

4 Week Training Schedule For The Mature Shih Tzu



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By Beverly Young and Asia Moore

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Introduction

4 Week Training Schedule for the Mature Shih Tzu will help you to easily teach your dog basic commands, including "Sit", "Come" and "Stay", as well as how to teach your Shih Tzu to walk on leash without pulling, and more advanced commands, including "Down", "Distant Down", "Off", "Move", "Heel", "Wait" and "Touch".

You will also learn all the silent, hand signals for each of these basic and more advanced commands.

Teaching basic and more advanced commands to your Shih Tzu will create a strong and lasting bond between you that will also help to keep your fur friend safe.

Chapter 1: Week One

During your first week of training with a mature Shih Tzu, you will want to first make certain that you have all the equipment you need, plus, if this is a new dog you have just adopted, you will need to determine what their current level of training actually is.

Equipment



frightened.

Martingale Collar: this invaluable collar will be an integral part of your training process. Not only is it the safest collar for your dog, because it is comfortable and loose for them to wear, it also provides security to the handler when attached to a leash, because your dog will not be able to back out of this collar should they become nervous or



4 Foot Leash: this is the perfect length of leash for almost every circumstance when out walking with your dog. It's long enough to give them some slack when they need to do their business, and short enough to keep them in a disciplined walking position at your side.

6 Foot Leash: this is used for umbilical work with your adolescent dog, where you simply tie the leash around your waist, or thread it through the belt loops of your pants for hands-free training.



20 Foot Lunge Line: this longer line will be used while training outside in an open field, or to allow your adolescent dog to have more freedom, while still being attached to you.

This can be a very useful tool, for instance, in a circumstance when they are learning to “Come” when called, where they may be displaying aggression toward other dogs, and you need to give them a correction for a distance, or when you you want to give them a little more freedom, and are not yet certain that they won’t decide to run off in the other direction.

Toys

Most dogs respond well to their favorite toy. Take them with you to your local pet store and let them pick their own, or ask the staff if you are unsure about what might be appropriate.

Treats



You will also need a bag of small-sized tasty treats to help reinforce all of your training commands.

Toys can be used as rewards for a great training session or to keep your dog focused on what you are training.

Zuke’s Mini Naturals work very well as training treats.

Taking your mature Shih Tzu out for a walk will quickly show you how much work you have in front of you, and depending on how they respond to a walk, will determine where you might need to start with their training.

No Pulling

For instance, if your Shih Tzu is pulling on the lead and will not walk beside you, this is the very first thing you will need to get under control.

A dog that is used to pulling in order to move forward on the walk will need you to teach them that the exact opposite will now be the case. In other words, they will only move forward when the leash is slack and there is no tension.

Perhaps your mature Shih Tzu has been previously walked in a harness with an extendable leash, and if this has been the case, it is now time to remove the harness and buy them a Martingale collar and regular 4 or 6 foot leash.

The most important, ongoing, bonding exercise you will experience with your Shih Tzu is when you go out for your daily walks together.

Far, far too many people ignore this critical time that is not only important for your dog's exercise, it also helps to fulfill their natural roaming urges, while also being a disciplined time when your Shih Tzu will learn to follow, trust and respect you as their pack leader.

Without daily walks together with your Shih Tzu properly walking on leash beside or slightly behind, you will likely have an unbalanced or problematic relationship with your dog.

As soon as you bring your Shih Tzu home you will be teaching them how to properly walk on leash without pulling.

Every time your Shih Tzu needs to go out to relieve themselves, slip on their collar and snap on that leash because there is no time like the present to teach your dog proper walking manners.

If they are not used to wearing a collar, at first your mature Shih Tzu may struggle or fight against having this strange sensation around their neck. DO NOT drag them, and if they pull backward and refuse to walk forward with you, simply stop for a moment, while keeping slight forward tension on the leash, until your dog gives up on their own and moves forward. Immediately reward them with your happy praise, and if their is all new to them, a favorite treat.

Always walk your Shih Tzu on your left side with the leash slack so that they learn that walking with you is a relaxing experience. Keep the leash short enough so that they do not have enough slack to get in front of you.

