



When Dogs Talk™

## Station Lead

By Sarah Hodgson



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## Station Lead

As much as I like predictability, my dogs, Balder and Whoopsie like it even more. Each has a place—a “station”—in every room we share. In the kitchen, their bowls are in one corner and their resting mats are in the other. There’s a place in the dining room—close enough so they can keep track of the floor freebies, but far enough to keep our laps dry—and one in the playroom. Their super-deluxe sleeping cushions take up most of the floor space in the bedroom. We even use flat mats in the car and a special greeting station by the front door where they hang out, patiently waiting for guests to acknowledge their wonderfulness.

The purpose of all of these stations? Routine. Dogs love, love, love routine. Whoopsie and Balder know their places and know what to expect when they get there. It calms them and—a wonderful side benefit—it confines their hair to several easy-to-manage locations. This means nothing to our dogs but it’s priceless to me, the hair cleaner-upper.



## What Your Dog Wants To Know

Your dog wants to know two things: where she should go and what she should do. If you don't give clear direction, she'll make her own decisions and chances are, they will differ from your own. When you're cooking, should she get between you and the counter, paw at your leg and beg for scraps? No, of course not. But that's what your dog thinks she should do—especially since she's getting a nice, full-contact reaction from you every time she does it.

Remember, dogs will repeat any behavior that gets a reaction—good or bad.

## First Things First

Identify the rooms where your dog is welcome and choose a location for her station. The location should be near a sturdy, immovable and non-tipping object. Pick a spot that is out of the way of foot traffic but still close to the action. Help your dog identify the space by putting a bed or blanket down. Spruce the area up with a chew or a toy. This is the official station.



When you enter the room—undoubtedly trailed by your four-footed shadow—direct your dog to her place. Be consistent. Whenever you're going to spend more than a few minutes in a room, send her to her place and direct "Settle Down."

Tip: Make sure your dog has been fed, exercised and pottied before you work on the "Settle Down" direction.

### **What If She Won't Stay?**

This is where the station lead comes in handy—it eliminates debates and ensures that your dog learns to listen to your direction.

The station lead is a short nylon lead with clips on both ends. It can be adjusted to a length between 2 and 3 feet. Clip one end to a sturdy, stationary object and the other end to your dog's buckle collar to establish a safe and comfortable "go to" spot for your dog. Add a bed or mat and some favorite toys or bones.

Create stations in every room you share with your dog.



Teaching your dog good containment skills inside the house is an important first step towards reinforcing the direction “stay.” Once you’ve led your dog to her station and secured her lead, focus her on her toy and direct her to “stay.” Stay with your dog in the beginning until she’s relaxed at her station. Once she’s going to her station automatically, phase off clipping the lead and simply instruct her to “stay.”

### **Car Station**

Dogs love a car ride. So much so, in fact, that some leap from the front to the back in frenzy of travel-induced hysteria. This is unacceptable for several reasons, the most important being safety. Create a car station by placing a flat mat in the back set, cargo area or the front passenger seat if that’s your only option. Use your station lead to secure jumping bean types in the cargo area or to a headrest. Allow enough room for your dog sit and stand comfortably.

**Do not leave your dog unattended in the car while she is attached to a station lead.**



## Couch Station

Oh, I know. I shouldn't recommend that you let your dog sleep on the couch. But let's be real: a lot of dogs sleep on the couch...even mine. Dogs should not, however, be allowed to slowly nudge you down to the saggy end of the couch where you can't see the TV. Put a mat or blanket on her couch spot and insist that she stay there.



## Greeting Station

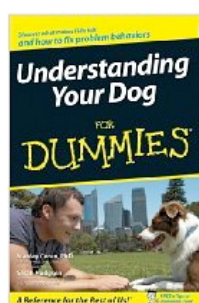
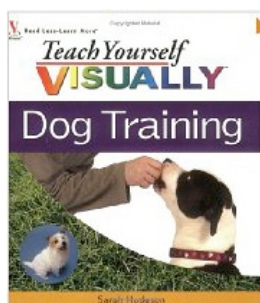
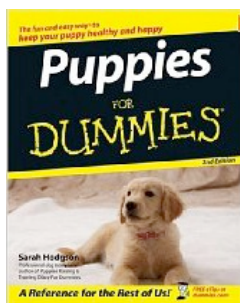
If the thought of someone ringing your doorbell leaves you paralyzed with dog-related anxiety, you need to create a greeting station. Place a mat and station lead near the door. When someone arrives, calmly clip your dog to her station lead and ignore her until she settles. When all four paws are in contact with the ground, allow your guest to greet her.

Tip: In your dog's mind, your house is her den and it can be very stimulating when non-pack members try to enter. Ask a friend or neighbor to help practice door greetings. Early in Whoopsie's door greeting training, I enlisted the aid of our mail carrier. Every day he'd ring the bell and wait patiently while I worked with the Whoops. What a guy!



Remember, good behavior results when you encourage and reward good behavior. Correcting or punishing random mischief works in the moment, but your dog isn't learning; she's just reacting.

For more information on housetraining, basic manners, problem solving and all-around dog behavior improvement, visit the [WhenDogsTalk.com](http://WhenDogsTalk.com) bookstore.



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