Basic Obedience

In the first year of your Danes life or the first year a Dane comes to live with you, the basic commands you will generally want to aim for are:

1: Sit
2: Drop
3: Stand (Stand for Vet examination/handling)
4: Give
5: Off
6: Bed/Crate
7: Leave it
8: Heel
9: Stay/Wait
10: Watch
11. Come

**Puppy Pre-School** School is a great place to start learning how to train your puppy as well as helping with socialisation.

Beware though, **not all puppy schools are created equal**. You'll want to attend a puppy school that is run by an experienced Trainer not just the Vet's Nurse.

If the puppy school allows 'Free Play' which is letting the puppies play with one another you'll need to keep an eye on your dog and the other dogs for inappropriate behaviours.

Don't let your puppy get too boisterous with other puppies and call your puppy back to you regularly. You do not have to participate in Free Play if you don't feel the puppies present are suitable play mates.

**Obedience Classes** at your local obedience club are great to progress to after puppy school or for adult Great Danes needing to acquire some basic-intermediate obedience.

Be very careful **not to bore your dog at Obedience classes**. You do not have to stay in class the entire lesson. Take a break when you see your dog getting bored, have a play with them, take a tug toy or another favourite toy with you.

Puppies may only have enough attention span to do 15-20 minutes of the class (if you're lucky). Do not feel compelled to stay, if it takes you 6 months to advance up a class then that is fine because at least you will still have a dog that enjoys its' work.

Before you sign up for a puppy school or obedience class make sure you know what methods of training they use so you know if it is a method you are comfortable with.

**Never be afraid to say 'No' to a Trainer**, your dog's future is in your hands and if you don't want to use a particular method, or something, just doesn't feel right then you can say "No Thank You" and walk away.
Training Sit

Place 20 small pieces of tasty high value treats in a container and 20 pieces of boring kibble and stand in front of your dog. Place a treat in between your fingers and show the dog you have it. Raise the treat above the dog's head and then back behind the dog's head, this should make the dog bend into a sit. As the dog is bending into a sit say "YES!" or mark with your clicker and give the dog the treat.

Do not say "Sit" yet.

Throw a low value piece of boring kibble away from you so the dog chases after it. We do this so we 'reset' the dog so it has an opportunity to come back and earn another treat. Repeat the process another 19 times.

When you have run out of treats, say to the dog in a sad manner "no more, all gone" and walk away. This tells the dog the session is over, if you don't tell the dog the session is over they don't develop an off switch and will think that there is still food to be earned.

After 3 sessions of these 20 Sit>Treat sessions the dog should understand that sitting earns them the reward so now we can introduce the "Sit" command.

Just before the dog sits say "Sit" in a friendly normal v tone, when the dog sits say "Yes!" or mark with your clicker and give the dog a high value treat.

Throw a low value piece of boring kibble away (as per the same steps above). At the end of the session tell the dog the session is over.

Do another 3 sessions of this Command/Cue association training and the dog should start sitting on command.

Randomly ask the dog for a sit when you're just walking around the house (make sure you have treats in your pocket), if the dog sits say "Yes!" or mark with your clicker and give the dog a treat, pat the dog and continue with whatever you were doing.

If the dog does not sit, walk away and ignore the dog for at least 5 minutes and try again.

Do not say sit more than once, otherwise the dog will think the Command is SIT SIT SIT.

Do not raise your voice or sound sterner. You need to teach the dog that if it does not do what you have asked, it will not get the attention and/or treat it desires.

Try your hardest not to help the dog into a sit position by forcing it physically.
Trouble Shooting the Sit

If your dog does not sit down when you raise a treat above its head you can try alternative training methods.

**Alternative #1**
Place dog in a corner so that when you raise the treat above the head it cannot back up and should sit.

**Alternative #2**
Place a treat in your closed fist and hold it in-front of the dog’s nose. Simply stand there and wait for the dog to sit. When it does say “Yes!” or mark with your clicker and open your hand and allow the dog to have the treat then follow the steps from the previous page.

**Alternative #3**
Use a Clicker and simply stand there and wait for the dog to get bored. As it is sitting Click and reward.

Once the dog understands SIT you should no longer lure the dog. Luring means you have to use a piece of food to get the dog into a position.

You can stop luring the dog by not touching the treats until the dog has completed the command, that way the dog knows that they have to perform the task first before you show them the goods. This way you should prevent yourself ending up with a dog that will only perform when you show them the food first.
Training Drop

Place 20 small pieces of tasty high value treats in a container and 20 pieces of boring kibble in another container (place your containers on the bench/shelf) and stand in-front of your dog.