If they begin to create tension in the leash by pulling forward or to the side, simply stop moving, get them back beside you, and start over. Your patience is the key here.

Be patient and consistent with your Shih Tzu and very soon they will understand exactly where their walking position is and will walk easily beside you without any pulling or leash tension.

Remember that if teaching your mature Shih Tzu to walk on leash beside you without pulling is a new experience for them, give them lots of understanding and don't expect them to be perfect all the time.

Get your Shih Tzu used to automatically sitting every time you stop when out on your walks. Say "Sit" and if they do not, lift up and back slightly on the leash to give them the help they need to understand what you want.

If they still do not "Sit", reach down with your left hand and gently squeeze with your thumb and middle finger across their back at the point where the back legs meet the hips. This squeeze will make most dogs automatically sit.

Add the hand signal for "Sit" and use this at the same time as you say the word "Sit" so that you can soon remove the word altogether and just use the hand signal, which is your right arm bent at the elbow, fingers together, palm facing upward. Say "Sit" and, while keeping your arm bent at the elbow, raise your arm toward your right shoulder.

Practice getting your walking routine and your Shih Tzu automatically sitting whenever you stop, for the first week as this is the basis of all follow the leader discipline.

TIP: if your Shih Tzu is walking too far in front of you, make a sharp left turn and try to walk into them so that they learn to stay back behind your knee where they can easily see which way you might be turning.

Also, practicing sudden turns and twists, walking in circles, weaving around poles or obstacles, stopping and starting suddenly and varying your walking pace will all help to teach your Shih Tzu that they must keep their eyes on you and that the only way to do this is to not get in front of you.

Chapter 2: Week Two

Basic First Commands

If you just adopted an adult dog who has not learned basic “Sit”, “Stay”, or “Come” commands, you will need to start with these before progressing to more advanced adult dog commands.

Teaching these three basic commands will keep your dog safe, while helping them to focus on respecting you as their leader.

If you’ve already taught these three commands when your Shih Tzu was younger, make certain that your dog also understands the hand signals for these commands, because ultimately, you want them to obey your commands with hand signals alone.

Come

Always show the hand signal (arms open wide) for this command at the same time you say the word. If your dog is totally ignoring the command, it will be time to incorporate your lunge line to help you teach the “Come” command.

Simply attach your 20 foot line to their collar and let them sniff about in a large yard or at your neighborhood park.

At your leisure, firmly ask them to “Come” and show the hand signal. If they do not immediately come to you, give a firm tug with the lunge line, so that they understand what you are asking of them.

If they still do not “Come” toward you, simply reel them in until they are in front of you. Then let them wander about again, until you are ready to ask them to “Come”.

Repeat this process until your adult dog responds correctly at least 80% of the time. You can also reinforce the command by giving a treat when they perform as you wish. Always ask them to "Sit" when they return to you.

After practicing this every day for at least a week, you should be able to take your mature Shih Tzu for a walk on their regular 4 or 6 foot leash to the park where they can have some off-leash time.

Practice the "Come" command with your Shih Tzu while they are off leash and make sure you have some tasty treats and your excited and happy praise to reward them for immediately returning to you when you show them the hand signal from a distance.

Sit

Sit is a very simple, yet extremely valuable command for all puppies and dogs. The mere act of the sitting motion helps to calm an excited mind, while at the same time teaching discipline and respect.

Always incorporate the hand signal for "Sit" (arm bent at the elbow, palm open and facing up, and raised to the shoulder) at the same time as you say the word.

If your dog is not sitting on command, try holding a treat above and slightly behind their head, so that when they look up for it they may automatically sit to see it. Slowly remove the treats as reward and replace the treat with a "life reward", such as a chest rub and your praise.

If your dog is not particularly treat motivated, lift up and slightly back on the leash when asking them to "Sit". Stand in front of them, and if they still are having difficulties, reach down with your free hand, place it across your dog's back at the place where the back legs join the hip and gently squeeze.

Do NOT simply push down on your dog's back to force their hind legs to collapse under them as this pressure could harm their spine or leg joints.

