



Doberman Planet LLC
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Client Information:

Lauren & Dakota
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Dog Information:

Name: Onyx
Breed: Doberman Pinscher
Age: 20 Weeks
Sex: Male
Color: Black/Rust

Onyx's Training Plan of Action

Session 4

Focus: Engagement Before Independence. Building voluntary attention, improving impulse control, and continuing progress with mouthing management and structured exercise.

What We Worked On Today

1. **Engagement & Eye Contact (“Eyes” Command)** – Practiced structured eye contact using the verbal cue “Eyes.” Onyx was asked to maintain eye contact before receiving reinforcement to begin building stronger focus and engagement.
2. **“See It, Choose Me” Attention Exercise** – Introduced voluntary reorientation exercises where Onyx notices environmental distractions and is rewarded when he chooses to disengage from them and look back to his handler.
3. **Luring & Movement Engagement** – Continued luring exercises with Onyx on the handler’s left side to encourage engagement, directional following, and focus during movement.

Trainer Observations

1. **High Energy With Developing Self-Regulation** – Onyx is a very energetic puppy and still attempts attention-seeking behaviors such as jumping, licking, and occasional nipping. However, he consistently demonstrates the ability to reset and return to calm behavior when attention is withheld to a degree that is superior to the average Doberman of his age.
2. **Strong Engagement With Owners** – Onyx shows good Doberman-typical focus on both owners and the trainer and responds well to commands he already understands.
3. **Significant Improvement In Mouthing** – Owners report that puppy mouthing has improved significantly since the previous session, even while he continues active teething.
4. **Active Teething Stage** – Owners have found fallen molars, indicating Onyx is currently in a heavy teething phase which can temporarily increase mouthing behaviors.
5. **Potty Training Progressing Well** – Potty training has improved drastically, although occasional accidents still occur as he continues learning consistency.
6. **Escalation Behavior After Corrections** – When interrupted for nipping behavior, Onyx sometimes redirects toward shoelaces, feet, or clothing. This is common for Dobermans with high prey drive. A management solution was discussed to allow owners to separate him when escalation occurs.

Homework Until Next Session

Nipping & Biting Management

- Install a puppy pen around Onyx's bed in the common living area so that separation can occur when nipping/biting escalation happens.
- Keep the pen door open during the day so it becomes a normal resting space and not a punishment space (Do not use the sleeping crate for separation when biting/nipping).
- Place several acceptable chew toys inside the pen that remain available to him throughout the day.
- If biting continues after interruption and disengagement, calmly place him in the pen until he settles and/or redirects to "good chew options" in the pen. You may open the pen door after a few minutes of him successfully redirecting.

Troubleshooting Tip: Do not introduce new toys when placing him in the pen for biting behavior, as this can accidentally reinforce the behavior in a Doberman and lead to breed-typical manipulation to get access to these toys in the future (such as purposely engaging in nipping/biting to gain access to the new toys). This is also why the door should be left open at all times during the day when not being used for separation.

Luring Practice

- Practice luring exercises daily with Onyx on leash positioned on the handler's left side.
- Begin each exercise with the command "Let's Go!" to signal the start of the engagement game.
- Increase difficulty by incorporating turns, obstacles, and faster directional changes.

Tips:

- Gradually transition from having a treat in the hand to using an empty open hand at your side that Onyx targets with his nose.
- Keep sessions short and playful to maintain strong engagement.

Attention Exercises ("Eyes" Command)

- Practice the "Eyes" command by asking for eye contact and counting silently to three before rewarding.
- Reward with the marker word "Yesss" followed by a treat, toy interaction, or praise.

Tips:

- Gradually increase difficulty by practicing in more distracting environments.
- Progress from holding a treat between the eyes to pointing to the eyes, and eventually to only using the verbal command.

Mental Engagement Activities

- Incorporate mentally stimulating games daily, such as find-it games, hide-and-seek, puzzle toys, and short command sessions.
- Mix these exercises into play sessions so that Onyx's brain remains engaged throughout the activity.

Tip: Dobermans thrive on mental challenges, and increasing mental engagement will help reduce excess energy and improve responsiveness.

Structured Play Sessions

- Reduce play sessions to approximately 20–30 minutes instead of longer sessions.
- Start the session clearly with the command “Let’s Go!”
- End sessions while Onyx still has energy and is responding well to commands.

Tips:

- Multiple shorter sessions throughout the day are more effective than one long session. Keep them at predictable times of the day.
- At the end of play, help Onyx wind down and self-soothe by guiding him to his bed with a calming chew, frozen toy, or similar enrichment activity.

Controlled Environmental Exposure

- Once per day, take Onyx to the front yard or driveway area and sit calmly together while observing passing traffic.
- Use the “See It, Choose Me” concept by rewarding him when he notices distractions and then looks back to you.
- Use this same technique to help socialize/desensitize him to crowds and other public settings or reactive stimuli.

Tips:

- Keep the distance from traffic far enough that he remains comfortable.
- Slowly increase difficulty over time as his confidence grows.

Key Tips for This Stage

- **Engagement Before Independence** – At this age, Dobermans begin testing their independence. Building strong engagement now will make future training significantly easier.
- **Short Sessions Build Drive** – Ending training and play sessions while Onyx still has energy helps build motivation and focus for the next session.
- **Mental Work Matters More Than Physical Exhaustion** – Mental challenges such as luring, attention work, and puzzle toys will tire Onyx more effectively than simply increasing physical exercise.
- **Consistency Creates Clarity** – Clear start and end signals for play, consistent interruption of unwanted behaviors, and predictable routines help Doberman puppies understand expectations more quickly.
- **Separation Pen** - It is highly suggested to get a portable pen to wrap around Onyx’s bed in the common area to allow for separation when needed.

Onyx's Command-List

Below are the commands we've selected for Onyx, along with his current skill level for each:

Command	Verbal Cue	Visual Cue	Skill Level	Notes
Sit	"Sit"	Raised closed fist	Semi-reliable	Needs work w/o treats in hand.
Lie Down	"Down"	Flat hand, palm down	Semi-reliable	Needs distance practice.
Potty	"Go Potty"	Point to the ground	Learning	Basic familiarity gained.
Stay	"Stay"	Open palm facing Onyx	Not started	Will introduce once leash foundations strengthen.
Release	"Ok"	None	Not started	Will introduce with "Stay."
Off Object	"Off"	Point to the ground	Not started	Owners may introduce any time.
Drop Item	"Drop It"	TBD	Not started	Not introduced.
Reinforcer	"Yessss"	N/A	Learning	Introduced.
Watch Me	"Eyes"	Point toward eyes	Learning	Introduced.

Skill Level Options: Not started, Learning, Semi-reliable, Reliable indoors, Reliable outdoors, Fully trained

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