Ask the dog to sit - you do not need to reward the dog for sitting every time if it already knows this command very well. Perhaps reward every 3rd time, this is called a variable rate and this is how you fade out using food.

Place a treat in between your fingers and show the dog you have it. Place the treat in front of the dog’s nose and then slowly in a straight line to inbetween the dogs leg’s. At this point the dog should be following your hand. Once your hand reaches the floor, you can slowly pull the treat along the ground back towards you (not past their toes). As the dog’s elbows touch the ground say "YES!" or mark with your clicker and give the dog a high value treat.

Do **not** say "Drop" yet.

Throw a low value piece of boring kibble away from you so the dog chases after it, we do this so we reset the dog so it has an opportunity to come back and earn another treat. Repeat the process another 19 times.

When you have run out of treats, say to the dog in a sad manner "No more, all gone" and walk away. This tells the dog the session is over, if you don't tell the dog the session is over they don't develop an off switch and will think that there is still food to be earned.

After 3 sessions of these 20 Drop>Treat sessions the dog should understand that dropping earns them the reward so now we can introduce the "Drop" command.

Just before the dog Drops say "Drop" in a friendly normal value tone, when the dog Drops say "Yes!" and give the dog a high value treat.

Throw a low value piece of boring kibble away from you. Repeat the process another 19 times. Tell the dog the session is over.

Do another 3 sessions of this Command association training and the dog should start dropping on command. If not, don't be disheartened, keep at it.

Just like in the sit training, randomly ask for drops around the house.
Trouble Shooting the Drop

If your dog does not drop when you lure their nose to the ground you can try alternative methods.

**Alternative #1**
Sit on the floor with both your legs stretched out. Pull one leg in and lure the dog under that leg, when the dog’s elbows are on the ground (and the dog is in a drop not a play bow position) say "Yes" or mark with your clicker and give the dog a treat and follow the steps from the previous page.

**Alternative #2**
Place a treat in your closed fist. Place this hand on the ground and wait for the dog to drop. When it does say "Yes!" or mark with your clicker and open your hand and allow the dog to have the treat then follow the steps from the previous page.

**Alternative #3**
Use a clicker and simply sit there and wait for the dog to drop, as it is dropping with its elbows on the ground (and is not in a play bow position) click and reward.

Once the dog understands DROP you should no longer lure the dog. Luring means you have to use a piece of food to get the dog into a position or to do something.

You can stop luring the dog by not touching the treats until the dog has completed the command, that way the dog knows that they have to perform the task first before you show them the goods. This way you should prevent yourself ending up with a dog that will only perform when you show them the food first.
Learning to Come when called

Coming when called is one of the most important things your dog will need to know.

Here's how to make your dog NOT come when called:

1) Reprimand the dog when it finally comes back to you after you called it more than once - what you are doing is telling the dog that coming when called is a bad thing. If the dog doesn't immediately come that means it's not ready for the privilege of being off lead.

2) Clip the lead on as soon as the dog reaches you, you then leave the park. This teaches the dog not to come because it knows when it comes you're just going to clip it on and leave the fun it was having. Clip and unclip a few times and send the dog off for more fun for success.

3) Be a mean un-fun person. Yelling "COME" in a tone that makes the dog think it's in trouble isn't as rewarding as "COME" in the tone that lets the dog know that you're going to have fun, praise, play when it comes back

Here's how to get your dog to come when called:

When you are first teaching the dog this cue, always have food on you because you don't go to work for free and neither do dogs! The treat you carry should be your dog's most favourite treat in the whole wide world! e.g. a bit of steak vs. a piece of boring kibble - the dog knows the difference!

Start with the dog a short distance from you in a ZERO distraction environment e.g. your hallway, backyard, bathroom etc. Call the dog in a friendly and fun way "Daisy [pause] Come". As soon as the dog reaches you, give the dog the treat and praise.

As your dog becomes very good at that level you can increase distance and then start to add distractions. Don't be tempted to advance too quickly.

Do not advance a level until your dog is absolutely solid.

After a while (e.g. a month/s) you can go from giving the dog a treat every time to every 2nd time - you can give praise on the time you don't give a treat.

Then after more time you can advance that to every 3rd time, every 4th time etc.

This is called the 'Variable Reward system', its purpose is to keep the dog interested, it doesn't know if it's going to get the treat that time or not but it's not going to miss out so it does as you ask and then it becomes habit, but you always want to surprise it with a treat from time to time just to keep the motivation there.
Learning the Basics of being a good Trainer

For general pet obedience you'll generally lure the dog into the position you want with a treat and then tell them "Yes!" and give them a treat.