Stay

Once your Shih Tzu is in the Sit position, ask them to "Stay" by holding your open hand in front of them and saying "Stay". If you are right-handed, use your right hand for the signal, and if you are left-handed, use your left hand for the signal.

Using your dominant hand will be much more effective because your strongest energy emanates from the palm of your dominant hand.

While your dog is sitting and staying, slowly back away from them. If they move from their position, calmly put them back into sit and ask them to "Stay" again.

Continue to do this until your dog understands what you require of them. Keep repeating this training exercise until you can ask your dog to sit and stay from five feet away, then from ten feet away, then from 20 feet away.

An Effective Discipline Sound

If your Shih Tzu has not already been taught a discipline sound, you will want to teach this now. The sound can be whatever you wish, so long as it has the effect of easily gaining your mature dog's attention.

My favorite sound is short and sharp, and so far I have not found a dog that doesn't positively react to this sound, which is a simple "**UH**", said quickly and sharply.

If this sound works for you, too, please use it, otherwise choose a sound that everyone in the family can agree upon so that your dog will not be confused by too many different sounds when it's necessary to let them know that they are doing something you do not agree with.

Practice these three basic commands every day, for a few minutes, several times a day, for the next week before moving on to more complicated commands.

Chapter 3: Week Three

Down – Off – Move Commands

Down

Teaching the “Down” command is relatively simple, especially since your dog is now an adult and will be able to concentrate more easily. There are several ways you can teach this command, with your dog wearing their leash and collar, or without.

With your dog’s Martingale collar on and their leash attached, have a treat in your hand. Put your dog into the “Sit” position while standing in front of them.

Show them the treat and slowly lower it to the floor, while saying the command “Down”. At the same time put slight downward pressure on the leash. Most dogs will immediately follow the treat to the ground and when they do, praise them and allow them to eat the treat.

Practice this “Down” command with your dog 6 to 8 times each day for the next week so that they understand exactly what is expected of them.

You can practice exactly the same routine without the leash, and this time you will have a free hand, which means that you can now add the hand signal.

With your dog in the sitting position, say the command “Down” while at the same time showing them the hand signal. Hold your arm bent at the elbow, with your palm facing toward the floor, then while still standing, say the command and lower your hand toward the floor by straightening your arm.

Another way to teach the "Down" command is to stand in front of your dog while they are sitting, say the command "Down", reach down and slide their front feet toward you until they are in the "Down" position.

Choose the "Down" lesson that works best for your Shih Tzu and stick with it.

Distant Down

Practice this new command for a few minutes every day and once your dog goes into the "Down" position every time, you can begin to ask them to "Down" from a distance.

Start at five feet, and then increase it to ten, then fifteen. Every time they go down on command, return to their position and give them a treat. They should also be able to go "Down" from a distance with just the hand signal.

Eventually, you will be able to exchange the treat for a "life" reward of you returning to their down position and giving them praise and a nice chest rub.

When they are 100% at the distant "Down", you can add the "Come" hand signals to have them return to you, rather than you returning to them.

Off

The "Off" command, although easy to teach, can often be the cause of confusion for many dogs because too many people confuse "Off" with "Down".

For example, when you come home and find your dog has been lying on your couch and you want them to get off, many people say "Down" meaning get down from there, when what they really need to be saying is "Off". A dog, who has learned that the

“Down” command means they are to lie down, may simply think you are asking them to lay down on the couch.

When you want your dog to actually get off of something, make sure you say “Off” while using the hand signal for “Move” that tells them which direction you wish them to move toward.

Move

Using the above couch example, stand in front of your dog and with your dominant hand give them the command to “Move” off of the couch in the direction you wish, by moving your hand and waving them in the direction you wish them to move.

The “Move” command can be used in many different circumstances to simply have your dog move out of the way when they are blocking your path, to reaffirm that you are the leader who must be obeyed, especially during those adolescent times when they may begin to test their limits, or in more highly trained situations where you need your dog to obey your hand signals from a distance.

Always practice these commands for a few minutes every day,.

NOTE: while every command can be taught verbally, your goal will always be to eventually remove the verbal commands and use only hand signals.

Learning hand signals is a much more natural way for any canine to learn commands as dogs (and all creatures of nature) learn by watching body language and “reading” energy.

