

PUPPY TRAINING FIRST PHASE 2-7 months

Remain Ever Mindful of the Following 5 Critical Development Periods (Scott and Fuller):

Period	Weeks	Basic Needs	Mental Capacity	Trainability	Notes
1	0 – 3	Warmth. Food. Sleep. Mother.	Nearly Zero.	None.	Little or no handling by humans.
2	4	Warmth. Food. Sleep.	All senses functioning.	Slight.	Extremely critical period. Do not remove from littermates or mother. Introduction to human society should be instituted but carefully controlled.
3	5 - 7	Socialization within litter. Socialization with humans.	Capable of responding to voices. Ability to recognize people.	Developing.	Awareness of difference between human and canine society.
4	8 - 12	Remove from littermates and mother. Supervised human socialization. Love and security.	Ability to establish permanent bond. Ability to establish confidence. Capable of accepting gentle discipline.	Ability to learn respect.	<u>Critical. Avoid all potential scare or hurt situations.</u> Introduction to humans is very important. Expose gradually to loud noises.
5	13 – 16	Love. Attention. Discipline. Socialization. Security.	Fully developed, needing only experience. Will attempt to establish dominance. Mind still being influenced.	Capable of adopting a positive or negative attitude towards training.	<u>Praise is very important for establishing a positive attitude to training.</u>

TRAINING YOUR YOUNG PUPPY:

Your puppy is capable of learning from a very early stage - from about 7 weeks. However, puppies are not, and should not be ready for "formal" training until they are about 6 months of age, some even much later, depending on the individual. By formal training, I mean training in which you expect a high degree of obedience, which you will enforce with corrections when you do not get the usual response to a known command. Although some puppies are capable of taking mild corrections from 3 - 4 months of age, it is undesirable to expect too much too soon. It is very easy to ruin a puppy by pushing them too far, before they have had a chance to have their puppy hood. So, let them have their puppy hood! However, do not let these early formative stages go by without some training and exposure, because it is during these early months that the puppy's desire to please you and to learn can be nurtured, so that you will have a strong foundation for more advanced training later on.

So what sort of training does one do with a young puppy? For lack of a better term, early training can best be described as "play training", where the training time spent is really more **structured play** than anything else - think of it as preschool. You will spend your short training sessions shaping the puppy's behaviour through fun lessons with almost solely **positive reinforcement** as your training tool. It should be fun for both of you, with little or no pressure on the pup. A cowed, fearful or confused pup is incapable of learning. So, always look for the signs in your puppy that he is confident and happy - eager demeanour, wagging tail, looking to you for approval and for "What's next!" If these signs are there, then you will be on your way to fulfilling the objectives of your early training, which are outlined below.

EARLY PUPPY TRAINING - OBJECTIVES AND COMMANDS:

Your objectives of early training are many, the most important of which are:

- Developing a strong, positive bond with your puppy
- Establishing yourself as pack leader
- Developing the pups desire to please you
- Developing the pups desire and capacity to learn
- Balancing obedience, retrieving and free hunting – this is important to the pup's development!

If your early training/shaping is done correctly, then the above objectives will be fulfilled as a natural progression of your training program. So, what does one expect of the young gundog puppy? You will "teach" the following things to your puppy:

- Puppy's **NAME**
- **"COME" OR "HERE"**
- **"SIT"**
- **"OK" OR "RELEASE"** command
- **"NO"**
- **"FETCH" and "GIVE" OR "LEAVE" through Play Retrieving**
- **"SIT" means STAY** for very brief periods
- **"HEEL" on lead**
- The **SHORT WHISTLE** peeps for **COME** in.
- The **LONG WHISTLE** for **SIT**.
- **Introducing your pup to the world - early experiences, socialising, the field, cover, hunting, birds, water, shot.**

During your training sessions you will spend time with and get to know your puppy - and he will get to know and love you! Do not let your training sessions become so focussed on "lessons" that you both forget to have fun - a puppy will learn and benefit as much through structured play during the day as through formal lessons. Also, do not let these training sessions be the only quality time spent with your pup. A

great deal of your puppy's bonding and lessons can be accomplished through the daily feeding, care and petting routine that you establish. Your training sessions can be carried out in your garden at first and should be very short - 5 minutes at first - and always end on a positive note. 5 minutes twice a day is better than 10 minutes once a day and your sessions should be daily if at all possible. Later, the length of your training sessions will increase, but for now keep them very short and frequent.

A good rule of thumb in training is the **3-time rule**. If you get the desired response from your pup 3 consecutive times, then praise the heck out of the pup, and give the pup something fun to do (a retrieve or just play and run around etc) and then move on to something else or quit. The response should be given on his own, that is, without you having to reinforce the command or make him do it through some sort of coercion. The 3-time rule helps you keep your lessons short and ending on a positive note.

