

CHAPTER 10
OBEDIENCE
By Lyn Richards

Intro: Danes and personalities, how their mentality figures into the training equation.

Great Danes are by nature a more laid back personality type, and are stubborn as well as gentle and sensitive. This must be considered when training a Dane puppy. While there are exceptions, generally speaking a very gentle and firm hand is effective with Danes. Bear in mind that Danes grow quickly, so it is vital that the puppy respect the authority and dominance of the trainer/owner early in puppyhood, as well as admire and respect the owner/handler. Praise and consistency are vital ingredients in the training recipe. The following guideline will help foster admiration, respect and love in your new pup once you bring him home.

In packs, dogs always look to the leader or “alpha” for attention, direction and protection. That’s your number one job as a Dane owner and trainer. If you can fill that role, then training will come easily. A secure dog will follow your lead no matter where you go, because he trusts you. Try to learn to think like a dog and treat him like a dog. This includes teaching yourself about dominance and respect issues, as confidence in yourself is necessary to build trust with your dog. He won’t trust you if you don’t trust yourself.

Your Dane must know that you will never let him down. The dog is very forgiving in nature, and will trust you even if you make mistakes, as long as you are unfailingly dependable. Since the dog doesn’t know what you are teaching him, if you make a mistake he won’t know that either. Watch what you do, exude confidence and be consistent. Your dog will love you for it.

Goals

What is your purpose for training your Great Dane? Do you want a good solid citizen, who won’t knock over grandma or the nieces and nephews when they visit, or are you looking to enter the competition ring, agility ring or do Therapy work with your Dane? How you go about training is governed by what your goals for that training are. Reading this chapter will hopefully help you identify your goals, and perhaps guide you towards fulfilling them.

1. Basic/Pet Obedience: A Solid Foundation

A. Training at home

Obedience training starts in the whelping box. You have to depend upon the breeder from which you purchase your puppy to provide these basics. If you are well acquainted with the breeder, you are more likely to be able to positively affect the early training of your puppy. You will also be better able to make an educated choice of puppy, based on your knowledge of

each individual pup in that litter. In the case of someone who has never before owned a Dane, the breeder may be better able to select the correct pup for you.

Up to three weeks (21 days) of age, studies have shown that puppies are able to absorb very little in the way of education, they are unaware of much except mom, food and sleep. Elimination is done by reflex at this point. This changes between the ages of 21 and 28 days of life. Puppies begin to leave the blankets and look for a corner in which to eliminate. They become acutely aware of their environment, and are extremely sensitive to stimuli. In fact, any experiences at this stage, (to the negative or positive) will more profoundly affect the puppy than at any other point in its life. This is where you and the breeder can help shape your puppy's mind and life.

Crate training and minor obedience training can actually begin at this age. A large wire crate (big enough to hold all the puppies) padded with blankets is introduced to the whelping room. Papers are layered on the floor around the crate (as they were around the blankets at the beginning. As the puppies explore and roam, they will choose to sleep in the crate, and eliminate on the paper.

Puppies can be handled and stacked (started in conformation show posing) at four weeks, and it is great for them to be socialized and handled starting at this point. When stacking, remove a puppy from the litter. Place the pup in position, hold in position gently for just a couple of seconds using the “stay” command quietly. Praise softly and release. Make it a fun, play kind of thing. Calling the puppies as a group, clapping the hands and using a happy voice, is an introduction to the “come” command. This is effective as a pre-training method if the puppies can be induced to come to the caller by a second party urging them forward gently, and if lots of praise is used. They can learn lots of basic skills at 4-6 weeks, which will save the owner and handler (and also the pup) the headaches and frustration that may occur, if taught at a later age.

After bringing your new Dane pup home, the best way to begin training him is by beginning the process right away. Obedience training should be a daily practice, done at the drop of a hat, and at varied times of the day for just a few minutes. For instance feeding time is an excellent time for an impromptu training session. When placing the feeding bowl down for your dog, you should expect and receive a “sit” before the dog is allowed to eat. Release with an OK command, and let the feast begin.