Timing is important, when you say "Yes!" it must be at the moment the dog is actually doing what you want them to do.

Clickers are a great way to mark the millisecond a dog does what you want, then once the dog knows what it’s doing you can transfer to the verbal marker "Yes!".

Once the dog knows the action of what you want and is performing it consistently you can then add the cue word/command just before the dog does the action.

Don't use the cue word/command until the dog understands the action.

When you first start training an action you'll be using a high rate of reinforcement of high value treats. Don't be stingy, just keep delivering the food until the dog is solid on the action.

After the dog is solid (for some time e.g. a month/s) you can then move to a variable rate of reinforcement that means delivering the treat every 2nd or 3rd time and then from there maybe every 6th to 7th time. The dog doesn't know when the reward is coming so they keep performing the action. This is how you phase out food. Don't be tempted to phase out food too soon, take your time.

If you want to do competitive obedience then luring is not necessarily the best choice. You may be better off learning about shaping behaviours with a clicker which will make the behaviours stronger and removes the dog’s reliance on having to see the food before it offers behaviours if phasing out food isn't something you want to do.

ALWAYS have treats in your pocket around the house. Treat rewards aren't just for training sessions otherwise your dog will only perform commands well in training sessions. Ask for random commands around the house (but don't become a nag), randomly call the dog to you and have a treat ready to give them but don't show them the treat until they complete the action you have asked for.

You can purchase a vest with pockets to keep the treats in that you can just pop over the top of your clothing. This way you don't have to worry about getting your clothes dirty. You may like to use a treat pouch.

NEVER ask for the action more than once e.g. SIT SIT SIT. If the dog does not do what you have asked then get up and walk away and ignore the dog for at least 5 minutes then try again later. If you repeat the command the dog will only start to respond to the command after say the 3rd request.
Teach your Dane to have a Gentle Mouth

A very important skill for your Great Dane to learn especially as they could really hurt you by snatching.

**Step 1:** Have the dog in front of you and place a single small high value treat in your hand. Have 19 more pieces in a container, place your open hand infront of the dog’s nose.

**Step 2:** The very second the dog moves to take the food quickly close your hand. The dog may get quite forceful at this stage to try and get the treat.

**Step 3:** Wait for the dog to stop harassing your hand. The moment the dog does open your hand. If the dog does not try and take the treat say “Yes!” and take the treat out of your hand with your other hand and give it to the dog on the palm of your hand.

If the dog tries to go after the food again, repeat the process.

The dog may still be grabby when taking the treat, persevere, they will get there.

**Once the dog knows not to grab the food** you can introduce the "Leave It" command right before you offer your hand to the dog.

**Next Step**
You can make this action harder by placing treats on the ground in front of the dog. Each time the dog goes to grab the food put your hand over the food. When the dog doesn't move towards the food say "Yes!" or mark with your clicker and pick up a treat and deliver it to the dog.

**Make it harder**
Once your dog is leaving food on the ground without any problems you can start making it harder by placing treats on their paws etc.
Teach your Dane to accept handling
Ideal for cutting toe nails, show ring dogs, Vet visits etc.

The 'Gotcha' Game

This is a great game and is recommended to be played with puppies everyday. Adult dogs can learn this game very quickly as well.

Take 20 high value treats in a container, ideally you'll use a clicker, however you can use a verbal "Yes!" marker if you prefer.

Have the dog in front of you and reach towards the dog but do not touch them, say "Yes!" or Click as you are reaching towards them and deliver the reward quickly to their mouths.

Reach & Click 3 times. If the dog is accepting of the reach with no problem then you can advance to reach and touch the dog on its leg, Click or verbally mark "Yes!" when your hand touches the dog. If the dog isn't comfortable with the reach then stick with this level, do not advance to something harder unless the dog is completely comfortable at this level.

Once your dog is ok with you reaching and touching progress using the below levels:

Touch head > touch the dogs back > touch their tail > touch their ears > touch their feet > touch their Jowls > place a hand over an eye > lift up an ear > lift up both ears > cover both eyes > lift up a jowl > lift up both jowls > pick up a foot > pick up each foot separately > lightly pull an ear > lightly pull the tail.

Once you get to this level you can start advancing to more challenging handling such as, spreading the toes, lightly squeezing the toes, tapping the dogs nails - this helps the dog prepare for nail clipping.

If your dog needs to have eye drops, cream etc. this type of training can be done for them to accept it. Never rush, take your time, some stages may take a long time.