I cannot stress enough the importance of **praise**. Many books I have read insist that a pat on the head should be enough praise for a puppy, but it is not, particularly with some individuals. You must let the pup know that he has pleased you immensely, particularly with new lessons, and you can do this with physical contact by fondling him or lightly patting him (but not on the head, most dogs don't like this). However, your most important communication tool is your tone of **voice**, which you can use to great effect to convey your pleasure to your puppy. The tone of voice you use will depend on the puppy - some need more excitement than others, but as a general rule, use rather high-pitched tones or phrases (low-pitched or growling tones are threatening). The combination of pleasant verbal and physical praise will really get through to your pup when he has done something right and that you are pleased with him. You will give more praise at certain times than at others, when you are especially pleased that he has mastered a command or exercise. At other times, less enthusiastic praise is required, but you should still give some praise for the correct responses.

Your puppy must also be able to clearly tell when he has displeased you, either through the tone of your voice or by shaking him by the scruff of his neck, along with a very stern **NO**, given in a sharp, low, growling voice. Your displeasure and subsequent correction should be commensurate with the "misdeed" and with the pups' temperament. Some pups only every need a stern voice – others need more than that. Whatever, save the stern "no" lessons for instances around the house or garden when he has done something unthinkable, such as stealing food or getting on the forbidden furniture, and do a good job of it. He will then learn the command in a situation that is not "training", and will come to understand your displeasure and its consequences without making a bad association with any of your training commands or acts.

Your puppy should know his **NAME** and associate it with something pleasant, so during the course of day or night, hold him and say his name often, call him to you by name and pet him or give him a tidbit. It won't take long for him to respond and learn his name.

Do not use his name to stop him from doing something unwanted. The command **NO** is for that. **NO** means simply "stop what you are doing" and should only be used to stop a specific action. **NO** should not be used during training to indicate to the puppy that he is not responding correctly. Your puppy will not understand what you want unless you show him the correct response. Saying **NO** if he is not sitting, for instance, will only confuse him. He will only understand what you want when you reward him for the correct response and will only learn the correct response through repetition and through you showing him what is required if necessary.

(NOTE: At this point it may help to refer to some of the training videos on the SAVHDA website (<http://www.savhda.co.za/basic-training/#.We8VC3YIG70>) and to the Basic Training from M Deeley (<http://www.savhda.co.za/training-articles-books-dvds/#.We8WT3YIG70>) .

BASIC COMMANDS:

Try to develop a "command" tone of voice so that your commands are authoritative and cannot be misunderstood by the puppy - without intimidating him. When your puppy is learning the command, it is fine to repeat it a few times to get the message through. However, once the command is understood and learnt, do not repeat yourself. Give the command once and then see that the puppy obeys - even if you have to physically make the puppy do what is required.

Your pup does not know at first what any command means. It is up to you to show him what it means, or to put him in a position so that the correct response is automatic. To teach the Sit command, for instance, you give the command and then gently push the pup's hindquarters down so that he does sit. After a number of repetitions of this, he will associate the command with the action and is therefore learning what sit means. Many more repetitions will be required before you get an automatic response in a variety of situations, but that is what training is about – repetition, reward/praise for the right response, or correction (push the pup's hindquarters down) to achieve the right response if it is not achieved at first.

Give praise for the correct response each time that the pup obeys on his own (without your intervention). While learning, reassurance and mild praise is fine so that the pup remains confident and understands he is on the right path. Once the general response is understood, however, praise should only be given when the pup responds on his own. Then, it should be given lavishly and there should be no doubt in your pup's mind that he has really pleased you. Take care, however, when praising that you do not cause the pup to become so excited that he "disobeys", ie., if he is sitting and you praise and allow him to start jumping up then he is no longer sitting and has broken your command. Keep the pup doing what you want him to while praising so that you do not inadvertently cause him to break the command – in this situation, for instance, hold the pup in the sit position while you praise him, and then give a release command.

Let's say that in a training session your pup finally SITS on his own on command with no intervention from you. Great, praise lavishly. Continue working on the command until you get him to do it 3 times in a row and then quit! Praise for these correct responses. That's the 3-time rule, and with a pup it is important not to overdo things or to train too long. Pup has done this lesson well, so quit before he becomes bored and give him something fun to do to take the pressure off and keep him happy.

Once fully learnt and understood, commands should not be repeated. Give one clear command, and if the pup does not respond, make the pup respond (push hindquarters down to sit, for instance) and give the command at the same time. If you begin to repeat commands without requiring an immediate response, pup will begin to take advantage of it and simply ignore you, since you obviously don't mean what you say! Eventually he will not bother to obey at all if he doesn't feel like it. That is training on his terms, not yours, and you will end up with a disobedient pup that you are constantly nagging.

The commands **COME/HERE**, **SIT** and **STAY** are easily taught during feeding, particularly since you will have the puppy's full attention during mealtime! **SIT** and **STAY** are effectively one command, that is, once you have commanded your pup to **SIT**, he should not move until you release him with your release command (**OK**). However, many people use the **STAY** command as well, but it is up to you. Your puppy will be especially eager to please if he knows it results in something very pleasant for him - food. These commands can be taught in a variety of ways and circumstances, you can refer to the training manuals for instruction on how to teach them. If you call your puppy to you for every meal and reinforce this by calling him during the day and giving him treats or praise, the puppy will associate **COME** with pleasant things and will be conditioned to respond to **COME**. As a separate exercise, the **SIT** can be taught with treats, and once pup knows both **COME** and **SIT**, you can combine them at mealtimes to really reinforce the response to these commands. In a short time, you will be able to call your pup, sit him, make him wait until you put the bowl down, and then eventually release him to go and eat. He is learning mild control in a low-level stress situation, which you will extend to the field later on. You will continue to use these commands at mealtimes for a long time, long after you think the pup understands them and perhaps for the life of the dog.