The same theory applies to trips out of doors. Before the door is opened, the dog must “sit” and “wait” allowing the owner to open and then head out the door first, with the dog following politely. Of course if you have a puppy in extreme need of a good pee, then please pick the pup up and race out the door by all means. But, in the normal course of events, this type of politeness training is imperative with a dog the size of a Great Dane. I cannot begin to tell you of the mishaps, broken toes, knees, legs, arms, and other assorted and sundry injuries which have afflicted owners of giant breed dogs that are untrained or even trained but “forget”.

My internet Great Dane e-mail list companions have asked me a lot of obedience questions in the last two years. The most frequently asked question is, "How do I make my dog come when I call him"? The second most common question is, "How do I stop my dog from pulling me when he's on leash"?

The answers to both questions are actually very simple. Never give your dog the option of doing it *wrong* in the first place. This does not mean that mistakes will not happen, they indeed need to happen for learning to take place. But, the underlying factor of most obedience issues, is that the dog just doesn't understand who's in charge, and what's expected. You can control the positive outcome of that process.

For instance, if you call your dog with a "come" command, and he's off-lead busily sniffing some track or another interesting item, his refusal to come to you enforces (in his mind) your inability to "make" him obey, and his ability to be "alpha" or boss. Or worse still, that you are muttering some incomprehensible words,

On the other hand, if you only tell him to "come" when he is on-lead and you can pull or guide him in to you, he learns that the word "come" is enforceable. That means you always win, therefore you are boss. Consequently, over a period of time, with enforced recalls on lead (using a Flexi-lead* or longe line ultimately), he begins to respond when off-lead in non-distracting situations (meaning there is nothing around which is more interesting than you!).

Begin in a small room, where he is not going to be distracted, and he cannot "walk away". Call the dog to you, and praise lavishly once he arrives, even if you must walk to his location and take his collar to lead him to the point from which you originally called him. Then add a distraction, (could be a person in the room bouncing a ball or singing...) and perfect the recall at that stage.

Once the recall is performed consistently in the small room, graduate to a large room, with a SMALL distraction, then a large one. Ultimately, in a confined situation, the dog will come reliably.

This is where the student graduates to the outdoors, with the dog on a 30 foot line. The same routine is used, starting with a place of low distraction, and graduating to higher and stronger distractions. Ultimately, the dog will come reliably in almost ANY situation. It takes time, but is worth the effort.

B. Local school and club classes

* If you use one of these retractable leads, it's a good idea to acquaint your dog with what will happen should you drop the plastic holder. These holders will bounce along the ground, retracting the lead as they go. This can terrify a dog so much that it runs in fright. I've heard of dogs running away and never being found or into traffic where they are hit and killed by a car. (Jill Swedlow's comment).

Group or school training is a must for the Great Dane. If a dog the size of a Great Dane is allowed to grow to the age of 6 months without encountering and interacting with strange people and dogs, he develops problems. These problems can manifest themselves in aggression, fear, submissive urination, or a myriad of other distasteful and sometimes dangerous behavior.

Group training is useful to the owner in that it teaches the owner how to handle the dog, and what methods of training may work best for the team of the owner and his dog. For the dog the school atmosphere is a way for him to learn about how other dogs act, and how to behave around other dogs. In a controlled environment, the dog begins to learn pack behavior and proper eye contact do's and don'ts.

Schools are also a good place to learn about and try different types of activities, such as Obedience competition, Agility, Therapy and a myriad of other competitive and non-competitive dog activities.

In the coming sections, I will try to cover a bit about some of the more common and fun things you can try with your Dane. All have been done with a Dane with success, so you can try them with confidence.

