

Working with children in the Family Dog Class:

The Yes/No/Yes Game:

A fun game to play with the children attending the Family Dog class is the Yes/No game. Have the children as a group all either shout out "Yes" or quietly say "uh,uh" (followed by shouting yes) when the instructor does something good or bad to a stuffed toy dog. The instructor will do something to the stuffed puppy and the kids can exclaim "Yes" if action was good or they must say "uh,uh" quietly, firmly but not meanly if the instructor's actions were wrong. And when the instructor stops being bad, then they all shout "Yes". Kids love to make noise as a group, they giggle like mad, they have fun and even the shy ones get a chance to participate. It is also an excellent teaching tool for explaining:

- What are appropriate ways to approach, handle and treat a dog
- How to communicate to your dog when it is "good" and when it doing something it shouldn't
- Using "yes" and "uh,uh" followed by "yes" gives them a chance to see how reinforcing a correction makes learning happen faster

Play it up: Be happy when they say yes, cower and turn away if they are too stern/mean when they say "uh,uh" or if they forget to follow-up with "yes" after "uh.uh". The goal is to get the kids to understand that their reaction to the instructor can change the instructor's behavior - just what we want them to understand about working with dogs.

The instructor can do things like:

- throw things at the dog,
- pull dogs ear,
- poke dog with pencil,
- run by the dog

When they say "uh,uh" and then yes the instructor can follow up with you were right because doing that makes the dog feel really bad, or because that scares the dog"

The instructor (and assistants) will reinforce them with the cardboard bones which can be exchanged at the end of class for "treats" from the prize grab bag. (Whoever has the most bones gets to pick first.)

When the kids make the right response, the instructor could also walk by slowly, letting them ask permission to pet, letting the stuffed animal smell their hand - whatever is an appropriate approach to a dog. This should be followed by an explanation like "Yes because that helps the dog to stay quiet and happy", "Yes, because that how the dog says hello".

The kids would get a kick out of having all the adults have to do the same thing!

Getting the kids attention:

Another good tool, if the kids get out of hand and you can't get their attention would be to start to sing "How much is that doggie in the window", or "Who let the dogs out." As soon as they look up, the instructor will just start talking right where they left off as if there had been no interruption.

Also toss out bones for being quiet (or any "good" behavior) as you're talking.