As you give the puppy the verbal commands **COME** and **SIT** you can also begin to condition him to the hand signals for these commands, and later the whistle signal. Tapping the side of your left thigh with your left hand will bring the pup in (the left hand is used for two reasons: first, you will have a gun in your right hand later on, and second, the left hand will bring him to your left side, which is the side which he will learn to heel on and the side on which he will stay when retrieving and the side he will deliver game to). Use the verbal **COME** command and tap your thigh with your left hand. The pup should come racing toward you, but if he doesn't then kneel down and encourage him until he understands what you want. After a few days of this, get the pups attention and signal him to you with your hand tapping and then use the verbal **COME**. He will soon respond to the hand signal alone. The hand signal for the **SIT** is the police-style hand up to stop, with the palm facing forward. Again, the left hand should be used. Give your pup the verbal **SIT** command and at the same time raise your left hand high up. Do this for a few days, and then give the hand signal first, followed by the verbal command. Soon, he should begin to anticipate what you want and begin to respond to the hand signal alone.

Once verbal and hand signals are understood, you can introduce the whistle commands. For the come-in, multiple short peeps on the whistle is traditional (peep-peep-peep, peep-peep-peep, peep-peep-peep). For the **SIT** a single long blast is used (peeeeeeeep). Do not overdo the volume, keep your commands quiet and your dog will learn to respond to quiet handling - their hearing is at least as good as ours so if you can hear it he can. Again, when first using the new whistle commands, use them with the known hand signals. Then, use the whistle command followed by the hand signal until the pup responds to the whistle alone.

Once **COME** and **SIT** are thoroughly learnt, the **STAY** (or sitting/staying for a longer period of time if you are not using the stay command) can be introduced, but only for very brief periods. Most pups are too active to stay put for long, and it is only asking for trouble to try to make them stay too long – they are bound to go wrong, and success is more important than long sit/stays from a puppy. A very common mistake made when teaching the pup to stay is to command **STAY** and then once the pup obeys, to call him and praise him. Don't call him back to you - go back to praise the pup for staying and then release him - otherwise the pup will not stay but will keep coming back to you for praise. Once he has learnt what is required you can begin calling him to you from the **STAY**, but always mix it up a bit, sometimes calling him and sometimes going back to him to praise him.

The "**RELEASE**" command is a command that says to the pup, "OK, you are free to go play and relax". It may seem strange that such a command is necessary, but it is as important as any of the others. Your puppy will need to know when he can forget about his lessons and can go play. He needs to know when he can get up from the **SIT**, which is only going to be on your command. Later on, he will need to know when he can start or resume hunting, and your release command will play a part in this. I use **OK** "go play" as a release, others use "release", and you can use what you want as long as it doesn't sound like another command. Use it during your informal training during the day after the **COME** or **SIT**, or when your formal lesson is over, or when you take him off the lead and give him his freedom, or at mealtimes when you give him the **OK** to go and eat his food. The pup will pick up the meaning very quickly just through association, and you do not have to teach it formally.

PLAY RETRIEVING/RETRIEVING:

FETCH or whatever command you will use for retrieving can be taught through association during play retrieving. The general idea is not so much to teach the pup **FETCH**, which he is likely to do and enjoy anyway, but to encourage the pup to return to you each and every time you throw something for him. When the pup is secure with you (knows his name, looks to you as a fun pack leader and will come to you when called), you can start to work on his retrieving by tossing a small dummy for him a few times every other day or so. **Do not do this too often or too many times a day – two or three at the very most, a few days a week.** Puppies are easily bored, and they can be sickened of retrieving by the eager owner who constantly throws objects or dummies for them.

Your puppy will need a couple of dummies for the retrieving lessons. These dummies are never for playing – only for “training”, and your pup will only see them when you are doing the retrieving lessons. Do not throw toys or other objects for your pup, and if you have children they must also understand that they are not to throw any objects for the pup. If you do not follow these guidelines, one of two things will happen: either the pup will get tired of retrieving and won't bother to retrieve his dummies for you at all, or he will develop the habit of playing, dropping or not returning to you with the dummy during your lessons.

Before you begin your retrieving lessons, pup should be comfortable with you and his environment. He should be coming to you when called, or be put in a situation that he must come by you or close to you with the dummy to get to wherever he wants to go with it.

When you throw the dummy give the command **FETCH** each time and soon he will come to know it and associate it with the retrieve. Sit down or get on your hands and knees and call him back to you and make a big fuss of him when he returns to you. Get him into your lap and let him hold the dummy for a while, praising him and then gently take it out of his mouth, using the command **GIVE** (some trainers use "leave" or "dead" or “out”). Throw the dummy again for him a couple of times, so he does not think you are just going to take it from him and put it away every time he brings it to you. This should be a fun game he wants to play, so keep him excited and wanting more.

Only praise the pup when he has come to you with the dummy and is holding it. Do not praise until he is all the way to you and is holding the dummy. If he drops it, stop praising. When he picks it back up, praise and pet him.