2. AKC/CKC obedience trials

Obedience Trials are a test of the dogs ability to perform certain exercises as laid out by AKC rules. The dog must get a total score of at least 170 points out of a possible 200 points. Every time the dog receives a qualifying score of 170, then he has achieved one "leg" of the three legs required to become an Obedience titled dog. There are three levels of "Titles" and each is more difficult than the previous. The ultimate goal for many Obedience trial competitors is to achieve the elusive perfect 200 score. Other competitors are satisfied to simply attain a title at the minimum score required.

Competition levels of each title are divided into "A" and "B". "A" classes are for trainers whose dogs have never received a title while "B" classes are for more experienced handlers.

a. Description of 4 Levels

NOVICE: Completion of Novice level earns your dog a Companion Dog (CD) title. In this level of competition, your dog will have to heel both on and off leash at slow and fast speeds, complete a successful figure of eight, come when called (recall), do automatic sits, stay at a sit and a down with a group of other dogs (while the handler is across the ring), and stand for an exam by the judge.

OPEN: Requiring good physical soundness, this level once successfully completed, earns your dog a Companion Dog Excellent (CDX) title. The exercises are the same as in Novice, but are

performed off-leash and for longer periods. In addition, the dog must retrieve a dumbbell on the flat and over jumps.

UTILITY: Completion of this level earns your dog a Utility Dog (UD) title. At this point in training and beyond, physical soundness is imperative, otherwise the dog will injure itself due to the demanding level of agility and strength. There are not many dogs who achieve this distinctive title. The exercises are more difficult, and the dog also must perform scent discrimination tasks. 3 sets of articles are used, wood, metal and leather. The articles in each set are lettered so that the judge and handler can tell them apart. One article from each set is marked (scented) by the owner of the dog. The dog must pick this one article out of each set. **[INSERT PHOTO 10-5]**

UDX: The successful Utility titled dog can compete for more titles. Utility Dogs that continue to compete and earn legs at 10 shows become Utility Dogs Excellent (UDX). There ARE several Great Danes with this distinctive Title of UDX, so please believe me when I tell you that Danes CAN do obedience.

OTCH: Utility Dogs that achieve a rank of 1st or 2nd in Open B or Utility classes earn points toward an Obedience Trial Champion (OTCH) title.

B. Training Tools

Tools used in the training of an obedience dog start out simple and advance as the training level or title of the dog advances.

Leashes and collars are the basic tools. Anyone can use them and everyone has them. Moving up to more advanced levels requires some jumps and a wooden or plastic dumbbell. The more advanced levels require scent discrimination articles (leather, metal and wood dumbbells).

* Information source-AKC brochure "Getting Started..."

*For more information about these or other AKC events, contact the AKC at 919-233-9767 or at their home page.

3. AKC/CGC Training, Therapy Dog Training, AAA & AAT

The American Kennel Club has a certificate program available to all dogs called Canine Good Citizen. While this is not a "title", it is a very important certificate to hold. Possession of this certificate says that your dog is an all-around great companion dog. The requirements of a CGC are listed below.

a. CGC test requirements

Your dog must be able to perform a series of 10 exercises that can be learned in basic obedience. The main thrust of the test is to show that your dogs temperament is even, well mannered, friendly and never aggressive, shy or fearful. The tests involve simple sits, stays, downs, loose leash walking exercises and reactions to distractions and strangers.

b. Basic requirements of a Therapy Dog

As a member of and Evaluator for Therapy Dogs International, I find that there are many wonderful people in the community willing to volunteer their pet dogs in nursing homes, hospitals and community adult care centers. While these services are much needed and welcome, I also find that often many of these dogs are lacking in the socialization skills and worldly experience necessary to perform well as Therapy Dogs. In addition, some of the dog owners are unprepared for the situations they will encounter in elder care facilities.

Training for these dogs is difficult to come by locally for many people, so I try to prepare dogs for the rigors of therapy work by following the AKC/CGC requirements and then adding the additional skills required for the Therapy Dog Certification.

