



# Animal Training (5e Rules)



# ANIMAL TRAINING

In your journeys, you will encounter a variety of creatures—some benign, some good by nature, and others evil to their core. Many adventurers adopt creatures as companions to accompany them on their quests. Some creatures are well-suited to be instruments of war, while others are natural-born scouts and scavengers. Some creatures have an aptitude for neither, but can still be valuable for staving off the cold and dark of nights spent alone.

Presented below are a set of optional rules for forming a bond with an animal, and training it as a companion. Some classes, like Rangers, can ignore these rules, as their class features provide companions with inherent training, but less nature-inclined classes might resort to these rules to train an animal companion.

## BONDING

The bond between you and your animal companion is the crux of the training process. If your bond is strong, training an animal becomes an effortless extension of the time you spend together. If your bond is weak, training will be a constant uphill battle against a creature's wild, bestial nature.

### MEETING THE ANIMAL

First impressions are important, and the conditions you meet your potential companion under will affect the speed at which you form a bond. Your possible standing with the creature is divided into three categories, as described below.

#### HOSTILE OR AFRAID

If you meet an animal under hostile conditions, such as the midst of a battle or other dangerous event, an animal may be more inclined to see you as a threat. If the creature is a predator by nature and it hasn't eaten recently, it might tend towards hostility; if the creature is usually prey, it might consider you a threat, and easily fright. If you have attacked the creature or a creature of the same species within their line of sight, you are automatically considered hostile.

#### NEUTRAL

If you meet an animal in the wild, an animal may hold a neutral assessment of you. In conditions that do not tend towards hostility or friendliness, a creature will likely regard you with a neutral curiosity.

#### FRIENDLY

If you are already bonded with another creature of a similar nature, or you rescue an animal from degraded or dangerous conditions such as a natural disaster or an abusive tamer, it may imprint on you and regard you as a part of its social group.

### STARTING THE BOND

When you meet an animal, or at the first instance where you can spend time with the animal, you can start a bond by making a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. The difficulty of this check is determined by two factors: the nature of your meeting, and the animal's Intelligence score. Animals of a higher Intelligence score tend more towards pack behavior, and bond with different species (read: you) more easily, but also make sharper assessments of threatening

behaviour, and are more difficult to win back over once you've lost their trust. Succeeding on this check allows you to begin training.

You can also try to improve your standing with the animal. After 7 days of spending time together, feeding the animal and preparing it for training, you can make another Wisdom (Animal Handling) check of the same difficulty. If you succeed, your standing with the animal improves by one category. If you fail, your standing stays the same. Optionally, your DM may rule that a critical failure, or failing by a certain threshold, diminishes your standing by one category.

TABLE: HANDLING DIFFICULTY

Conditions	Difficulty
Hostile	16 + the creature's Intelligence score
Neutral	16 – the creature's Intelligence score
Friendly	14 – the creature's Intelligence score

Additionally, a creature's alignment is important. Most beasts are unaligned, meaning that they have no particular moral bearings, and can be trained by a creature of any alignment. But some creatures, such as worgs, tend naturally towards evil, and thus are more difficult to train when the trainer does not share their alignment. A good creature training an evil one, and vice versa, is an exercise in denying the animal's natural behaviors.

If a creature is unaligned or neutral, its starting difficulty is unaffected. If the creature has a particular alignment (good or evil, chaotic or lawful) that you do not share,

then the starting difficulty increases by 3. If you and the creature share an alignment, then the starting difficulty is reduced by 3. This modifier can stack if the creature has multiple alignments.

## ANIMAL EXAMPLES

The table below shows some potential examples of animal companions, as well as their size, alignment, Intelligence scores, CR ratings, and page reference in the Monster Manual.

Creatures cannot be trained if they are intelligent, such as dragons and humanoids.

TABLE: EXAMPLES

Name	Size	Align.	INT	CR
Ape	Medium	U	6	1/2
Badger	Tiny	U	2	0
Black Bear	Medium	U	2	1/2
Blink Dog	Medium	LG	10	1/4
Cat	Tiny	U	3	0
Draft Horse	Large	U	2	1/4
Giant Owl	Large	N	8	1/4
Hawk	Tiny	U	2	0
Hyena	Medium	U	2	0
Mastiff	Medium	U	3	0
Winter Wolf	Large	NE	7	3
Worg	Large	NE	7	1/2

# TRAINING

Once you have initiated a bond with your potential companion, you can begin the long work of training. If your creature is hostile, this process may be near-impossible. If your creature is friendly, it might be eager to please you and learn quickly.

## COMMANDS

After spending 7 days training your companion, you can make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to attempt to teach it a command. Each command has a difficulty assigned to it, depending on the complexity of the action. If you succeed on the check, your companion learns the action, and can use it at your command (or its own, in certain circumstances). If you fail, your companion does not learn the action, but the difficulty of learning that action is reduced by 3, as it retains pieces of the time you spent training together.

The difficulty of learning an action is also modified by your standing with the animal. If your standing is neutral, the difficulty is unchanged. If your standing is hostile, the difficulty increases by 2. If your standing is friendly, the difficulty decreases by 2.

## ACT

*Difficulty: 16.* Your companion takes the Dodge, Disengage, or Help action. It can only take the Help action to help a creature make an attack, not to grant advantage on an ability check (unless the DM rules that the companion is able to do so).

## ATTACK

*Difficulty: 14.* As an action, your companion attacks a target within its movement range. A companion can use any single attack

actions available to it, but not its Multiattack option.