If your pup is reluctant to let go of the dummy, let him hold it for a while, then either blow lightly in his face and take the dummy, or if he is really determined, take it by putting your finger in his mouth and pressing down *gently* on his tongue - he will release the dummy without a fight and without you having to pry his mouth open.

It is very important that the pup return to you with each retrieve. In order to achieve this, it is good practice to do your play retrieving in a long hallway in which one end is open and all other doors are closed – so that the pup has to come back by you to get to the open doorway. I do this in our hallway and position myself in the doorway to our bedroom, and throw the dummy down the hall, send the pup and the pup will come running back to the only open room and one that he enjoys going into. Sometimes we will both end up on the bed with the retrieve in order to give the pup lots of praise before taking the dummy. Once returning with the dummy becomes a habit you can venture out to other places.

As pup gets older, it is a good idea to keep the pup on a long lead (a checkcord or rope attached to his collar – 15 – 20 meters in length) when you first venture out to the garden or field to do your retrieving. That way you can ensure that he returns to you every time. If you find you do not need it, great, dispense with it. But if you do need it, at least you have it to prevent the pup from developing a bad habit of not returning. Working with the checkcord takes some practice, so keep at it and learn to reel it in and keep it from getting tangled in bushes. The checkcord should be used like the lead – do not apply constant pressure but use it to bring the pup to you in short, gentle jerks and releases: Use a couple of light pulls to bring him toward you and then release as he is coming on his own, if he stops or veers away short tugs and release as he is coming toward you. In this way he learns to do it “on his own” because if he is responding correctly the discomfort (pull on his neck) stops, or if he is not the discomfort continues.

Do not try to make pup SIT to deliver! A sitting delivery can be trained later. The most important thing to do now is to make it pleasant for the pup to return to you as quickly as possible. Making a dog sit on return, with or without a retrieve, inhibits a fast return, and in some cases, becomes a correction for the dog because it is not very pleasant. Put yourself in your pup's place: here you are running full tilt back to your owner, and he shouts “SIT”. Pup may sit and wonder why he got stopped from racing into your arms.

Pup may not sit, in which case you will have to correct him – and therefore have effectively ruined your chance to praise for the recall. Pup may also drop the dummy and he probably won't pick it up again – so you've ruined your chance to praise for returning all the way back with the dummy!

There are many do's and don'ts while teaching and encouraging retrieving. However, the golden rules are: **never** punish the pup for bringing something to you, **never** throw something (or let your children throw things) you do not intend to have the puppy bring back to you, **never** play tug of war with the pup or chase him when he has something in his mouth, and **never** snatch something from the puppy's mouth. **Always** praise the pup for bringing something to you. **(For the pointing breeds, it is also important that you do not use lots of game or birds until they are pointing well. It's fine and good to allow them to retrieve some game occasionally, but don't overdo it in the first few months).**

Do not indulge yourself in lots of throwing, chasing, fetching games!!!! This will only teach your pup the ingrained behaviour of CHASING, which can be very difficult to stop, and will be a serious handicap for later training. In most instances, your pup will be a keen retriever and you do not really need to make him even keener by overdoing the retrieving and chasing. With the really keen retriever, you don't usually need to do much to excite him about the retrieve – normally what you really need to work on is encouraging a good return. With the less enthusiastic retriever, you can and should tease him with the dummies and allow a lot of chasing in order to get him really hyped up and excited (It's easy to tell the difference between these two types of pups – the really keen retriever will be difficult to hold back, while the less keen one will not exhibit a lot of desire to run and pick up the object, or will only want to retrieve once before getting bored).

Only when the pup is retrieving enthusiastically and returning to you, can you begin the rudiments of steadying (teaching him to wait for your command to retrieve) by kneeling down and physically holding him back with your left hand just for a second or two before you give the **FETCH** command. This should not dampen his spirits and if it does you may want to lay off trying to steady the pup at this point. If you find that the pup is losing his confidence and enjoyment in retrieving, then do not try to steady the pup yet. Wait until he is older and ready for a little more pressure.

Some pups are ready for initial steadying at 4 months – others only at 8 months or even later. It depends very much on their inherent desire to retrieve and their mental maturity. Some pups are so soft that you cannot put much pressure on them until they are much older. Others just don't have as much drive, and you have to allow them to develop their drive before trying to steady them up.

However, if you have a pup that is really confident and happy with the situation and exhibits a lot of retrieving desire, and is returning to you with the dummy, then you can begin the steadying. Once the pup has gotten the idea to wait, then you can take your hand away, make him wait and then send him on command. Occasionally, you can still toss the dummy for him without holding him, just to liven him up and make things fun. As he becomes more reliable at waiting for your command, you can begin to make him wait while you pick up the dummy occasionally. This will teach him that the retrieve is a privilege that you allow him, and that every dummy is not his – which is the basis for steadiness.

HEELING:

You will need to introduce your puppy to a lead and to teach him to "**HEEL**" **with a lead on**. Generally, hunting breeds such as Pointers or Spaniels are not taught to heel especially strictly while young and are not required to heel off lead until they have developed their hunting to a fair degree. It can be very confusing to them to be taught that they have to heel and be close to the handler, and then all of a sudden be told to go off and hunt! If the early heeling is overdone it can be quite difficult to get them out from under your feet later on. Therefore, get them used to a lead and teach them to heel reasonably well with it on, but leave it at that for now.