The first Items of concern are health and cleanliness standards. The standards set by Therapy Dogs International, for qualification for the TDI-CGC test are:

1. Proof of current Inoculations, including rabies, distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, and parvo virus.
2. Proof of Health, such as a current health certificate from a Veterinarian.
3. Visible cleanliness, no sign of fleas/ticks, clean ears etc.
4. Dog must appear healthy, alert and not grossly over or under weight.
5. Yearly physical and stool check.
6. Annual heartworm test

c. Therapy Dog Evaluation test

The test performed to certify a dog for Therapy Dogs International is an AKC/ CGC test to which additional requirements have been added. The point of this test is to determine to the best of the evaluators judgment that the dog being tested is steady, dependable and passive. Any dog which exhibits signs of aggression, stress or fear will automatically be denied TDI status. These items listed below are amendments to the CGC test.

d. Therapy Organizations

Therapy Dogs International
Ursula Kempe Treasurer
260 Fox Chase Rd
Chester, NJ 07930

Phone (518) 377-3559
e-mail: tdi@gti.net

Delta Society Pet Partners Programs
321 Burnett Ave. S. 3rd Floor
Renton, WA 98055-2569
Phone (206) 226-7357

Therapy Dogs Inc.
Ann Butrick
2416 E. Fox Farm Rd.
Cheyenne, WY 82007
Phone (307) 638-3222

Therapy Pet Pals of Texas
Kathryn Lashmit
807 Brazos St.
Suite 312
Austin, TX 78701

Pet Assisted Therapy Facilitation Certificate Program
Pearl Salotto
State University of New York
Phone (401) 463-5809

The Chenny Troupe
Laura Mensching
Phone (312) 280-0266

Love on a Leash
Liz Palika
3809 Plaza Dr
#107-309 Oceanside, CA 92056
Phone (619) 630-4824

PAWS - Pets are Wonderful Support
P.O. Box 460489
San Francisco, CA 94146-0489
Phone (415) 824-4040

Pets and People Foundation
Sally Jean Alexander, Volunteer Coordinator

11 Apple Crest Road
Weston, MA 02193
Phone (617) 899-5029

Therapy Dog Assns In Canada

Jim Newell
St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program
1199 Deyell 3rd Line
Milbrook, Ontario L0A 1G0

Pet Therapy Society of Northern Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Phone number (403) 413 4682
Fax number (403) 413 8805
E-mail: paws@connect.ab.ca
Web Site: <http://www.shopalberta.com/paws/>

BC Pets and Friends
#250, 167 West 2nd Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1B8
(604) 879-5991
FAX is (604) 879-2992

e. AAT (Animal Assisted Therapy) / AAA (Animal Assisted Activities)

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a program where the dogs actually work with therapists to accomplish specific goals with patients or nursing home residents. Tasks such as improving motor coordination by getting a patient to throw a ball for a dog to fetch, care for a dogs coat with a brush or simply performing the act of petting. When speech therapists use dogs, tasks are given to the patient such as giving commands to a dog in order to recover speech. Psychotherapists use dogs in order to draw a patient out, many times an abused or psychologically damaged person, especially a child will talk to a dog where they would not open up to a person.

Animal-Assisted-Activities (AAA) is intended to provide opportunities for human-animal interaction, promoting educational and motivational benefits while reinforcing the bond between people and animals. A perfect example of this is a group home which keeps a cat or small dog as a means to elicit responses, soothe emotions and permit contact between and among its residents. The mere act of touching and petting many times fills a gap which is very wide in patients who may go for long periods of time without human to human contact such as hugs and caresses.

4. Tracking

a. Description of tracking

Having origins in actual service work, AKC Tracking Trials test a dog's ability to find and follow a human scent trail, and show enthusiasm and competence while doing his job. This energetic outdoor sport is designed for dogs who have a good physical constitution and are athletic. Unlike Obedience events that require a dog to qualify three times, a dog must successfully complete only one track to earn a title, it is a noncompetitive outdoor sport.. Dogs are required to successfully complete a qualifying track before being allowed to run in a licensed tracking trial.

