes Game: Dog must maintain eye contact with the handler while the handler is bouncing around. The handler should stay facing the dog, but in motion by jumping, dancing, wiggling, etc.
- Focus Forward: Dog and handler both facing the same direction. Dog must look forward, not at the handler, on cue. Focus forward must last at least 20 seconds.
- Back and Forth Focus: Dog must move between two objects pausing at each object to focus on the handler's face.
- Four hands focus: Dog must move between the handler and a helper touching all four hands, pausing at each hand to look at the handler's face.

Loose leash Walking

- Release To Pressure,
- Cheek Dance: Dog and Handler walking 20 steps, handlers left hand with palm turned toward the dog and close to the dog's left cheek. Then dog switches to other side, handlers right hand with palm turned toward the dog and close to the dog's right cheek with another 20 steps of walking.
- Reverse Heeling: Handler walks backwards with dog following but facing the handler. Dog's nose should be right at the handler's leg, not lagging.
- Right Turn: Dog does a 90 degree turn to the right with the handler. Dog and handler should walk 10 steps, do the 90 and then walk another 10 steps.
- Left Turn: Dog does a 90 degree turn to the left with the handler. Dog and handler should walk 10 steps, do the 90 and then walk another 10 steps.
- About Turn: Dog does a 180 degree turn with the handler. Dog and handler should walk 10 steps, do the 180 and then walk another 10 steps.
- 30 foot walk with all three turns: each turn should be cued
- Circles clockwise: Dog circles to the right either in front of the handler or to the side on cue.
- Circles counterclockwise: Dog circles to the left either in front of the handler or to the side on cue.
- Switch Sides while walking: Dog and handler walking side by side, dog on left for 10 steps. Dog switches sides on cue and stays on the new side for 10 more steps.
- Shadow Skills: No verbal cues in this task. Dog must follow the gestures of the dog around three objects. Both dog and handler are moving together, but dog's focus is on the handler and the dog only changes directions when the handler signals them to do so.
- Directionals: Dog must demonstrate moving: left, right, forward, back on cue

Handling Distractions

- My Head is Exploding: Dog and handler on a walk with a helper hidden and poised to step out at the team. When the helper steps, the dog may startle slightly but continue walking. No noise from handler or dog.
- Far Around That: Dog, on cue, goes around a very large object like an overstuffed chair or couch.
- It's In the Yard: Dog and handler going through a door, helper steps out at them from hiding. When the helper steps, the dog may startle slightly but continue walking. No noise from handler or dog.
- Creep: Dog and handler walking together, slow step by slow step. This should be VERY slow. One step, pause, one step, pause. 10 steps in a "creep". Dog may move one front and one back foot on each step if necessary.
- Crawl: Dog moves at a crawl on cue for 4 feet (measured from front toes to front toes).

- Breathe: Dog flares his nose flaps on cue.
- Turn Away: Dog turns his head when presented with a strange object. The object should be at least 6 feet from the dog when presented.
- Look and walk Away: Dog looks at the object when presented with a strange object, turns and walks away. The object should be at least 6 feet from the dog when presented.
- Two paws up: Dog to put two front, and then two back, feet up on an object that is minimally 6 inches high. 3 inches for dogs under 15 inches high. Dog must stay in the position for 20 seconds.
- Four paws up: Dog to put all four feet on an object that is minimally 18 inches high and wide and deep enough for the dog to stand comfortably. 7 inches for dogs under 15 inches high. Dog must stay in the position for 20 seconds.
- Turn around while on an object: Dog must get up on an object with all four feet, and then make a 180 turn on the object without falling off.
- Narrow walk: Dog must walk on an object that is no wider than 4 inches for 10 feet.
- Tight space walk: Dog must walk through a space that is only 10 inches wider than the dog, for 10 feet.

Emergency Skills

- Stop: Dog starts out walking with handler. Handler cues "stop". Dog stop immediately and stays until released. 20 seconds
- Screech: Dog is running, handler is only watching. Handle cues "screech". Dog stops immediately and stays until released. 20 seconds.
- Down in Motion: Dog must stop moving on cue, lie down, and stay in place while human keeps moving away from the dog, until released. 5 steps of the human duration before release. Human and dog walking together with dog at human's side before the cue to down.
- Sit in Motion: Dog must stop moving on cue, sit, and stay in place while human keeps moving away from the dog, until released. 5 steps of the human duration before release. Human and dog walking together with dog at human's side before the cue to sit.
- Away: Dog to be heading toward and object, sound or smell (your choice). Cue the dog to run away ('away') and the dog must do a 180 degree turn and rush away.
- Behind: Dog to move behind the human first facing toward the human on cue, then away from the human, on cue.
- Between legs: Dog between the handler's legs facing the same way as the handler. Dog between the handler's legs facing the opposite direction as the handler.
 - Stopping Still: Similar to Screech, but done at a door. Dog approaches the door, handler at least 6 feet away not moving. Handler cues dog to stop before they would go out the door.
 - Place: Dog cued to go lie on a mat at least 6 feet from the handler. Dog stays until released. 20 seconds.
 - Elvis Has Left The Building: Walk to a friend's front door. Cue the dog to sit. Drop the leash and walk into your friend's house. Dog should remain in a sit until released. 20 seconds. You may use a 15 foot leash and retain a hold on the end of 15 feet if you wish after dropping the leash from holding at 6 foot mark.