EARLY EXPERIENCES:

Your puppy will benefit greatly if you **expose him to a variety of situations** that he will encounter throughout his life, either while hunting or just during his daily routine. Therefore, when he is old enough (when his vaccinations are complete, about 3 months) you can begin to take him out into the big, wide world. Take him to friends' houses, to town, to parks, to shopping centers - anywhere to get him used to things and to get him used to the car. Some areas have puppy socialisation classes or ringcraft classes that are very good for getting him used to other dogs. If you can find them, gundog puppy training classes, either in a formal or informal group, are also good and will get him used to field conditions as well.

During your early training you should try to go to as many different areas as you can, partly to get the puppy used to the fact that he will not only train in one area and partly to get him used to different terrain and cover. Carry out his training sessions in different areas and get him to retrieve in a variety of conditions. The best time to do your retrieving lessons is at the start of a training session - you are far more likely to have success if your puppy is fresh, physically and mentally. For now, your retrieving lessons will be done separately from your hunting lessons. Your pup is likely to ignore a retrieve if he has been hunting and is excited about game, so don't cause a problem by expecting too much at this time and by mixing retrieving with hunting.

Introduction to water is critical, but will depend mainly on the time of year - if it is warm your puppy will probably go into the water very easily, but if it is cold you will have to wait awhile and sometimes the older puppy is more difficult to entice into the water. At any rate, wait until the weather and water is warm and **never** throw your puppy in the water and do not force him in if he is reluctant. The best way to get the pup in is to go in yourself to give him an example or to let him play with other dogs in the water. If you or other dogs romp in the shallows with him and make it really fun you shouldn't have any problems getting him in deeper and gradually swimming for short periods. If it is warm weather and you are still experiencing problems getting the pup in the water you should ask an experienced trainer for help.

HUNTING:

You will give your puppy a chance to develop his **HUNTING** desire during some of these outings. By hunting desire, I mean the understanding by your pup that he is being sent out to seek for scent, to range away from you to do so and the desire to do it enthusiastically. Your pup is effectively a nose on legs, but he needs to learn that he can use his nose and legs together to find scent and ultimately, birds. You need to find an area that is free of distractions (other dogs, lots of birds, other game) to begin with, but that has cover, some interesting smells and is large in area. You do not want a lot of distractions because you want your pup to concentrate on what he is doing and to also concentrate on you – not necessarily stay with you underfoot, but to understand that you are doing this together and that you, the boss, are the ticket to a good time. Stay away from areas that have a lot of birds that your dog can see and chase (the beach is a disaster at this time – if you do go there, keep your dog on a leash! Areas with lots of guinea fowl that can be seen are also very bad for a young dog).

When in the field on your normal free running walks with pup, give your puppy his release or hunting command and allow him to run about and explore, to find game and to experience the conditions he will be expected to work in. Don't worry too much about control, but on the other hand don't let him run absolutely wild ignoring you completely. Occasionally, whistle to get his attention and walk in another

direction or call him in to you, but don't overdo it or you may distract him to the point of confusion about whether he should hunt or be with you. **These “hunting” sessions should be separate from your “obedience” lessons – leave your puppy to concentrate mainly on hunting and give very few commands at first. When you first start, do not overtire your pup.** Keep the hunting sessions short at first, increasing the time out gradually. Remember, he is still young. (NOTE: Refer to the Riffmuir videos for Puppy Walking and Quartering on the SAVHDA website (<http://www.savhda.co.za/basic-training/#.We8VC3YIG70>))

Encourage pup to hunt as far out ahead of you or to the side of you as he wants at the moment. However, don't go to him or follow his lead – you want him to follow your general direction, not the other way around! As far as possible, try to keep your general direction into the wind or on a crosswind for most of the session. You need to change direction occasionally and call his name or use the whistle when you do, move in a direction that you choose and stick to your direction. Keep on walking and do not stand around waiting for him. If pup does not follow, stand your ground and make him find you. If pup is still not with you after 10 minutes after your last direction switch and you cannot see him, then go back and look for him, but where possible (most of the time) you need to let pup find and catch up with you - then praise him and make a fuss of him when he does catch up with you. Be very careful of pup training you to follow him, or having you stand around waiting for him (keep moving in your chosen direction, not your pups) as the pup will learn that he is controlling things, not you, and he will take advantage of this and not learn his job, which is to *hunt for and with you* (not only for himself!).

Let pup hunt often in the field and encourage him to hunt enthusiastically, ranging and exploring and developing confidence. When pup is a bit stronger and bolder you may come across game birds or ground game (rabbit or buck) and your pup will probably chase when these flush. If this happens, simply ignore pups chasing and change direction immediately when he begins his chase. Walk in the opposite direction to the direction he has taken on his chase and keep on walking - don't stand around waiting for him and **do not give any commands** (he will ignore these and learn he can disobey you). Do not scold him but call him once or twice as you move away from him and if he does not follow, make him find you and do not go back to find him (unless you think it's an emergency). Let him panic a little bit while he struggles to find you after chasing. When he does find you then praise him and make a fuss of him for finding you. **Do not punish him**, since he will only think he's being punished for coming back to you! Praise your dog when he reappears, no matter how irritated you may be! Give your pup water if he's thirsty and wait a minute or two for him to settle and then continue on in a direction away from where he was chasing.