## DEFEND

*Difficulty: 16.* As an action, your companion stands by a creature or object within its movement range and readies an attack. If a hostile or unknown creature comes within melee range of your companion, it unleashes its readied attack.

## FETCH

*Difficulty: 14.* Your companion moves to an item within its movement range and grabs it, then attempts to deliver it to you with the rest of its movement speed. If it can't reach you in a single turn, it will prioritize bringing the item to you on subsequent turns unless you give it a different command. The item can be no heavier than your companion's carrying capacity. If the item is the same size category as or larger than your companion, it drags the item across the ground, halving its movement speed.

Alternately, you can give your companion an item and tell it to deliver the item to a place or person within its movement range. If it can't reach the place or person in a single turn, it will prioritize completing its delivery unless you give it a different command.

## GRAPPLE

*Difficulty: 15.* Your companion moves to a creature within its movement range and makes a Strength (Athletics) check to attempt to grapple it, contested by the creature. If your companion succeeds in grappling the target, you can also use this command to drag the target on subsequent turns. The creature can be no more than

one size category larger than your companion.

## HIDE

*Difficulty: 14.* Your companion moves to a place you designate and takes the Hide action.

## MOUNT

*Difficulty: 15.* If your companion is one size category larger than you and has an appropriate arrangement of limbs, you can train it as a mount. Your companion allows you to ride on it. It acts on your initiative count, can take only the Move and Act commands, and cannot take the Help action. While mounted, you cannot move without commanding your companion to move, and you use the rules for mounted combat.

## MOVE

*Difficulty: 12.* Your companion moves to a place you designate. Also, as an action, your companion can take the Dash action and move up to double its movement speed.

## MULTIATTACK

*Difficulty: 20.* As an action, your companion takes the Multiattack action against a target within its movement range. A companion without the Multiattack action cannot learn this command.

## PLAY DEAD

*Difficulty: 18.* Your companion lies down and feigns death until you give it another command. A creature can determine whether the creature is truly dead with a Wisdom (Medicine) check or Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC15).

## TACKLE

*Difficulty: 15.* Your companion moves to a creature within its movement range and makes a Strength (Athletics) check to attempt to shove it contested by the creature. On success, the creature is knocked prone. The creature can be no more than one size category larger than your companion.

## USING COMMANDS WITHOUT TRAINING

You can also attempt to command your companion without training it, relying on its general level of obedience and its ability to understand your commands. When you make the command, make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, of the difficulty listed in the command's description. On a successful check, your companion carries out the command, but does not learn it. On a failed save, your companion ignores your command, taking an action of its choice on its turn, and your action is wasted.

The difficulty of this check is modified by your standing with your companion in the same way learning a command is.

## MAINTAINING

The work doesn't end when your standing is good and you've learned every command. Every relationship requires maintenance to stay healthy and strong.

## SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

There are a variety of things you can do to spend time with your companion. Some examples of these are described below, divided into categories based on the length

of the activity and when you might expect to perform them.

TABLE: EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Length	Description
Small (1 hour)	Resting together, feeding, practicing commands, exercising, playing, minor grooming (petting, combing loose fur)
Medium (8 hours)	Sleeping together, hunting or foraging, extensive grooming (bathing, trimming fur, claws, wings, beak)
Long (8+ hours)	Learning new commands, exploring a dungeon

## NEGLECT

If you don't spend time with your companion, they may begin to feel neglected. A neglected companion is less willing to listen to your commands, and might grow surly or aggressive towards you and your party. Serious neglect can even lead to your companion leaving you to seek out the wilderness again.

### SOCIAL POINTS

Social points represent the time you spend with your companion outside of combat. Performing a small activity grants you one social point. Performing a medium activity grants you three social points. Performing a long activity grants you five social points.

If you don't have at least three social points at the end of each day, the DM will roll on the Minor Neglect table. Your companion will exhibit the behavior rolled on the table for 24 hours.

If you don't have at least fifteen social points at the end of each week, the DM will roll on the Major Neglect table. Your companion will exhibit the behavior rolled on the table until you complete a week without rolling on the table again. These behaviors can stack with each other.

If you roll on the Major Neglect table three weeks in a row, your companion may consider abandoning you in favor of the wilds. This is an event that should be curated more carefully by you and the DM, and thus there are no rules presented for its conduct.

Much of this mechanic is determined by the DM. If a creature is a pack animal by nature, it may require significantly more upkeep than a solitary creature that hunts and rests alone. Take the rules above as a guideline for your game.

TABLE: MINOR NEGLECT

d6	Behavior
1-3	<b>Loud.</b> Your companion feels the need to get your attention. The difficulty of checks made to quiet your companion are higher.
4-5	<b>Surly.</b> Your companion is less willing to follow commands. When you issue a command, the DM rolls a d6. On a 1 or a 2, your companion ignores you.
6	<b>Aggressive.</b> Your companion is frustrated. The difficulty of checks made to stop your companion from attacking a creature are higher.

TABLE: MAJOR NEGLECT

d8	Behavior
1-3	<b>Unruly.</b> Your companion is less willing to following commands. When you issue a command, the DM rolls a d6. On a roll of 3 or less, your companion ignores you.
4-5	<b>Clingy.</b> Your companion feels as if it is alone, and demands your attention. You cannot issue the Move command, and your companion is unwilling to move more than 10 feet from you.
6-7	<b>Aggressive.</b> Your companion is frustrated. If a creature other than you approaches your companion, even a friendly one, there's a chance it will lash out.
8	<b>Cold.</b> Your companion ignores you. You cannot issue commands, and Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks are made at a disadvantage.