Any handler wishing to compete in tracking must have commitment to work at training, for at least 3 days a week. Tracking involves being outdoors and walking in open spaces and parks. Besides a dog, you will also need bait, a 40-60 foot line, a field or park in which to work, and a good tracking guide or lesson book.

b. Titles

TRACKING DOG:(TD) A 440 to 500 yard track over grass and vegetation, is laid 30 minutes to 2 hours prior to a test. The dog earns a TD title by following this track successfully. The rules require specific turns in a 440 to 500 yard track.

TRACKING DOG EXCELLENT:(TDX) An "older"(3 to 5 hours) and longer (800 to 1,000 yards) track with more turns. The challenge is increased by adding physical and scenting obstacles. A dog earns the TDX title with the successful completion of this track.

VARIABLE SURFACE TRACKING:(VST) In the real world, dogs track through urban settings, as well as through wilderness. A dog that has a VST title has proved this ability by following a three to five hour old track that may take him on city streets, buildings and other areas not necessarily a field or grassy area.

5. Flyball

a. Description of sport and equipment

The sport of Flyball is fun and challenging. Flyball consists of teams of 4 dogs that run a “relay race” of sorts. The course that they run consists of a start and finish line, and 4 hurdles spaced 10 feet from each other, the first one 6 feet from the start/finish line. The Flyball box itself is 15 feet away from the 4th hurdle. The overall course length is 51 feet.

The dogs leave the start line, leap the hurdles and stomp a spring loaded pedal on the box, which releases a tennis ball. They catch the ball, reverse and run back, leaping over the hurdles

once more. Once the first dog crosses the finish line, the next dog begins his run. The object is to have all 4 dogs complete the entire course with no errors.

Tournaments are run usually in a round robin, or elimination rounds. Height of the jumps is dependent upon the height of the dogs. The height is 4" below the height of the shoulders of the smallest dog. The maximum height is 16". This height differential is to encourage a mixture of dog sizes, as the height of the smallest dog on the team sets the jump height for the runs.

b. How Danes fare in competition

Danes do well competing in their own size group, but fare poorly when pitted against breeds such as Border Collies who are VERY fast. It is best to set up competitions of like sized dogs when dealing with giants, this increases the fun and makes for a fairer handicap.

C. Equipment

Flyball boxes, tennis balls and hurdles. The safest Flyball boxes have a sloping front and the ball is delivered to the dog horizontally rather than vertically (popping up in the air) as in the old design. The pedal should have an impact absorbing rubber cover. The safety of the dog is paramount in the design of all Flyball equipment. If you are interested in learning more about Flyball, contact the North American Flyball Association (NAFA).

6. Agility

The AKC (American Kennel Club), NADAC (North American Dog Agility Council) and USDAA (United States Dog Agility Association, Inc.) all sponsor and sanction Agility events. Whereas the AKC will only allow AKC registered dogs to participate in their events, USDAA allows all dogs to participate. This is preferable to me as I believe that Agility should be something that all dogs can participate in, the same as a CGC certification. The AKC and USDAA differ somewhat in a few of the event requirements as well. USDAA requires the weave poles on Novice level, AKC does not, AKC has lower jump heights as well.

a. Activity/Competition Description

The basic Agility competition consists of a series of obstacles and jumps which must be completed safely, and within a time limit.

b. Equipment requirements

The equipment list is pretty lengthy and specific. I will give you a GENERAL idea of the equipment required.

1. Jumps (wing jump, tire jump, long jumps, hurdles)
2. Tunnels (a chute or collapsed tunnel, and a rigid curved tunnel)

3. Weave Poles (closely spaced vertical poles through which a dog must “weave”)
4. Contact Obstacles (A-frames, tables, dog walks and teeter)

7. Freestyle Heeling

a. Canine Freestyle

The point of Canine Freestyle is to display a dog at its creative and artistic best. There is always a musical selection accompanying the presentation.