If your pup finds game and points it, great! Praise him if you can while he is pointing and ignore it if he chases or rushes in, and respond as in the previous paragraph when he chased. Do not try to use any command to keep him on point – he does not know such a command and you will only confuse or distract him. Reassure him while he is on point – shut up if he moves or chases! If pup starts pointing barren scent, do not praise as he may think this is a good thing and start false pointing. If pup points or shows a lot of interest in rats and/or moles, just ignore him and keep walking.

If you find while hunting that pup is not keeping track of you – **HIDE**. This is a very good way to get your dog's attention on you and to teach him that he is responsible for keeping track of you. If you turn and call pup, carry on and don't repeat the command. If he does not follow and catch up eventually or in good time, find a bush and hide or if necessary lie down, but make the pup hunt for you. (Keep an eye on him just to make sure he doesn't panic and run off at first, though). You need only do this a few times every few weeks (when you see him slacking off) for him to get the idea at this stage.

Change your direction as you walk, occasionally calling him each time you change direction and using your turn signal. When you can see pup beginning to tire, you can use the opportunity to reinforce your “Come” commands, calling him to you a few times and rewarding him with a pat or water or tidbit.

Don't call your pup and put the lead on and go home every time you are in the field. Pup will begin to associate the recall command with getting put up and no more fun. To prevent this, recall pup occasionally

during the session, pet him, praise him, give him water, slip the lead on and off, and then continue. If you do this, pup won't think every time you call him you are going to put him up!

INTRODUCTION TO SHOT should be carried out with the utmost caution. There are many opinions and methods about introducing your puppy to shot, but they all agree to tread carefully. **NEVER just fire a gun** to see if your puppy is gunshy! Follow any one of the manuals' or books directions on introducing to shot - they all work - but remember to do it gradually. It is easy to rush on thinking there isn't a problem, only to find out later that by not going through all the steps you have created a gun sensitive dog. This is curable, but with great difficulty and it is far easier to ensure it never happens in the first place.

CONCLUSION:

If you have managed to successfully teach your puppy the given commands, especially the **SIT AND COME** commands, developed his retrieving instincts and delivery, and introduced him to the world, to hunting, to birds, to water and to shot, then you will have done an admirable job and should have a young dog with the solid foundations for future successful training. You will have accomplished far more than it will seem like and will be pleasantly surprised at how easy much of the formal training to come will be. Even if you haven't managed all of it, you will have done the most important part, which is bonding with your puppy and developing his desire to please you - without which you and your puppy will never be able to progress.

Once you have reached this point in your training and the pup has reached 5 – 7 months of age, it is time to stop and decide which way to go next. Do you continue on and start with more advanced training or not?

Many trainers will say that now is the time to put the pup “on ice”, which will allow it to mature mentally and physically enough for serious training. Usually after (sometimes before) 4 – 6 months of age the pup will go through a rebellious stage, and not all pups are mentally mature enough to take the corrections required for more advanced training and control in the field. Some pups take much longer to mature than others. So, some trainers will wait a few months to recommence stronger obedience and field training, when the dog will be able to handle it. Others will press on, but will be careful about the corrections they apply.

What you decide to do will probably depend on the nature of your puppy. With a really confident and bold pup that is inclined to want to do his own thing, it might be a good idea to continue. With less confident individuals it may be better to proceed slower, letting them mature for a few months until they are ready for “serious” field training.

Retrieving exercises are a good way to continue working with the pup without undue pressure. Working on steadiness, more difficult retrieves, water, memory retrieves, drags and beginning blinds will give an opportunity to build the retrieve and give your pup exercise. They also instill greater steadiness and control.

Field work might be discontinued for a while if you have a pup that is a strong chaser and is not yet pointing. However, if your pup is starting to point and doesn't chase for long distances, by all means continue your field walks. Balance it with retrieving exercises.

By 8 months of age, I believe most GSPs are able to handle some pressure and benefit more by earlier training than later training. However, some are not, and if you have a pup that is extremely sensitive, and you have decided to wait to do the more advanced hunting, pointing and control work, you should still continue with your obedience training in and around the house, at parks and areas that do not hold a lot of game, field walks, and also continue with your basic retrieving training.

Above all, remember to have fun and enjoy your pup!

SAMPLE Training Schedule

Training to be done every day, for very short periods, best done several times throughout the day at first and progressing to one or two short (5 minutes to begin with, 10 minutes later on) sessions a day. It is ok to skip a day, but not two or three days "training" if at all possible. Remember, all dogs are different, so all training will be slightly different!

First Week

- Get acquainted with your puppy.
- Teach **NAME, COME, SIT, NO, OK, FETCH, GIVE, SHORT WHISTLE** and **LONG WHISTLE** commands.
- Let puppy settle

Day 1 : Return with pup. Introduce and acclimatise to basket or crate. Feed evening meal using name. Briefly use **NO** if required. Play with pup, caress and enjoy!

