

Older rescue dog training

Section 1 | Start small: attention and sit

Your dog can feel comfortable near you and choose a brief check-in without pressure. Introduce sit only when physically comfortable.

Before you begin Arrange a veterinary check, particularly for an older dog with possible pain, hearing, sight or mobility changes. Set up a quiet rest area with non-slip footing, water and an easy route outside. Use gates as needed to separate pets and visitors. Let sleeping and eating dogs rest undisturbed.

1. Make the day predictable Offer regular meals, toilet opportunities and quiet rest. Avoid filling the first days with introductions or training demands. There is no universal three-day or three-month adjustment deadline.

2. Let your dog choose Sit sideways at a comfortable distance. Do not lean over, hug or reach into their resting space. A calm approach is a choice, not a request for automatic petting.

3. Notice a glance When your dog looks toward you, say a soft “yes” and gently place or toss a small suitable reward where they feel safe. Hand-feeding is optional.

4. Try the name once When comfortable, say their name once. Reward turning toward you. Use a visual cue they can see if hearing is reduced; do not startle them with unexpected touch.

5. Offer a comfortable sit If sitting is comfortable, reward a sit your dog offers naturally, or guide gently with a small food lure moving slightly above the nose. Never press the hips down. Add “sit” just before a predictable sit. If joints are sore or sitting is difficult, reward a relaxed stand instead and ask your vet.

6. End while it is easy Thirty seconds may be enough. Offer space to rest and note what helped. If food or interaction is unwelcome, pause rather than trying harder.

Pause or get help Freezing, turning away, avoidance, hard staring or growling mean you need more space and a safer plan. Never punish a growl or test whether your dog will tolerate handling. For bite risk, established fear or repeated distress, involve your veterinarian and a qualified reward-based behavior professional.

Build at your dog's pace Progress can be choosing to stay in the room or looking at you once. Begin new lessons only when your dog is comfortable enough to participate. Repeat this section as long as useful.

Practice date	What felt easy?	Next tiny step

Practice is optional and brief. Reward comfortable choices; never force participation. General guidance, not an individual behavior plan. Full lesson and sources: dogdays2024.com/training.html