

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: [Small breed obedience - can you train a Yorkie like a German Shepherd?](#)

If you receive this email in full html, you can just [click on the events underlined and in light blue](#) to get to the correct page on our web site!

It's that season again! Everything is slowing down for the holidays, even the activities at The Better Companion. Already **in full swing** are the preparations and **sign-ups for the new year!** We're starting great classes in January and February, you don't want to miss out on!

Need a last minute gift? Give a doggy gift and you can't be wrong! The options range from a state-of-the-art clicker for only \$3 over different **books, DVDs** and training aids to **gift certificates** of any amount. We have on stock books like "**January Journey**", a love story with our famous Iditarod as the back drop scenery, "**Play Together, Stay Together**" with great ideas of proper and fun interaction with your dog, "**Chill Out Fido**" with wonderful ideas on how to help your dog to calm down and **DVDs from the Iditarod**, about women on the long distance races and about the Alaska Sweepstakes, a famous race in Western Alaska.

 **Nose Work classes starting in January!**

Mondays; starting Jan 14. Beginners are at the most wanted time at 6:30pm, Intro to Odor at 7:45pm. This great activity helps dogs build confidence, and fine-tunes the handler's ability to read their dog's body language. Learn how to exercise your dog at home as well as in our class! We have revamped these classes to be even more fun!!!
<http://www.bettercompanion.com/dogsports.html>.

 **Mushing and Skijor Workshops now scheduled!**

Enjoy the great outdoors having your dog(s) safely connected with you - either through the skijor belt or the ganglines and sled! Only 1-2 pet dogs (depending on their size and strength) can pull you on a lightweight sled over our winter trails. We help you teaching your dogs to pull a sled or you on skis.

Our famous [mushing for pet dogs](#) workshop will be held on two Sundays, January 20 and 27. On the first day you'll learn about the equipment and how to drive a sled, on the second day you'll bring your own dog(s) and we'll help you teach your dog to pull that musher's sled. We have all the equipment available to loan for the workshop, no purchase necessary.

The [Skijor Workshop](#) is set for Sunday, February 17. We have again Kirsten Ballard come and teach you and your dog this wonderful sport. Hopefully with some snow coming, you can practice your intermediate skiing skills before hooking yourself up to your dog 😊.

🐾 Treibball classes starting in February:

Pushing balls towards us is a great game to teach your dog distance control as well as self control! Take this class in February (starting Tuesday, Feb 12) and you'll be better prepared for the Treibball workshop with Nancy Tanner on April 8th at our facility!!! See under Events below.

➤ **Sign up now!**

🐾 Agility classes for all levels: Saturdays all day; starts Jan 12.

🐾 Nose Work Beginners: Mondays, 6:30pm; starts Jan 14.

🐾 Nose Work - Intro to Odor: Mondays, 7:45pm; starts Jan 14.

🐾 Rally College: Thursdays, 5pm; starts Jan 17.

For all Elementary School graduates. Guide your dog through different obedience obstacles while practicing the heel for longer sections. This will increase your dog's attention span and work on self control exercises, set up in form of a fun course.

🐾 Check our class listings below in a new easy overview format!

➤ **Open Play Time/ Doggy Day Care:**

- **DDC** will be closed **Dec 24 - Jan 6** (Holiday break)
- **OPT** will be closed on **Dec 21, 28 and Jan 4**

➤ **Upcoming Events:**

Mark your calendar for the following events in 2013:

🐾 March 16: Odor Recognition Test (ORT) for "Nose Work - Intro to Odor" graduates at the Cook Inlet Kennel Club building in Palmer.

🐾 April 6/7: Freestyle/ Dogdance workshop by Nancy Tanner in Anchorage at Alyeska Canine Trainers

🐾 April 8: Treibball Workshop by Nancy Tanner here at The Better Companion

🐾 May 3/4/5: Nose Work trials level 1 and 2 in Chugiak

The calendar can look very confusing at first. Please don't hesitate to call or email us with any questions about upcoming classes, workshops or practices.

Stay warm,

Claudia

Upcoming Classes and Practices:

Listed are start dates. The classes will run once a week for 6 weeks unless otherwise specified. A **“maybe”** for a class means **YOU can tell us** if you want this class to happen.

Click [here](#) to view the online calendar by month. To see who's instructing the class you're interested in, go to our online [calendar](#) and click on any week of that class to see the details.

Click [here](#) to register for a class.

Already registered? Click [here](#) to pay for a class.

Or contact us by email or phone: info@bettercompanion.com, (907) 357-2521.