Day 2 : Repeat and reinforce as per Day 1. Call pup often during day with **NAME** and **COME**, praise, play and caress pup. Use **NO** when required.

Day 3 : At each meal begin to call by **NAME** and **COME** with brief repeated hand tapping on knee. Introduce **SIT** command with tidbits often during the day and during meals.

Day 4 : Repeat and reinforce as per Day 3. Use **SIT** command at mealtimes, but make pup wait for **OK** command to eat: holding food bowl, **sit** pup and immediately put bowl down and say **ok**. Begin to extend the **sit** at meals by sitting pup, lowering bowl and immediately picking it up when he stands to eat. Keep doing this until you can lower the bowl all the way to the floor while he is sitting and then give release command "**ok**" to eat.

You can also introduce play retrieving with sock or dummy at any time as long as pup enjoys this, and provided that bad habits do not develop such as pup running around with the dummy too much, chewing, mouthing or playing unsupervised with dummy. Use **FETCH** and **GIVE** commands, but do not require steadiness.

If possible, reinforce **NAME** and **COME** by calling several times during the day with praise and tidbits.

Day 5 : At each meal, call by **NAME** and with repeated **SHORT WHISTLE** Peeps "**COME**" command and brief repeated hand tapping on knee. In addition to the **SIT** command, give a **LONG WHISTLE** command for sitting. (If you are not using a whistle, but verbal commands only, skip the whistle training and just continue with the verbal and hand commands. If using a whistle, remember to use it softly).

Continue brief **SIT** training at other times during day, using hand to gently push rump down when needed.

Pup should be starting to recognise name.

If possible, reinforce verbal commands with whistle commands during day.

Continue with play retrieving, restricting retrieves to no more than 2 or 3 every other day.

Day 6 : Repeat and reinforce as per Day 5.

Day 7 : Two extra short sessions in addition to weekday routine – (1.) Try **NAME** and **SHORT WHISTLE**, with signal to **COME**. Try **COME** and **SHORT WHISTLE**. Try **SHORT WHISTLE** alone. (2.) Try **SIT** with **LONG WHISTLE**.

Continue with play retrieving, no more than 2 or 3 retrieves.

Second Week

- Continue with variations and reinforcement of Week One training.

Third Week

- Continue with variations and reinforcement of Week Two training.
- Continue with meal routine.
- Introduce lead.
- **Take pup out.**

Day 1 : Meal routine, using whistle and hand commands and **OK** to release for feeding. Introduce pup to lead. Put lead on briefly with praise and tidbits and increase the time spent with lead on.
Repeat and reinforce any previous lessons that require it for variation.

Day 2 : Take the pup on an outing to a strange place, like a park, to friends or simply take for a drive. Mealtime routine.

Day 3 : While pup is sitting, put lead on and remove. Begin “heeling” the pup in house, slip lead on and walk a few steps using the **HEEL** command..
For variation repeat and reinforce any previous lessons that require it.

Day 4: Repeat and reinforce as per day 3.
Continue lead introduction and heeling. Slip lead on and walk a few more steps than the previous day. Once pup is becoming aware of the lead, **SIT** while still on the lead. Gradually increase distance you “heel” the pup without any distress to the pup .
Continue your mealtime routine and do your play retrieving

Day 5 : Take the pup on a fun outing.
Do mealtime routine.
Continue lead and heeling, working up to being able to heel pup around house, occasionally sitting pup.
Play retrieving..

Day 6 : Go outside with pup on lead. Do a few combinations of **HEEL** and **SIT**. Take lead off and use **OK** command after lead is taken off, and allow the pup to roam and play unhindered.
Mealtime routine.

Day 7 : Repeat and reinforce as per Day 6.
Begin play retrieving outside. After throwing dummy into open ground, throw dummy into some light cover. Dummy should be upwind so pup can easily smell it.

Fourth Week

- Continue mealtime routine as Week Three
- Continue to reinforce **COME**, with whistle and hand signals

- Continue to reinforce **SIT**, but begin to introduce whistle signal with hand signal
- Continue play retrieving outside, keeping downwind of retrieves and keeping most retrieves in open sight of the puppy. If your puppy is ready, you can begin to restrain puppy briefly with your hand before **FETCH** command is given. With the really keen retriever, from now on, you will make the pup wait briefly before removing your hand and sending with the **FETCH** command.
- Go on walks outside, begin with lead on and **HEEL** with a couple of **SITs**. Take short walks with pup on lead in parks.
- Take pup to the field with lead on and **HEEL** very briefly, take lead off and **SIT**, then **OK** and allow pup to explore and hunt. These **walks in field with free running are the start of your pup's hunting routine**, and should be no more than 15 minutes for now. Call pup a couple of times during the run and praise, then allow to continue. At end of pups run, call pup in, give water or tidbit, put lead on and return to car or continue home.

