

Training Manual for Rags The Humane Education Dog

Thank you for purchasing Rags, The Humane Education Dog. A portion of the proceeds from this kit goes to Caring For Creatures (CFC), a 501 (c) (3) organization, dedicated to caring for abused, neglected, and homeless animals. Cheryl Falkenburry, former Director of Training and Education at CFC, has reached out to over 3500 students in just a few years through puppet programs. Thanks to a grant from the ASPCA, Rags the Humane Education dog is now available for sale for other humane educators. There are a limited number of kits available, however, so Cheryl has put a link to instructions on ways to make a humane education dog with just a few easy steps and limited funds. Please go to www.centerhillschool.com and click on the Humane Educators link to learn more. These instructions will help you use any type of puppet in a school environment. There are types for successful performances and the equipment that will be helpful in reaching out to as many students as possible. Remember: the important thing is to have fun!

Cheryl uses Rags as if he were a real dog, which means he doesn't talk to the audience (although nothing is preventing you from becoming creative and giving Rags a voice). The audience role-plays a variety of tasks with Rags. There are several advantages to using Rags versus a live dog: Rags allows children who are fearful of dogs to practice skills in a safe environment that will help them when a real dog is around; children with allergies can focus on the important messages being taught without worrying about any uncomfortable health reactions; the humane educator doesn't have to worry about Rags deciding not to listen that day.

It's amazing how puppets intrigue and amaze young people. Even with the fast-paced age of computers, children still laugh and clap when they see a puppet on stage. The key is proper manipulation in order to help the puppet come alive.

Getting Started

Gently pick up Rags by the black control bar, keeping the hook on top. Remove the Velcro from the strings and set aside. You will want to keep the Velcro for packing Rags away each time you use him. This will help prevent tangles.

Manipulation

You don't need to have a lot of acting talent or puppetry skills to begin to use Rags. He'll do most of the work for you. Become familiar with each of the strings and what part of Rags they are attached to. Take a moment to look at the control and follow the strings down to Rags. Gently pull up on each string and see how it makes Rags move.

Walking: Tilt the control back and forth (right and left), slowly moving Rags forward to make him walk. Be sure to keep his feet on the floor so he's not flying--this is actually the most difficult task puppeteers have when using a marionette.

Sitting: Tilt the control with the back end down as you raise the front end. Rags' bottom will go down to the floor.

Down: First put Rags in a sit position, then take both front leg strings with one hand and slowly pull them forward as you lower the control making Rags go down to the ground.

Tail wagging: The tail string is on the back end of the control. With quick, gentle jerks, pull on the string to make Rags' tail wag.

Ears: Rags can cock one ear to hear better by pulling up on one ear string located on the front of the control along with the head string. If you pull up on the ear string far enough, Rags will raise his ear and cock his head, giving him a very inquisitive look.

Waving: Children love to have Rags wave at them. Locate either front foot string on the ends of the front cross-bar of the control, and pull the string up and down in a waving fashion.

Bowing: Rags can bow at the end of the show, or demonstrate a play-bow showing the audience a friendly dog posture. For a bow, locate the back string that is found on the center of the back cross-bar of the control. Hold onto this string as you lower the front end of the control. This will keep Rags' rear end go up as his front end lowers. This is fun to do when you are teaching Rags to lie down during a show. You can have Rags lower his front end and raise his back end in a see-saw way as so many dogs do when they are first learning a down.

Roll-over: Just kidding! This is one trick you don't want to try with Rags or you'll end up with a tangled mess.

Audiences

Size of audience: Before you let people know that you have a show, you need to decide how big an audience you are able to handle. I recommend to those just starting out to start out small. Offer to go into individual classrooms and perform for small groups. This way you will not need to invest in expensive sound equipment. You can just bring a small CD player for the music and your booming voice.

Sound Systems: If you plan on performing for a large group, you will need to invest in a sound system. There are a variety out there of varying sizes. Do an internet search on portable sound systems or go to a local music store. You'll need to find one that will be loud enough for the number of people you plan to perform for as well as one that has capabilities to hook to a CD player or has a cassette player built in. It must have a clip on microphone as you need both hands to perform. Check the weight of the unit and be sure it is something you can carry. It's also helpful to have battery power as an option as electrical outlets are often hard to find. This also gives you the ability to perform outside.

Performing Live: Performing live in front of any sized audience can be scary. Even veteran performers get the jitters before a show. Take a deep breath and just jump in. Once you get rolling, the jitters go away.

Audience Participation: Audience participation is crucial in order to keep everyone's attention and to help children learn. This is where most people get scared--the "what ifs" begin. "What if I pick a wild child?" "What if the child freezes and does nothing?" "What if the child does something different than what I ask?" "What if the child breaks a string on Rags." This is where improvising is very helpful. You have to roll with the punches. Start the show by explaining that you will be needing volunteers throughout the show, and you will only pick those that are sitting on their bottoms, with their mouths quiet, and their hands raised. You may need to remind them of this each time you pick a volunteer. Be sure to choose a variety of volunteers, i.e. boys, girls, and different ethnic backgrounds.