In Freestyle heeling, emphasis is placed on the dog being in heel position, and in the dogs execution of heeling patterns to music. Heel and front positions are the base for all the technical scoring of the routine, while the artistic scoring is based on movement, direction and rhythm. Emphasis is placed on the correctness and flexibility of the dog, while the role of the handler is of less importance.

A Freestyle routine should not resemble the heeling routine of an obedience competition, instead it should be a balance of movements between the dog and handler, smooth and harmonious, complimenting each other. There should be freedom of movement, an emphasis on the dog’s flexibility and athleticism, as well as the unity of motion between the handler and dog.

8. Musical Freestyle (Dog Dancing)

a. Description of MCSI (Musical Canine Sports International)

MCSI is the only title bestowing body in the sport of Musical Freestyle. In the early 90's, a group of individuals interested in combining the arts of music, dance and obedience developed the rules of musical freestyle. Those rules were tested in various competitions during the mid 90's. By 1994, the MCSI rules and guidelines were adopted by the Illini Obedience Association in the United States. The first MCSI competition under the new Organization of MCSI was held.

b. Sport requirements

Musical freestyle is not heeling with music in the background. MCSI rules encourage the dog to move out of the heel position to perform a variety of movements and tricks not found in a traditional obedience performance. To interpret the music , the handler may use the body, arms, and legs in a free and rhythmic manner. A mixture of dance-related steps completes the footwork portion of a routine. Musical freestyle performances unite creativity and contrast of movement , and a range of actions not available to the more limited Freestyle routines. Emphasis is placed on the teamwork between the handler and dog, neither partner is spotlighted, since both are judged equally.

Musical freestyle routines are judged for their technique and artistic impression. In judging technical execution, the judges consider a number of details of the routine, including:

- *difficulty of the maneuvers
- *the dog's demeanor and excitement
- *meticulous movements by dog and handler

The judging of artistic impression centers on:

- * choreography
- * interpretation of the music by the handler,
- * matching of the handler's and dog's movements with each other and the music.

9. Frisbee Competition (Flying Disc)

Generally speaking, Flying Disc is a complicated game of fetch. Basically good frisbee skills offer wonderful challenges for the mind and the body of the dog and human, as well as strengthening the bond between the dog and owner through fun and skill.

Frisbee competitions may be enjoyed by Danes and their owners as long as the dog is in good physical condition. Caution must be used in larger dogs to be sure that the dog does not injure itself attempting to leap too high. The possibility of bloat or heat stress also presents itself in the case of over exercise or excessive heat.

Recently, an organization to unite Frisbee clubs all over the country was formed. This group the International Disc Dog Handlers' Association (IDDHA) acts to the world of Frisbee, as the AKC does to the world of obedience and conformation competition.

The IDDHA has designed a rating process called a Retrieval Proficiency Test (RPT) and has developed a titling process for competition dogs as well.

Frisbee Event Types

Toss & Fetch

Teams have 60 seconds to complete as many throws and catches as possible. Longer throws result in higher scores.

Accuracy

Similar to Toss & Fetch, but dogs must make catches in marked circles.

Freestyle

Intro division teams (a team is one dog, one handler) have 60 to 90 seconds and Advanced Division have 90 seconds to perform a freestyle routine. These routines consist of timed throws of the frisbee. Music, costumes and tricks may be included as part of the performance.

Contact:

IDDHA

1690 Julius Bridge Road
Ball Ground, GA 30107

10. SAR (Search and Rescue)

(excerpt from an article by Dana Perry, Dane owner and SAR volunteer)

“Although using Danes is not recommended by most SAR Groups, I have found it to be very rewarding. It takes intelligence, drive and a mutual bond of trust to do SAR work and Danes certainly possess these qualities.