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>Jan 2013</u>	<u>Feb 2013</u>	<u>Mar 2013</u>	<u>later</u>
<u>Behavior Classes</u>				
Puppy 1	Sun 1/13	Wed 2/13	Sun 3/10	
Foundation Class	Sun 1/13	Wed 2/13	Sun 3/10	
Puppy 2	Thu 1/17		Sun 3/10	May 2013
Elementary School	Thu 1/17		Thu 3/7	May 2013
High School			Thu 3/7	July 2013
CGC-test (one day)				Sep 8, 2013 (one day)
C.L.A.S.S. - BA				April 2013
CLASS Evaluation				June 5, 2013 (one day)
Rally College	Thu 1/17			
Rally Practice	Thu 1/17			
Tricks 'N Clicks				May or Sep 2013
<u>Sports Classes</u>	<u>Jan 2013</u>	<u>Feb 2013</u>	<u>Mar 2012</u>	<u>later</u>
Nose Work Beginner	Mon 1/14			Mar or May 2013
Nose Work Odor	Mon 1/14		Mon 3/11	May 2013
Nose Work Practice	Mon 1/14		Mon 3/11	May 2013

Treibball Beginner		Tue 2/12		Maybe Apr
Treibball Intermediate			Tue 4/16	Apr 2013
Treibball Practice		Tue 2/12	Tue 4/16	Apr 2013
Flyball Beginner				Summer 2013
Flyball Practice				Summer 2013
Agility Puppy/Beg	Sat 1/12		Sat 3/9	July 13
Agility Skills	Sat 1/12		Sat 3/9	July 13
Agility Sequencing	Sat 1/12		Sat 3/9	July 13
Agility Trialing	Sat 1/12		Sat 3/9	July 13

You can check our web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, daycare, Open Play Times, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form and more.

Or contact us by email or phone: info@bettercompanion.com, (907) 357-2521.

MONTHLY STORY: SMALL BREED OBEDIENCE - CAN YOU TRAIN A YORKIE LIKE A GERMAN SHEPHERD?

Yes and No! I remember having seen a little Dachshund back in Germany heeling like he was a German Shepherd. His owner gave him the commands as if he had a German Shepherd at his side, and the little guy followed like a soldier. It was a cute sight, looking a little awkward.

To keep a small dog in heel position is much harder than with a large dog for several reasons. Heel position means staying along a handler's side, right below the handler's hip. The handler's left foot in the mean time takes a stride, stops, and takes stride, which doesn't bother the large breed dog, who's looking up to his handler - at least to the hip, if not at the handler's face. Now for a small breed dog that's a totally different situation. She needs to keep an eye on the handler's feet to not get stepped on, and to keep the same distance to them at all times. Now if a small breed dog walks next to a handler, it either focuses on the left foot and accelerates and decelerates with that foot, or it stays with the hip, and it could look out of heel because it's not next to the handler's foot at all times. Plus, that handler's foot and leg are way more visible to an observer than if a large breed dog walks along the side. The best quick fix for that is shortening the stride of the handler, to not have that foot and leg go "out of position" as much as with a regular stride! This will also be easier for the small breed dog to focus on and to follow.

OK, you don't care about heel position, but would like a well-behaved small dog? So your dog needs to learn Sit, Down and Stay as the basic behaviors in your home environment. No problem with a large breed - gravity helps! Plus, you just lure that head all the way down - which is about two feet - and eventually the dog will lay down to get in a more comfortable position. With a small breed dog you better start sitting on the floor yourself, because those little guys can keep that uncomfortable position forever! And you now only go down 6 inches with the cookie, so be precise, every single ¼ of an inch counts!

I have seen owners of small breed dogs struggling with the training not because they're bad handlers, but because their little dogs show no forgiveness if they're off with where exactly to hold the cookie by less than a ¼"! Especially to keep a squirmy small breed dog in a Sit-Stay, it takes the precision of a robot to bring each treat back to exactly the same position, without accidentally luring the dog out of the Stay.

And to do all that either while sitting on the floor or bending over all the way down to the dog can be a struggle for arthritic knees or painful backs. Here at BetCo we always try to help small breed dog owners giving them different tips and training aids to work through these issues. A chair with low sitting horizontal bars connecting its legs can help teaching the Down, and a wooden spoon with peanut butter or spray cheese can help rewarding the dog low without having to bend all the way. A target stick can teach the dog to follow a lower focus point without using food as a lure.

Another big difference in training is based on their sensitivity. Not that all large breed dogs are less sensitive, but if you rein in a German Shepherd or Retriever by its leash connected to its collar, that's mostly ok. It usually doesn't take much force and they just follow the draw. If you rein in a Yorkie by its leash and collar, even without much force, you're usually getting the dog's full body weight of resistance - which isn't much, right? So it's easy to still reel them in. But the consequences can be huge, a dog that becomes shy of being put on leash and even hand-shy overall, making the owner look like they beat the dog every day.

Our training methods are overall based on not using any forces like reeling a dog in by the leash or giving any leash corrections. So some training methods really work only on large breed dogs or better said on hard headed dogs only (since a lot of large breed dogs aren't hard headed), whereas the training methods we use at The Better Companion work on all dogs, small and tall, soft or hard headed.

Come join us with your small breed dog - be it a Yorkie, Russell, Maltese or any other wonderful small breed! BTW, I own a Jack Russell Terrier myself ☺.

Training never ends! Enjoy every day with your dog(s)!

Claudia

Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA
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