Wild Child: If you invite wild child on the stage, (and you'll know it because all the teachers will gasp when you point to the student), remind the student that it is important to stay calm around a dog. Give them a job to do right away. With this particular show, it's always great to just stop and ask the student how to show everyone the proper way to greet the dog (even if you've already done this earlier in the show, it's a good reminder to get the wild child on task). If you happen to have picked the class clown that shows the audience the wrong way, very nicely thank the student for that example of how NOT to greet a dog (always maintaining a sweet smile), ask him to take his seat, and call on the quietest looking student to show the proper way, and then continue with whatever you originally needed a volunteer to do. Believe it or not, this doesn't happen often. Most students want to do things right because they are so happy to be on stage, but it's always best to be prepared.

Stage Fright: (The volunteer's not yours.) Volunteers that freeze in front of the audience, need a little extra guidance. Sometimes asking them to point instead of talk, or whisper in your ear helps. Some volunteers just won't do anything, praise them for doing just what they should be doing around a strange dog. Thank them for that fine example that you will discuss further later (unless this happens to be the point where you are teaching this, and then it's perfect!), have the audience applaud as they return to their seat.

Independent Thinkers: For the volunteers that decide to steal the show, you will have to think quick. If they want to do their own thing, quickly get them back on task. Remind talkers that you appreciate their input, but it is your time to talk. Get them doing something with their hands right away. Even if you have to ask THEM to be a dog. This is always a good distraction and most kids will jump right into it. Then you can practice a sit or something with them, praise them, and send them on their way.

Broken Strings: Fortunately this very rarely happens, but if it does, you can do two things. If it's a minor string, just keep going as if nothing happened. If it's a crucial string, like Rags head is now hanging to the ground, have Rags walk behind the table and ask him what on earth he is sniffing. This is where that improvisation really comes in. As you investigate what Rags is looking for, duck behind the table and tie the strings together. It may be a little short, but it will work for the moment. Keep talking and tell Rags you don't see anything. Ham it up. The kids will never know you had a major crisis.

Loud Audience: If the entire audience gets loud, Rags can hide behind a table while you inform the audience that he's scared because it's so noisy. Ask them to sit quietly and see if that will bring Rags back out.

Always have the audience clap for all the volunteers as you send them back to their seat and thank them for their help.

Performance

Show Introduction: Start your show by introducing yourself and the organization you represent (if applicable). Let the audience briefly know the concepts you will be covering, the rules you expect them to follow (sitting on bottoms, nice and quiet, hands raised when you need a volunteer) and then introduce Rags. It's more dramatic to have Rags hiding behind a table and then go get him as you give his introduction. If Rags is out there when you first start talking, your audience may be too distracted by him to listen to the rules.

The Show: The following is a sample of what you can teach with Rags. Be creative and choose any topic you'd like. The show can be as long or as short as you desire. For young audiences, preschool – 1st grade, it's best to keep the show to 20 – 30 minutes. For older audiences you can lengthen the show to 45 minutes.

Animals are similar to humans: Start out by telling the audience that Rags has needs very similar to the needs of this audience. Ask the children what things both humans and animals need to survive. Most of them will be able to come up with food, water, shelter. Use props to help the children come up with answers. A food dish, a water bottle, a toy house, a toy or real stethoscope (go to a doctor to stay healthy), a leash (exercise), toys (entertainment), soap (stay clean), toothbrush (talk about responsibility and brushing teeth of the animals in our homes). You can make it harder for older audiences by putting things like an electrical cord (we need to keep our animals safe, just like younger siblings), and a silk poinsettia plant (keeping poisonous plants out of reach). Ask a volunteer from the audience to come up and pick something that animals need and show the audience. Ask them what it is and what purpose it serves. You may need to repeat the answer so that all can hear.