I chose to focus on Urban and Wilderness SAR work for several reasons. In my opinion Great Danes are too large to do disaster SAR work because one of the requirements is to be able to lift your dog, another concern was for the victims possibly buried under rubble another 150 pounds (on the rubble) could mean the difference between life and death. Area Search dogs are all off lead and I was hesitant to do this because of his size, he might frighten the subject when finding them. Trailing dogs are always on lead and usually activated to search for missing children or Alzheimer patients. By the dog being on lead you are relatively close to your dog at all times and can calm someone rapidly if they are frightened. Keeping up with a Dane in this field of work requires the handler to be in good mental and physical condition. The closer or hotter the trail becomes, a Dane can move swiftly covering a lot of ground, regardless of the terrain. This can include going through heavy underbrush or over large downed trees, all of which you must get through or over without interfering with the working dog.

Your dog must be physically fit as well. Agility training is a fun way to give your dog confidence and to help him learn where his back feet are. Great Danes are large but they can be agile at the same time. Keeping their weight in check is also important. Obviously an overweight Dane is going to have a harder time if a track ends up being a long one.

Because your dog may become sick or injured on the trail it is vital that you have a good knowledge of canine first aid, including what to do if your dog bloats. No one may be around that can assist you so your dogs life will depend on your knowledge and your ability to keep calm in an emergency situation. You must be physically and mentally prepared to make a litter and pull your dog back to base camp if necessary.

There is no better feeling than to watch a Great Dane develop confidence and learn the skills to do this type of work, they enjoy having a job to do and who knows, someday they may even save someone’s life.”

Contact:

Pacific Trail K-9 Search and Rescue, Inc.

Dana Perry

26735 Wonderly Road

Rainier, OR. 97048
(503) 556-8765 (Home & Fax)
stevep@blkdane.com

11. Trick Training and MDCDT Tournament Training

a. Description of MDCDT game and tournaments

Trick training is a great and fun way of doing informal obedience training with classes of students. I used to invent tricks and write out the step by step method of accomplishing three or four tricks, and ask my students to have one of them ready to perform on the final night of a 6 week course of obedience classes.

I now use the “My Dog Can Do That”(tm) game to teach the students for at least 2 classes of my 6 class-weeks of training, and we always play the game for our final class. My standard after session reviews went from, “yes we learned from and enjoyed your classes” to “Wow! Can you start another class with just your game?”

“My Dog Can Do That”(tm) is a new game designed for the average pet owner. The object of the game is to teach your dog tricks and by completing those tricks to advance around a game board. The tricks are written on separate cards, and the cards are divided into levels of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced, making it possible for players of mixed abilities to play together. The best part of this, is that the “tricks” are actually a stepped method of obedience training. For instance to teach a dog to “beg” first you must master “sit”. There are 72 tricks to master, and every one of them can be performed easily with some training!

The training manual, included with the game, is written by Terry Ryan and Dr. Ian Dunbar, both are well known, experienced trainers. Competition, or wanting to “win” is the motivation for the student to teach these tricks to their dogs. In turn as the dog becomes more proficient at the basic commands, layers are added on for the more difficult tricks. All of this is done with an emphasis on POSITIVE reinforcement and FUN, which are the keys to ANY good training program.

An added benefit to playing this game is FAMILY focus on training and obedience, as well as togetherness and just plain old fun. Great Danes seem to excel at this game. It’s amazing to me that the minute we pull this game out, the dogs all troop to the table and SIT!

The company (The ID Store) that manufactures this game has begun to organize nationwide “My Dog Can Do That” (tm) tournaments as fund raisers for local animal shelters and other animal related charities. I am helping organize one for the Manchester, NH area to benefit the NH Animal Rescue League, and it promises to be fun AND educational.

Dan Sherry, the inventor of “My Dog Can Do That”(tm) points out that the number one reason for more than 25 thousand pets being “euthanized” each DAY, is behavioral problems due to lack of good training. So, if for no other reason than that, I think this is an excellent reason to get this game and play it with your family, friends and training school.