

SPANIELS

This tip is from JIM KARLOVEC of FLUSHING STAR KENNEL, 33665 Henwell Rd. Columbia Station, OH 44028; <http://members.aol.com/flushstar/>; flushstar@aol.com. Jim has been training professionally for 18 years. He trains all sporting breeds for hunting, and specializes in training spaniels for hunting, hunting tests and field trials. He judges spaniel field trials and breeds English springer spaniels and English cocker spaniels.

Owner-Created Problems

“THE MOST COMMON owner-created problem I deal with is plain old disobedience!” Jim said. “Owners bring this on by spending too little time on basic yard work, or by using inconsistent commands, or both.”

By inconsistent commands, Jim means using “synonyms” for the various commands, like “Come,” “Here” and “Get over here!” to call the dog, or “Heel,” “Let’s go” and so on, to tell the dog to walk along beside you. People readily understand synonyms, but dogs don’t.

“Keep everything as simple as possible,” Jim said. “One command for each canine task. Stick with the standard commands, like *Heel*, *Come*, *Hup* and *Stay*. Ditto for whistle commands: a single blast for *Hup*, and several short pips for *Come*.” Not surprisingly, Jim feels that the single most important command is *Hup*, because it stops your spaniel wherever he may be and whatever he may be doing. Once you stop him, you’re in control.

If your spaniel is a house dog and member of the family, Jim advises that you not only use consistent commands yourself but that you also teach others in your family to do the same. He recommends posting your “approved list of commands” on the refrigerator where family members can find them whenever they need a refresher.



Jim Karlovec

So much for consistency of commands. The other major contributing factor to owner-induced disobedience is inadequate training time.

“Everyone’s busy,” Jim said. “But when you bought your spaniel, you made a commitment to him. To reach his potential, he needs a little of your time every day. Ten minutes a day every day is far better than an hour once a week. Spend 10 minutes a day on basic obedience and by six months, he’ll be pretty well mannered. By 12 months, he’ll be a pleasure to be around.”

Jim pointed out that dogs love

structure. You should plan your daily obedience lessons so your dog achieves some particular goal every day, or at least makes progress toward it. To do this, you must keep your dog’s head in the game for the entire lesson. Remember that puppies have short attention spans, so

give your puppy short lessons. As he matures, you can lengthen them out.

Jim also recommends using “casual” time with the dog for obedience training. When you feed him, make him *Hup* and wait until you release him to eat. When you take out the trash, make him *Stay* at the gate. You should also expose him to a variety of new experiences, especially those involving unknown people, sights, scents and sounds: shopping center parking lots, kids’ ball games and so on. With that background, new situations in the field

won’t fluster him.

For corrections, Jim recommends going as gently and gingerly as possible, considering the individual dog’s temperament. A tug on the lead, a sharp *No*, a stern command and so on. He pointed out most emphatically that an e-collar is *not* a shortcut or a substitute for adequate training time.

“Above all be patient,” he said. “It took you years to learn how to do your job properly, so don’t expect your spaniel to do his immediately and by magic. He needs proper schooling and experience.” *