

# ***Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach***



## **National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual**



### **Additional Methods of Surf Dog Training**

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## Additional Methods of Surf Dog Training

There are several ways to begin training a dog to surf. Below are three of these methods from which you can choose depending on the owner and dog's abilities, particularly if you do not have a dog that will not naturally and without direction, enter the water and jump on the surfboard.

### The At-Home Method

1. **Bring board inside.** Get the dog to know the surfboard you use to surf, bring it inside and lay it on the floor. Leave it lay for a while giving the dog time to sniff and get used to it, and get comfortable with it.
2. **Reward.** As they approach the board reward the behavior each time they get closer and closer. As the dog approaches and sniffs the surfboard give him treats. Once you see the dog is comfortable, ask them to stand on the board.
3. **Pick a spot.** Determine the best spot for the dog to sit when surfing.
4. **Mark the spot on the board.** Each time you approach the board for training direct the dog to the designated spot only, Try feeding them on the board by placing his food bowl on the surfboard right in front of his designated spot. This will mark the spot in an even greater manner.
5. **Practice 'sit' and 'stay'.** Direct the dog to sit and stay on the designated spot on the board. Try walking away with and without your back turned.
6. **Get the dog to jump on the board with you.** Sit on the board where you would normally be standing, and direct the dog to get on the board with you in his designated spot.
7. **Go to the beach.** When you see the dog is comfortable with the surfboard and you on the board with them, at home, it's time to go to the beach. Practice all the same steps and commands on the sand.
8. **Get in the water.** Take your board into the shallow part of the water. Watch the incoming waves and make sure there are no oncoming big waves, and the water is calm. Direct the dog to jump on the board. Command them to sit and stay. Practice with them to achieve the ability to sit and stay consistently.
9. **Move to deeper water.** Once the dog is used to shallow water, and exhibiting a consistent ability to stay on the board, move to deeper water with him on the board. Have him sit and



stay, keep him on the board. Move slowly, don't rush it. You don't want to scare him. Make sure he has his life jacket on from this point on.

10. **Paddle out.** Once the dog is comfortable with you on the board in deeper water, doesn't jump off or exhibit anxiety, it's time to turn around, if you haven't already, and look for a wave that is rideable. This will be one that is about 2-3 feet high, and breaking easy and not pounding, and breaking into a nice straight line of white water. Position the dog and board right in front of the wave, right after it breaks. Then, push hard, holding the tail down, as discussed in the basics section. The dog and board should move easily to shore. The dog will get better and better the more you do this, and will learn on their own how to position themselves in the sweet spot.
11. **Alternative Paddle out.** Once the dog is comfortable with you on the board in deeper water, doesn't jump off or exhibit anxiety, the owner can also paddle out and catch a wave if the owner is a surfer. Paddle out making sure the dog is in a position in front of you that is secure. Then, surf as is normally done. The goal being, a resulting ride that will hopefully be a bonding moment that the owner will likely want to experience again and again.

### The Calm Water Method

This is an alternative that can be used prior to taking the dog to the beach, particularly if the dog has never been in the water, and the owner is not sure if they can swim.

1. **Choose a calm water spot.** Bring the dog to some water with no waves and is relatively calm such as a pond, lake or even a swimming pool. There also areas of the beach that offer no waves. This can be found at river channels where there are dog beaches.
2. **Play with water toys.** Start by getting them excited about the water and swimming. You can purchase floating dog toys or even use a handy stick. Play with the dog, on land, with the toy, preferably with the same toy each time. Throw the toys out into the water, far enough that he needs to swim for them. Doing this practice will help them become a strong swimmer.
3. **Introduce the surfboard.** Introduce the surfboard to the dog on the sand or on the shore near the water. Next, sit on the board and direct the dog to join you. Watch their behavior, making sure they are comfortable getting on and off the board, and can stay with some consistency.



4. **Take the board into the water.** Put on the dog's life jacket and then take the dog and the board to a shallow part of the water, that you can wade into. Put the board into the water, and help the dog get on the board, keeping them and the board steady. Let the dog find his center of balance. Smaller dogs tend to go to the front while bigger dogs prefer the center and back.
5. **Practice paddling.** Once the dog is comfortable on the board, get on the board with the dog and try paddling around. Direct them to sit and stay and don't let him jump off. Keep reassuring them, and boosting their confidence with praise. Or if the owner does not surf they can practice by just pushing or pulling the dog around in the water.
6. **Go to the beach.** Once the dog is comfortable on calm water, you can go to the beach and get into, and start catching small waves, applying the training methods for in-wave practice.

### The Playtime Method

1. **Teach a love of the ocean.** Spend time at the beach, taking long walks, throwing sticks and balls, or some kind of throw-toy, for the dog to chase into the ocean. Make ocean time the ultimate play place. Use a lot of praise when they chase the toy into the water and when they don't run back to the beach right away.
2. **Teach your dog to swim.** Once the dog knows the beach is a fun place they get to go with you, and has no fear of the ocean, voluntarily going into the water, and not running out right away, start to swim with him in the waves. After you've put the dog's life jacket on, run on out into the waves and call the dog to you. Swim together and give him lots of praise. Make sure you don't stay out too long right away. Let them build up endurance for swimming and playing in the waves.



3. **Introduce the surfboard.** Start to bring the surfboard to the beach with you. Play games around the board, ask him to sit on it and give him treats, then command them to stay. Make the surfboard a fun and interesting toy where they get treats and praise.

4. **Riding the board exercise.** If the dog needs more confidence with the board before going into the waves, you can use this technique. Build up a mound of sand large enough to place the board on top, clearing the fins so that it can teeter up and down and move around simulating ocean water. Ask the dog to sit and stay on the board in the proper position. Kneeling in front of the board, grasp the nose of the board and gently move it around. Go slow getting them comfortable with being on an unsteady surface that's moving around. Remember to give positive reinforcement and praise the dog and/or give them treat rewards for offering the behavior in this case, staying on the board.
5. **Take your surfboard into the water.** Launch the board into the shallow water, direct the dog to get onto the board, and slowly push it into deeper water.
6. **Paddle out.** Once the dog is comfortable, make sure they have their life jacket on, get on the board, and paddle out into the waves with the dog on the board. Check on them and make sure they are secure on the board and ride around for a little while.
7. **Go to the beach.** Once the dog is comfortable on calm water, you can go to the beach and get into the waves as discussed above, and start catching small waves, applying the training methods for in-wave practice as discussed in the Basics section.
8. **Alternatively Catch a wave.** Now that the dog is comfortable paddling out with you, and riding with you on the board, if the owner is a surfer, they are ready to catch a wave with the dog. All of this preparation and playtime will pay off most when the owner and dog can catch that first wave together.

## SUMMARY

This section sets out the additional methods of training for you to use, depending upon the dogs abilities, particularly when a dog is not quite ready for the in wave training. The At-Home Method, helps, by using a step-by-step approach to get the dog comfortable with the surfboard, and is used if the dog does not naturally enter the water and jump on the board without direction. The Calm Water Method can be used if the dog has never been in water, the owner is not sure of their swimming ability, or is nervous about the waves. The Playtime Method is helpful if you need to give the dog more opportunity to get comfortable with beach time and the ocean. All three of these methods are useful if the owner is interested in surfing with the dog.