If your dog ever growls / aggressively bites at you during this process contact a Behaviourist ASAP.
How to be the Leader to your Great Dane

You don't have to get physical.

All dogs need a leader to follow and if the humans in the house don't step up to be the leader then the dog will feel it has no other option but to take this role itself.

Most dogs aren't suitable leaders and fall to pieces in the leadership role. They can over-react to situations and really misbehave. Imagine if you were asked to be the Prime Minister today!

Making a dog that is not cut out for the role as a leader is cruel. It's asking a dog to live in a constant state of anxiety (even if it's not obvious to the people around the dog).

A Leader is FAIR
Don't let anger creep in, make the rules and don't change them.

A Leader expects RESPECT

1) Does your dog treat you with respect?
2) Does your dog stand in your way?
3) Does your dog demand attention?
4) Does your dog barge past you
5) Does your dog jump on you?
6) Does your dog bark at you?
7) Does your dog push you out of bed or off the Couch?
8) Does your dog growl at you?

You get the picture...

Observe your dog's behaviour towards you for one day and you'll see a whole different dog.

A leader is calm, they don't need to get rough to get what they want, however they do provide discipline when required and always enforce the boundaries.

OBEDIENCE DOES NOT = RESPECT

Be the PROTECTOR
It is your job to protect the dog from any potential dangers. That means chasing away stray dogs, stepping in when another dog is playing too rough with your dog or when a person isn't treating your dog with respect.
Stop your Dane jumping on you

It may be cute when they're a puppy but dangerous when they're a 65+ kilo dog!

Jumping is very easy to stop - simply don’t allow your puppy to do it and then they won't grow into an adult who jumps at people. Start with a puppy how you mean to go on.

WALK AWAY
If a baby Dane puppy places its feet on you, turn away and walk off and ignore the dog. Dogs only do what is reinforcing to them so if you do not give any reinforcement they will not continue to do it after a while. Reinforce the behaviour you want.

Even negative reinforcement can be reinforcing to a dog e.g. If a dog jumps at you and you yell at it to get down - BINGO - the dog just got your attention.

TEACH AN ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOUR
A Dog can’t jump when it is sitting or in a drop. Teach the dog an alternative behaviour and ask for it during times you think the dog may jump, then heavily reward the correct behaviour and ignore the jumping.

STEP INTO THE DOG
Rather than taking a step back when a dog jumps at you, take a big confident step forward into the dog (this does not include raising your knee into the dogs chest). By taking a step into the dog’s space you are claiming your space back.

ALL 4 FEET ON THE GROUND
Using a clicker or a verbal marker, mark and reward the dog when it has all four feet on the ground.

TURN YOUR BACK
As soon as the dog jumps, turn your back to the dog without saying anything and continue to turn away from the dog until it stops jumping.

BE A TREE
Just stand still and don’t move, don’t look at the dog, don’t say anything – just pretend the dog isn’t there and the jumping isn’t there. That way the dog is receiving no reinforcement.
Puppies play bite in play and they can bite very hard! Because Great Dane puppies are going to be very big dogs, this is something you'll want to get a handle on very quickly. It can take some time in challenging puppies and you may need to ask for behavioural assistance from a qualified individual.

It is important that you do not take your puppy home until it is at least 8 weeks old because your puppy is learning bite inhibition from its litter mates. This is where they bite each other and make each other squeal in order to know how hard is too hard.

When you bring your puppy home (or later on during teething) it may start to bite you and it has to learn how hard is too hard or learn not to put its mouth on your skin at all, the choice is up to you.

**TOYS - Redirect the biting to something more appropriate**
Ideally you'll start with this method. Give the dog a toy. Show them that a toy is appropriate to bite and chew not you.

**SQUEAL**
This is a very popular method whereby you squeal in pain when the puppy bites you. This should tell the puppy that it has hurt you and it should be more careful.

Great Danes were originally bred to hunt and the prey drive they required to do this is still present in some Danes today, so if you squeal and the puppy gets over-excited and bites you more, your Great Dane may have prey drive and this method of training is not suitable.

**IGNORE**
This method is very hard if a puppy is biting you and hurting you, however if you can act like a tree and freeze and not look at the dog or verbalise then the puppy will realise you're not fun in this game and will cease usually within 1-2 weeks or even less.

As an alternative, you can praise the puppy as soon as it removes its mouth from you, using a clicker would be ideal to mark the millisecond this occurs.