A dog that learns hand signals will always be much more focused on their leader or handler and will be much more attentive, easier to train and keep safe.

Chapter 4 - Week Four

Heel – Wait – Touch Commands

Now that your Shih Tzu is mature, or if you have recently adopted an adult dog, their level of concentration should be longer and more focused, which will make it easier to teach commands that require a little more effort on their part.

Heel

This command is generally used whenever you want your dog to play close attention to you, either on leash or off leash, such as when crossing a busy intersection or approaching an overly exuberant dog or excited children.

When your Shih Tzu is properly heeling, they will be walking close to your left side and their attention will be focused on you. Before you teach the heel command, your mature Shih Tzu must already be automatically sitting whenever you stop walking, as this is part of the heel command.

The easiest way to begin training the heel command is when using a treat as extra incentive to get your mature dog into the correct position.

Begin by attaching the leash to your Shih Tzu's collar and having your dog stand at your left side, while you hold your leash in your right hand. Make sure there is a relaxed loop of leash, so there is no pulling.

With a treat in your left hand, hold the treat close to your Shih Tzu's nose while you say the command "Heel" and take several steps forward.

Stop, and say the command "Sit" (or give the hand signal) and as soon as your dog sits, immediately give them the treat you have been holding in your left hand and praise them.

Once your dog becomes reliable and follows your "Heel" command with the treat and then automatically Sits when you stop walking, it's time to ask your mature Shih Tzu to heel without following the treat in your hand.

Raise the treat up to chest level and repeat the exercise. As soon as you stop and your dog sits, immediately give them the treat while praising them at the same time.

Once your dog will perform the "Heel" and automatic "Sit" reliably, you can give a treat intermittently or remove the treat altogether, and replace it with praise and a chest rub.

Wait

Teaching your mature Shih Tzu the "Wait" command when they are off leash, can be very useful when you need them to pause or wait for another command, such as when crossing a busy street when you want to be certain that the traffic has cleared before allowing your dog to cross to the other side.

The "Wait" command would most often be followed by the "Come" or the "OK" command to release your dog and allow them to move again.

Have your dog stand on your left side, in the "Heel" position. Say the command "Wait" and with your left hand at your side, fingers pointing down, palm facing your dog's head, wave your left hand across your dog's face, from right to left.

When your dog stops, take a few steps forward and then turn to face them. If your dog moves toward you without your "Come" command, simply return to them and repeat the "Wait" command with the hand signal again.

When your dog waits until you turn and call them to you with the "Come" command and/or hand signals, immediately give them a treat and praise them.

Practice this "Wait" exercise until your dog is reliably waiting while you gradually increase the number of steps you take farther away from them without them moving.

Give your dog a treat and much praise every time they wait and do not move until you give the "Come" command.

Once your mature Shih Tzu becomes proficient at reliably waiting until you release them, you can remove the treat and replace it with your happy praise and a chest rub.

Touch

Teaching your mature Shih Tzu the "Touch" command can be very useful when you are out in a crowded public area bustling with many people and loud distractions.

The "Touch" command can also be used to help reinforce other commands, such as "Heel" or "Come" when you need your dog to focus on you.

Hold treats in your left hand while rubbing the treats with your right hand to transfer the smell of the treats onto your right hand.

Stand in front of your dog while holding your left hand (that is holding the treats) behind your back. Hold your right hand, palm flat, fingers together facing your dog's head, approximately four inches from your dog's nose.

Say the command "Touch" and look at your right hand. Your dog will move forward to investigate the tasty treat smell on your right hand.

As soon as your dog touches your right hand with their nose, praise them and immediately give them the treat you were holding behind your back in your left hand.

Once your Shih Tzu begins to reliably respond to the "Touch" command, you can move your hand to different areas (ie. to the left side, to the right side, lower to the ground, etc.).

Again, once your dog becomes 100% reliable with correctly responding to the "Touch" command, you can remove the treat and replace it with the life reward of your praise and a chest rub.

Remember to always make your training sessions fun and teach your Shih Tzu with kindness and much patience and they will learn quickly while you grow closer and both enjoy this special time you spend together.

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