Self-Control

- Eeek It's a Mouse: Dog must not move when treats are flicked around them.
- What's In the Bowl: Dog must ignore what's in the bowl placed in front of them.
- Are You A Gambler: Dog must choose to lie down when cued instead of chasing a radio controlled car.
- Mine: Dog must back off when cued "mine".
- Enough: Dog must stop playing when cued "enough".
- Leave It: Dog must ignore hot dog in a bowl as dog and handler walking past it.
- Wait: Dog must not move forward even a step more when cued "wait". But may move backwards or fidget. 20 second wait.

- Go On Cue: Dog must run fast away from the handler when cued "go".

Handling the Environment

- Over: Dog must go over an obstacle. Must use one, two, three or all four feet at the top of the obstacle. On cue. This is not a jump over. It's more a walk over. Object must be at least half the height of the dog.
- Through: Dog must go through some kind of tunnel on cue. Top must be solid; sides may be open. Tunnel to be slightly lower than dog's height.
- Around: Dog must go around an object on cue.
- Under: Dog must go under something (table, chair, desk, etc.) on cue and stay until released. 20 seconds.
- Get into: Dog must get into a box or something similar on cue.
- Jump over: Dog must jump over an object without touching it on cue.
- Circles object clockwise: Dog circles around an object to the right on cue.
- Circles object counterclockwise: Dog circles around an object to the left on cue.
- Ride in a cart or wheelbarrow: Dog should jump into or run up a ramp to get into the cart or barrow. Handler then pushes the cart or barrow for 10 feet. Dog needs to remain till other than body adjustments for balance.
- Leave It: Dog must ignore food dropped on the floor by the handler. Handler can cue a "leave it".
- Away from a boundary: Start out with your dog behind you and behind the boundary, walk towards the boundary. It doesn't matter who gets to the boundary first, if you get there, turn and run away, if your dog gets there first, turn and run away back into the space that the dog will be contained in by the boundary.

Scent

- Breathe: Dog must flare nose flaps when cued to "breathe" when target scent is in front of the dog's nose.
- Scent One Food Zero: Dog must indicate the target scent from two containers, one container the target scent and one containing food.
- Find the One: Dog must indicate the target scent from three containers of three different scents.
- I Dropped It: Dog must find a dropped object containing the target scent on cue after the human has dropped it somewhere during a short walk. 15 steps is a short walk.
- It's In the Bush: Dog must find a thrown object containing the target scent on cue after the human has thrown it for a short distance (no more than 5 feet) into bushes during a short walk. 15 steps is a short walk.
- Fool Me Once: Dog must indicate the target scent with two containers on the floor. Second container to be empty.
- Fool Me Twice: Dog must indicate the target scent with four containers on the floor. Other three container to be empty.
- Box Quest: Dog must find the box with the target scent with another 9 boxes with a neutral scent like straw.

Sound

- Noises On/Off: Dog to indicate when it hears a noise but maintain orientation even though the sound is gone for at least 20 seconds.
- Listen: Dog must move ears and orient to a sound made 5 feet away. Do this with 3 different sounds.
- Ring My Bell: Dog to push on a buzzer or bell, making the buzzer or bell sound off.
- Where is that Sound: Dog must move ears and orient to a sound made in another room. Do this in 3 different rooms.

- Watch that Sound: Dog must look at an object that makes a sound. Do this with 5 different objects with 5 different sounds.
- I Can Make Sound: Get 5 toys that make noises when touched or shaken. Dog needs to make each of the five toys sound off by touching them with a paw.
- I See Sound: Dog to indicate a sound by targeting it with its nose. Do this with 5 different sounds.

Patterns

- Navigate a maze of furniture: Dog must find a way through a maze of furniture to get to the handler.
- navigate a maze of toys: Dog must find a way through a maze of toys without disturbing the toys, to get to the handler.
- Two post game: Dog must go around two posts set a foot apart with a low platform behind the posts the dog must move over. Please see video here https://youtu.be/A89TRoEH6Cg?si=G_A0ftc5zIFbB-yj
- POSITION CHANGES AT HEEL (We started working each Position - sit, stand, and down - with the dog in front of us where we could see what she was doing. Now we need her to assume the positions while in Heel Position.),
- puppy push ups (sit down sit stand down stand),
- Halt and stand and walk around (This means you stop the dog in a stand WITHOUT stopping, quick tell her to stay, and KEEP WALKING all the way around her counterclockwise and back into Heel Position),
- Serpentine: Dog must move around a 4 post serpentine by following a target stick the handler is manipulating.
- Changes of pace: normal, fast, slow & transitions between: Dog must walk with the handler. Handler to cue changes of pace in any order. Dog and handler move together at each new pace.