

Old dog

- 1 There is a popular idiom “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” But that really applies more to people than dogs. People get stuck in their ways as they get older. Dogs on the other hand are incredibly adaptable and have a lifelong willingness to learn new things. With some dogs reaching “senior status” at age 7, I believe it is important to keep training for their entire lives, and I have seen dogs as vintage as age 11 in my classes.
- 2 With that in mind, it is always easier to install new behaviors than to get rid of old ones. A dog that has had 10 years of lunging at other dogs, barking to get attention or relieving himself indoors is going to need a serious commitment from a new owner to change these habits as it may take a while. However, to teach a senior dog with little to no obedience training how to walk on leash, sit on cue, stay and come when called among other basic tricks is just as easy as teaching a young pup.
- 3 Besides classes, there are activities you can do at home with your senior dog that help keep him alert and well-behaved while you maintain or strengthen your bond with him. Practice “stay” and “come” when called with a game of hide-and-seek. Use cardboard boxes, plastic cups and towels to create nose work (scent hunting) games of “Find the Treats.” Turn meal times and walks into training games, rewarding your dog for “wait,” “leave it,” “watch,” and anything else you can think of incorporating, with the things he loves.

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