



## **GUIDEWORK COMMANDS**

The purpose of this lecture is to explain basic guidework instructions. This lesson will cover:

- Hand signals
- Guidework commands
- Voice inflection
- Body position
- Footwork
- Turns

### **Hand Signals**

- Some guidework commands are accompanied by a hand signal given with the right hand. The hand signal is given at the same time as the verbal command.
- Dogs are naturally attentive to body language, even more so than they are to spoken commands. The use of the hand signal when giving a directional command serves as additional communication to the dog and makes it more likely that the dog will respond to the command.
- A verbal command alone can be used when you need your right hand free, such as when holding a door open with your right hand, but in most situations it is preferable to use both the verbal command and the hand signal.
- You do not need to bend down when giving a hand signal. Your dog has excellent peripheral vision and will not have trouble seeing the motion of your hand.

### **Guidework Commands**

Guidework commands are those commands given when the harness handle is in your hand and you are working your dog. These commands are not given when you are heeling your dog or using a human guide. Guidework commands, like obedience commands, are always preceded by the dog's name to get the dog's attention.

- "Forward" - This command tells the dog to begin moving forward and continue in that direction until the dog encounters a reason to stop, such as an obstacle or a curb or other change in elevation.
  - Before instructing your dog forward, you must ensure that you are facing the direction you want to travel.
  - The hand signal for "Forward" is swinging the right arm from its natural position by your right side straight in front of you with your palm facing towards your body and fingers pointed forward. This should be done in a relaxed manner, and you should not raise your hand higher than waist level.
  - Once your dog initiates forward movement, return your hand to its natural position on your right side.
- "Right" and "Left" - These commands tell the dog that you want him to turn right or left and continue in that direction until he encounters a reason to stop. There are different types of turns as discussed below.
  - The hand signal for "Right" is made by swinging your right hand to the right at approximately waist level, palm facing the dog, fingers extended forward.
  - The hand signal for "Left" is made by swinging your right hand to the left at approximately waist level, hand again facing the dog, fingers extended forward.
- "Straight" - This command does not have a hand signal. It is used when you feel that the dog is deviating from the straight line, possibly due to mild interest in a distraction. It is said in a sharp, firm tone of voice.
- "Steady"- This command does not have a hand signal. It is used when you want the dog to slow down. It should be said in a calm, drawn-out tone of voice while slowing your own pace.
- "Let's go" - This command does not have a hand signal. "Let's go" is used to speed the dog up. It should be said in a peppy, upbeat voice.

## **Voice Inflection**

A proper understanding of how to use voice inflection will greatly improve your ability to communicate with your dog.

- Your voice never needs to be loud. Dogs have excellent hearing, and a loud voice tends to attract negative public attention.
- When giving a command, your voice should sound firm and confident; when giving a verbal correction, it should be short and sharp.
- The type of voice inflection to use when praising your dog depends on the situation. A good general rule to follow is that when you want your dog to increase his energy level in some way, you should use a peppy, high-pitched voice with multiple short syllables.
  - Examples of when you would use this type of voice inflection to praise would be if your dog is walking too slowly and then responds to your request to "Let's go," or if your dog is slow to respond when you ask him to sit from a down position, but he finally does respond.
- When you want your dog to decrease his energy level in some way, you should use a low, calm, pleasant, and drawn-out voice.
  - An example of when you would use this type of voice inflection would be asking your dog to "Steady" and he responds to the command. If your dog responds to "Steady" and you react with excited praise, your dog is likely to increase his energy level, which is counterproductive.

## **Body Position**

Your body position when working with your Pilot Dog is very important. Improper body position contributes to many guidework errors, including bumping into obstacles, missing curbs, and angling street crossings. Proper body position, which we refer to as "handler's position," varies slightly depending on whether you are walking or standing still.

- When you are walking with your Pilot Dog, you will be holding the harness handle in your left hand. Your left arm should be relaxed by your left side and there should be a slight bend in your elbow.
- With your left arm at your side, your legs will be between the area of your dog's hind legs and the middle of his rib cage.

- When your dog stops for a curb, you should probe with your left foot to find the curb.
  - Once you have found the curb, you will leave your foot anchored there. At the same time, bring your left hand back slightly so that it is just behind the seam of your pants on your left leg. This keeps you and your dog in position while standing at the curb waiting to cross the street.
  - When you say “Juno, forward,” your dog will step off the curb first, and then you will step off.
- When you are walking with your dog, whether you are walking straight down the sidewalk or maneuvering around an obstacle, you must maintain your alignment.
  - Turning your body off the line of travel when the dog moves around an obstacle is a common cause of disorientation.
  - You will have to maintain alignment and move laterally with the dog just as you do when you encounter an obstacle with your cane.
  - If you turn your body in a different direction, the dog may assume that you want to walk in that direction.
- You should always keep your head up while you are walking with your dog. Looking down at your dog while walking alters your body position and can affect your dog's ability to work accurately.

## **Footwork**

The term “footwork” refers to using your left foot to find the object that your dog has stopped for. This will usually be either a curb or some type of obstacle.

- When your dog stops, you should move one foot forward just beyond the dog's front feet while maintaining contact with the ground.
- If you cannot locate the object your dog stopped for, leave your foot where it is and slide your other foot along the ground in front of you until you cannot extend it any further.
- If you still can't locate the object, you should ask your dog to "Let's go." After the dog steps forward, continue the process of footwork until you locate the object the dog stopped for.
- Make sure that you maintain alignment with your feet at all times.

## Turns

There are three different types of turns used at Pilot Dogs: the standing turn, the cutback turn, and the moving turn.

1. Standing turn - This is a 90-degree turn to the left or right made from a standstill.
  - a. When making the right turn, you should be in the basic position with your left foot forward. At that point, slide your left leg back parallel with your right and step off in the right direction; additionally, swing your right hand to the right as you give the command "Right."
  - b. With the left turn, again from the basic position, bring your right foot adjacent to your left, at this point being close to the dog's shoulders. Turn both feet towards the dog; slightly pull back on the harness handle as you pivot to the left and swing your free hand to the left across your body.
2. Cutback turn - This is a left or right turn made from a standstill. It differs from a standing turn in that it is not a 90-degree turn. This type of turn is most commonly made when you have reached a down curb and want to turn left or right instead of crossing the street, but the intersecting sidewalk is slightly behind you. The mechanics of this type of turn are best explained in person by your instructor.
3. Moving turn - This is a turn made in motion. Examples would be turning to find your door in the residence hallway or turning to find the entrance of a business in the middle of a block.
  - a. To make a walking turn, slow your pace and turn your head and shoulders very slightly in the direction you want to turn.
  - b. Tell your dog "Juno, left, left, left," and repeat until the dog makes the turn.
  - c. When making a left walking turn, you may want to bring your left arm back slightly, putting some additional mild tension on the handle.
  - d. When making a right walking turn, you may want to extend your left arm slightly, giving your dog room to turn in front of you without being stepped on.
  - e. The most common cause of errors when making moving turns is failing to slow down when asking your dog to turn. You must give your dog time to think and

respond to the command. This is especially true with walking right turns; if you do not slow your pace when asking your dog to make a walking right turn, the dog may miss the turn because he thinks you will step on him if he turns in front of you.