Fifth Week

- Continue mealtime routine, alternating hand, voice and whistle signals to **COME** and **SIT**. Clap hands together while pup is eating, at end of week clap hands loudly while pup is eating.
- Begin a bit more formal approach to training, with 5-minute sessions of heeling, sitting, coming and retrieving either in garden or in park/open field. Give pup retrieves in light cover, but always working into the wind so pup will use his nose and have a better opportunity of finding the dummy without help. If you find pup is not returning to you well with the retrieve, you can put pup on a long lead so that he has to return, or you can "bribe" him to return with food. **If pup drops dummy because of the food**, do not use food, but rather just the long lead.
- Go on a few walks in various areas with lead on, requiring pup to heel and to occasionally sit on hand and whistle signal when stopped
- Continue your **pup's hunting routine** with visits to the field allowing pup **lots** of free running often. Always start session with lead on, sit, ok and allow pup to go hunting, always end session by calling pup in and put lead on and return to car or home.
- If it is warm, you can **introduce pup to water and swimming**.

Sixth Week

- By now puppy should know commands **COME, SIT, HEEL, OK, FETCH, GIVE** and should respond to voice, hand or whistle signal.
- **SIT/STAY** for longer periods can be introduced in training sessions, which are now no longer than 10 minutes, including the retrieving lessons. Retrieves can be made longer and a bit more demanding and in different types of light cover and short, downwind retrieves can be started.
- **Continue walks and free running/hunting with the puppy**. Can begin to give pup a couple of retrieves before run, but no more than a couple and keep them upwind and short.
- Can start to carefully **introduce shot**, preferably with a starting pistol or 20 ga shotgun. **Watch pup's response carefully, and only continue if no notice is taken.** A good way to introduce shot is to work with another handler and an experienced dog: With your puppy at a distance (70 - 100 meters to start), let him watch other dogs retrieving with shot (he must be able to see the dummies!), then if he is keen and not at all worried or cowed, then let him retrieve too, with you throwing a dummy for him at each shot. Gradually move him closer to the gun and to the sound of the shot over a few days' time, until you and he are fairly close (within 20 meters) to the shot. He can then retrieve dummies thrown by the person holding and firing the gun; with you holding him at a distance and retrieving the dummy back to you. Gradually work your way closer to the gun. If this is done correctly he should be looking forward to the shot, and the gun, rather than being subdued or afraid of it. **If at any time there is a negative reaction (slow to retrieve, returns to you, doesn't want to retrieve) stop immediately and get the help of an experienced trainer!**

Seventh Week

- Require pup to **SIT/STAY** longer and begin to move further away during sessions. Always return to pup and praise.
- **If you have a pup that is a keen retriever** and you have been restraining him prior to sending him for the retrieve, you are ready to **STEADY** the pup to the retrieve. Begin to gently **steady** pup to the thrown dummy, telling pup to **SIT or STAY** and physically restrain him if necessary. Make him wait for a short time before sending, until he is waiting for incrementally longer periods. Once he has gotten the idea, either yourself or a helper will start to pick up the dummy, which is only thrown a short distance. Toward end of week you should be able to pick up the dummy yourself. Work towards being able to tell the pup to **STAY** and throw the dummy about 10 meters off to your right and pick the dummy up yourself, return to him and **praise a lot**. Pick up at least 1 out of every 3 or 4 dummies that you throw yourself (remember, this is to be done only if your pup is mature enough to take it and remains happy and confident through the steadying stage). From now on, this pup will always wait for the command to retrieve and will not be allowed to run in, chase or break to the thrown dummy!!
- **If you have a pup that is not such a keen retriever**, or that is very slow to mature or sensitive, you should wait to steady this pup and allow him the freedom to continue to run in and pick up his dummies with little or no restraint at all.
- Continue trips to the field and allow pup to do **a lot of free hunting and develop his hunting drive** and his contact in the field with you.

Eighth Week

- Response to all **commands becoming increasingly better and crisp**.
- **The very keen, forward pup is now reasonably steady to thrown dummy and you are picking up 1 in 3 or 4 yourself. The less forward pup may still be running/chasing in to retrieve.** Both types of pups are retrieving from different types of cover and at increasing distances and beginning to use wind and give indications of how good a nose he has. If you are training/retrieving in a group it's a good idea to leave the lead on, make pup stay a few seconds after you have taken the lead off (if pup is steady) and then send him for the retrieve. That way he will not regress and to break under these more exciting and distracting circumstances. If the pup strains and pulls and it's obvious that he would be out retrieving if you didn't have the lead on, then you know that later you will have to concentrate more on the steadiness, picking up more of the thrown dummies yourself and allowing the pup to retrieve only a few on command. The less forward pup will still be allowed to run in.
- Trips to **town and parks** have gotten puppy **used to car, traffic, people and other dogs**.
- Trips to the **field** have gotten puppy **used to cover, water, fences and other obstacles**.
- **Pup should be hunting enthusiastically and beginning to range out further.** Trips to the field may have resulted in game contact, which he may have flushed or pointed briefly. Pup should not be chastised for chasing, but rather called back gently when possible and then signalled and made to move on in another direction away from the game that he chased. He should be responding to your hand signal and body to move in a different direction and be keeping in reasonable contact with you.
- If the pup has not progressed this far, spend this week concentrating on the areas you have missed or gotten behind in, but do not push the puppy beyond his capabilities. They are all individuals, and pups mature and learn at different rates. If there is a problem it probably lies with some training fault, so seek the advice of an experienced trainer.

Good luck with your Training! Trudi