**TIME OUTS**
If your puppy is people orientated, you can put the puppy outside or in a bedroom (it doesn't sleep in) for a brief time out e.g. 10 seconds. Do it in a very unemotional way and don't speak. When you let the puppy in don't say anything, just open the door and go on with what you were doing. Do not use a crate for time outs, the crate should be a positive place.
LOVE IS A GREAT DANE!

WALK AWAY
Make a disappointed sound such as HUMPH, push the puppy away (not too hard) and then simply stand up and walk away and go into another room and close the door for a minute.

There are some puppies that will chase after you and bite the back of your legs if you try and walk away. If your puppy does this then this method would not be suitable.

SPRAY BOTTLE
(Aversive method & not necessarily suitable for your puppy)
Squirt the puppy in the face (avoiding its eyes) each time it places its mouth on you. To be successful in this method you should not let the puppy know the water bottle exists otherwise they will only behave when you have the water bottle.

If the puppy starts to enjoy the water you can put some lemon juice in it. Be careful not to squirt the dog in the eyes - the lemon juice is used as a taste aversive only.

DO NOT HIT / SMACK / BEAT A PUPPY
You will simply lose the puppy’s trust and respect...leaders don’t act like that.
Resource Guarding

Showing aggression around toys, food and any other item the dog considers as high value to them.

Resource guarding is easy to prevent when you start off with a puppy.

Resource guarding occurs when a dog believes they will lose something e.g. another dog steals their bone so next time they'll put on an aggressive display to make the other dog leave them alone.

**Action #1**
When the puppy is eating you can sit next to them and stroke them for a moment or two.

**Action #2**
When the puppy is eating put your hand in the bowl for a moment or two. If your dog freezes and does not eat when you do this, you could have a future problem building up.

**Action #3**
Hand feed the puppy the first half of their meal.

**Action #4**
When a dog has a treat such as a pigs ear or bone etc. say "Give" in a normal tone of voice and offer the dog a very tasty and awesome treat (more special than what it currently has) so you are effectively exchanging what you have with the dog. Then give the dog back its treat and walk away.

**Teaching "Give" is very important when it comes to preventing resource guarding.**

**Great Danes should be encouraged to eat slowly to avoid bloat**
Therefore if you have multiple dogs it is recommended that you feed them in separate rooms so the dogs do not feel competition between each other and eat faster.

If you insist on feeding your dogs together ensure you are there supervising so neither dog gets in the other dogs personal space which can end in a fight.
If you already have a dog that is resource guarding

You need to strip away all privileges to this dog e.g the dog can only have access to toys when you give them, cannot be up on furniture unless you invite them up and then they must get off when you say so. Implement the Nothing in Life is Free (NILIF) program with 100% consistency.

Please book a session in with a Behaviourist to help you through this situation, in the meantime the below may assist you, however always be very careful when managing a dog displaying aggressive traits.

**Action #1**
Hand feed all food to the dog if it is safe to do so. Make them work for it e.g. Dinner time can be a training session.

**Action #2**
If it is not safe to hand feed the dog, hold the bowl and throw the food out in-front of you so that the dog gets used to you being there when there is food.

**Action #3**
Do not let the dog approach another dog whilst they are eating, having treats or enjoying a high value item such as a toy. Show your Resource Guarder what the boundaries are and use crates or tethers if need be.

**Action #4**
Teach "Give".

**Action #5**
If all else fails, do not delay, contact a behaviourist to help you.

Always think of how you can set your dog up for success and implement routines and actions to do this.
Counter Surfing

Because Great Danes are tall dogs they can easily steal items off the bench including your Sunday roast!

When Danes are puppies you'll need to teach them that the kitchen is a no-go area. You can place tape on the floor to create a boundary line. Adult Danes can learn this too.

If the dog crosses over the boundary line you walk towards them and say "Out" in a firm tone, let your body do the talking, try your best not to use your hands to move them out of the way because dogs understand body language better.

If you already have a counter surfer you can try the boundary line method. If you are unsuccessful there are some aversive methods that can work quickly, which may feel necessary to keep your dog safe from eating items it should not.

Put the food away
A very simple solution, don’t leave food out where your Dane can reach it.

Aversive training
There are aversive training systems available to counteract counter surfing problems, however you would be best to try the above mentioned method before trying aversive methods.

Scat Mats
Scat Mats can be placed on the kitchen bench when the dogs commonly jump on, when they touch the mat they will received a static shock.

Innotek Zone Collars
A collar that responds to a unit in your kitchen. It emits a warning tone and then delivers an electric pulse to the dog. Dogs quickly learn where they can and cannot go.