

# A Sample CGC Training Plan

Originally disseminated at the Jan 2013

GDCNC Meeting - Permission to share

Compiled by Melissa Pevy

Photos Courtesy of Olga Maderych with Gadabout Photography



Recently the AKC has added the Canine Good Citizen program to the titling program. This means that if your dog successfully completes a CGC test, it may now have the title CGC following its name. Many Great Dane owners have participated in this CGC certificate program in the past; however, for anyone who might be interested in working towards a CGC title, the GDCNC has prepared a sample training plan that may help you and your dog train towards the skills needed to successfully complete the CGC title.

As you know, there are many different approaches to teach a dog to perform desired behaviors. The approaches offered below are not the only way to train your dog—nor are they necessarily the right way for you and your dog. They are offered as one option; it is not our intent to advocate for one training program over another.

Many people find that attending a training class with a knowledgeable trainer is preferable to training alone; however, sadly we can't all find the time to attend classes. The ideas provided below are in case you aren't able to train in a training class and

you would like to pursue the AKC CGC title and will have to train alone.

The most commonly asked question regarding dog training is, "How long will it take for my dog to be ready?"...and the answer is...It depends. "It depends" on many factors such as your dog's current level of "training", your skill as a trainer, your dog's desire to train, the time you can commit to training, etc...

In the pages below, the GDCNC has offered a training outline based on training for the skills necessary for the CGC test.

## Skills for CGC Test

Item 1: Accepting a Friendly Stranger

Item 2: Sitting Politely for Petting

Item 3: Appearance and Grooming

Item 4: Out For a Walk

Item 5: Walking Through a Crowd

Item 6: Sit and Down on Command/ Staying in Place

Item 7: Coming When Called

Item 8: Reaction to Another Dog

Item 9: Reaction to Distractions

Item 10: Supervised Separation

---

## Recommended Training Plan

### TRAINING SET ONE:

Your first sessions should focus on the following skills: Walking on a loose lead and learning how to sit.

**Sit:** If your dog doesn't know how to sit, you may want to teach the sit in the following fashion: Start in an area with limited distractions that your dog knows well. Place your dog on a leash and remove most of the slack from the leash. Hold a treat in your hand between your thumb and your index and middle fingers. Hold that treat in front of the dog's nose. Slowly lift the treat above your dog's head and the



dog will look up. As the dog looks up, continue to keep the cookie slightly out of her reach. As your dog continues to look up, she should sit. As soon as her bottom touches the floor, give her the cookie and praise her. Note: don't say sit yet. Once the dog has mastered the "cue" of

you luring them with the cookie, then you may add the command for sit. Once the dog sits in an environment with which she is familiar, begin to change the environment to the front yard, drive way, dog class... etc.

**Walking on a Loose Lead:** If your dog doesn't walk on a loose lead, you may want to teach this skill by breaking it up into two main parts. Part One: Stand beside you without pulling on the leash & Part Two: Moving with you without pulling on the leash.

**Part One:** You may wish to have some treats (or kibble) handy for teaching this skill. Stand with your dog on leash in a familiar area. When the dog stands without pulling AND is near enough to you that you can touch the dog's head without moving AND is looking at you, you may praise the dog and give her a treat. If she pulls on the leash OR she is not close enough that you can touch her OR she is not paying attention to you, say nothing and wait her out. As soon as she does all three things, praise her and give her a treat. Note: if the dog pulls on the leash, don't say anything. Wait until the dog releases the tension on the leash and then praise.

**Part Two:** Moving with a loose leash. You may wish to have some treats (or kibble) handy for teaching this skill. You will want to have the dog on a leash and in a familiar area. Say the dog's name and your walk command. If the dog walks beside you without pulling, for one or two steps, stop and praise the dog.

Try to give the dog the treat while she is still on your left side walking nicely. Try not to let the dog move to the front of you to take the treat. Gradually work up from one step to 10-15 steps on loose leash walking with limited distractions.



**Don't progress until your dog will sit in an area with limited distractions 75% and you can walk 10 steps without the dog pulling on the leash.**

#### **TRAINING SET TWO:**

In your second set of training sessions, you should continue the focus on the sit and the walk on the loose lead...and add in the following behaviors: allowing the dog's ears, feet and body to be touched, sit/stay and down.

**Down:** If your dog doesn't know how to "down", you may want to teach this skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on leash and in a sit. Hold a treat between your thumb, index and middle fingers with your palm facing the floor. With the dog in a sit, take the treat and move it down the dog's body from the nose to the underside of their belly. This action will cause the dog's nose to move towards the floor and then the dog will scoot back into a down—or—to pop her hind end up. If your dog pops her hind end up try the next approach. Instead of pulling the treat from the nose to the underside of the body, pull the treat from the nose straight down to the floor—making a right angle with the floor from her nose—and then pull the treat across the floor away from the dog. This will cause the dog's nose to drop towards the floor and she will lower herself toward the floor and fold forward into a down.

Stay: If your dog doesn't know how to stay, you may want to introduce the skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on leash and in an area free of distractions. Ask your dog to sit or down. Using a hand signal (such as placing your hand in front of your dog's face or swinging your hand from right to left in front of the dog) tell the dog to stay and take one step **LATERALLY** away from the dog. If the dog doesn't move, go back to the dog and praise the dog. If the dog does move, put the dog back into the position it was in and don't take a step away, but move in place....bounce up or down, move your hand, bend your knees....and then praise the dog if she doesn't move. Work up to one step forward, laterally and behind the dog before adding more distance. If the dog moves, then place the dog back in the position it was in before you left it and try again.



**Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks:**

- **Sit/Stay as you take 10 forward steps AND return to the dog**
- **Down 75% of the time on command**
- **Walk on a loose lead in familiar places**

---

#### **TRAINING SET THREE:**

In your third set of training sessions, you should continue the focus on the behaviors that you have worked on previously and add coming when called.

Coming when called: If your dog doesn't know how to come—each and every time you call her—you may want to teach the skill in the following fashion. Start with your dog on a leash (between 6 and 15 feet long) and in an area free of distractions. Ask your dog to sit and stay. Walk to the end of the leash and say your dog's name and using a high pitch voice tell the dog to come. You may want to step backwards until your dog reaches you. When the dog arrives to you praise the dog lavishly. You may want to use the dog's entire meal for a few days when teaching this skill.

Note: It is important to **NOT** punish the dog when you call it back to you. If the dog doesn't come to you, use the leash and "reel" her to you while saying

"come". Praise her when she reaches you and try again.



**Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks:**

- **Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog**
- **Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time**
- **Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 15-20 feet**

---

#### **TRAINING SET FOUR:**

By this session—the fourth training session—you and your dog have been introduced to all the skills tested in a CGC test. However, you are likely not ready yet. Over the next few weeks, you will need to focus on adding distractions and practicing in different areas.



It is at this point in most training programs that owners wish to have tee-shirts made that "say"..... but my dog does it perfectly at home! Unlike people, dogs don't appear to be able to generalize their skills in new areas without practice. So don't be disheartened if your dog will sit and stay perfectly at your house or in your yard and then acts like you haven't ever taught her anything when you try this skill out on the town.

This week you need to focus on adding distractions to all of your training. Some training classes offer "drop in" sessions where you can come with your dog and participate in one night of class. Even if you can't find this opportunity, consider going to local parks, practicing at a show, the grocery store parking lot, a playground, etc. Be creative and hit the road!



**Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks well in unfamiliar areas with distractions.**

**Please make sure your dog is on a leash during these exercises. If you don't have one long leash, consider making a longer leash out of a few shorter ones. Additionally, you may wish to return to treating/praising the dog liberally during the next few training sessions.**

- **Sit on command 90% of the time**
- **Down on command 90% of the time**
- **Sit/Stay as you take 10 forward steps AND return to the dog 75% of the time**
- **Down/Stay as you take 5 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time**
- **Loose leash walking with distractions**
- **Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 5-10 feet**

#### **TRAINING SET FIVE:**

During this session, you will want to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training. During these sessions, you will practice the supervised separation, greeting while seated, and allowing the dog to be touched by someone other than you.



For the supervised separation, you will want your friend to hold your dog on leash and you will want to walk away from the dog. For your first few sessions, you will want to stay in sight of the dog. Over time, you will build up more distance and increase the duration of these sessions. The goal for the test is a 3 minute supervised separation with you out of sight.



**Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks with**

distractions in an unfamiliar area. Don't be afraid to treat and praise liberally during these sessions.

- **Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog**
- **Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 75% of the time**
- **Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 15-20 feet**
- **Supervised Separation (with you in sight) for 90 seconds**
- **Dog should perform the first two exercises—Greeting a Friendly Stranger and Sitting for Petting—according to the CGC guidelines**
- **Loose leash walking with distractions**

#### **TRAINING SET SIX:**

During this session, you will want to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will still need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training.

During these sessions, you will pick the areas where you and your dog need extra practice and focus on those skills.



**Don't progress until your dog will perform the following tasks with distractions in an unfamiliar area. Don't be afraid to treat and praise liberally during these sessions.**

- **Sit/Stay as you take 25 forward steps AND return to the dog 90% of the time**
- **Down/Stay as you take 15 forward steps AND return to dog 90% of the time**
- **Come when called—on leash—from a distance of 20 feet**
- **Supervised Separation (with you in sight) for 3 minutes and with you out of sight for 30 seconds**
- **Loose leash walking with distractions—MUST INCLUDE—other dogs.**

#### **TRAINING SET SEVEN:**

Not much has changed in the last few training sessions. You are likely noticing a pattern by now that will continue from now until when you are ready to take the CGC test. During this session, you will want



to continue practicing your skills with distractions and you will need to have “unfamiliar” people to assist you with your training. During these sessions, you will pick the areas where you and your dog need extra practice and focus on those skills. By this point in the training program, you should feel confident that your dog is able to successfully complete each of the activities in the CGC test.

However, as we all know....getting here doesn't mean you are done. You will need to continue practicing and training until the CGC test....but the good news is that you have moved into reminder mode and that your dog likely knows that you are going to “work” and she is going to get treats while you are out. You should focus on practicing in areas where you have distractions—especially other dogs. If you two are having a good time training, you might want to consider moving onto the skills required for Rally Novice, K9 Nose Work or some other activity that you both enjoy.

Happy Training!

---