Spaying and Neutering: You can flow into this next topic by discussing this as something that we need to do for our animals. This is a bit of a touchy subject since it's considered sex education. Keep all explanations simple and stop volunteers from giving graphic definitions. Younger audiences really can't grasp the subject so it's best to include this section only with older children (2nd – 5th grade). Ask the audience if anyone knows what spaying or neutering means. Older audiences may be able to come up with the answer and say it is an operation to make an animal not have babies. Ask why this is important. Have a box of stuffed dogs to give a visual example of how quickly dogs can multiply. Bring a volunteer up on stage and ask the volunteer to take seven dogs out of the box. Explain that you are going to sing a song and as you do they are to take out as many dogs as the number in the song. Start singing the "I Quit" song from NAHEE (Appendix A). You don't have to have music for this, as it's easier to stop and go without it. Start singing and tell the child to pull out dogs as you get to each number. Sing fast; encourage the child to count faster. The audience will laugh, the child will get a little frantic (this is where wild child becomes a real problem), and all the while have Rags running back and forth with the child as the dogs are being pulled out. At the end, have Rags flop down on all the dogs, wipe your brow, and gasp at how quickly dogs can multiply. You can have the audience all start barking to show how loud a lot of dogs can be. Talk about how hard it would be to find homes for all these dogs; how expensive it would be to feed them. Ask the volunteer to put all the dogs in the box

again. If you get wild child up there and things get really bad, divide it up. Say, “Wow this is a lot of work, let’s get someone else up here so you can rest,” and send wild child to his/her seat. The child will probably say he/she is not tired, but go ahead and start calling on someone else and inform wild child that we’re going to give someone else a turn and thank him/her for the fantastic assistance. Never get angry. Smile and be sweet, but stay in control.

Training: Remind the audience that there are so many responsibilities that go with taking care of an animal. Ask how many have chores to do with an animal at home. Many will start to yell out what they are. Remind them to just raise their hands if they do chores for an animal. If they continue to tell their story, tell them you are sorry you don’t have time to hear all the stories, but that maybe they can share them with their classmates after the show. Talk about training as part of the responsibility we have to animals that share our homes. Ask why we should train our animals (so they can learn how to nicely live in a human world, help with boredom, make vet visits easier, etc.). Talk about positive reinforcement and how it helps dogs to learn skills with nice rewards instead of force. Call a volunteer up to show how to teach Rags to sit. Hand the volunteer a biscuit (invisible, but it’s amazing how children never ask “What biscuit?” and just grab the invisible one from your hand). Show how to put the biscuit right in front of Rags’ nose and then bring it up over his head. As the volunteer does this, make Rags sit. Tell the volunteer to say “Sit,” and then give Rags the biscuit and tell him what a great dog he is. Explain that this worked because dogs can’t do backbends so when Rags watched the biscuit go over his head, he could only sit to follow it. This way we don’t have to push hard on his hips to get him to sit, Rags does it all on his own. Have a different volunteer come up to demonstrate down, again using the invisible treat to lure Rags into position. Two volunteers are used to teach Rags to come. Have them stand a distance apart, facing each other, and taking turns calling Rags while tapping their knees, using excited voices, and running backwards (make sure they can’t trip on anything or fall off the stage). Play puppy ping-pong with Rags running back and forth between the two children. This is a fun way for friends or siblings to help teach their dog to come to them. You can make the training segment as long or as short as you want, but keep all the steps short and simple so the children can remember and go home and try it.

Greeting Dogs: Ask how someone should greet a dog while it is being walked by a human. Most students will say you should ask. Invite a volunteer up to show how this is done. Tell him/her that you are walking down the street with Rags and begin walking towards the volunteer. Coach if necessary on what to say. “May I please pet your dog?” and reply, “Yes, you may.” Encourage the volunteer to pet Rags under the chin or on the side since going over a dog’s head can be very scary for the dog. Now ask what should be done if a dog is wandering around by itself and there is no one to ask if it’s o.k. to greet the dog. Some will say, “Check the dog tag.” Be careful about how you respond to inaccurate answers as you don’t want to discourage children from trying. You can repeat the response “Check the dog tag,” and add “That’s an option. If I reach down to look at the tag, what might happen?” If no one says anything, you can coax them more by saying, “Look how close my hand is to the dog’s mouth. Do you think that might scare him if I grab his collar?” Always explain every situation. Try not to gloss over wrong answers as children are expressing their ideas and you want to help them think through the consequences. Wrong answers are all part of learning. Ask for some other ideas. Some may reply, “Get an adult.” Help from adults can

be very good, but remind the audience that the dog might chase them as they walk away to get help. Ask why moving is not a good idea, and then ask what they should do instead of move. Have a volunteer come up and have them stand like a tree, arms at their sides, don't move around, and don't stare at the dog. Have Rags sniff around the volunteer as you talk about how staring makes a dog feel uncomfortable and that it's better to look straight ahead. Send the volunteer back to his/her seat, and then say you have a song so everyone can try. (Stand Like a Tree CD included with Rags, Appendix B Stand Like a Tree words). Start the music and invite the audience to stand after the intro part has played. Move around the audience and have Rags sniff the students (use the front row if there is a big audience or have a few kids come up on stage). If students move, kick, or hit at Rags remind them they are holding still and that those actions might cause the dog to be scared and bite. Feel free to talk during the song to encourage the audience to do the actions of the words. You can even curl up like a rock right along with them as Rags lies down next to you so they can see how to tuck their knees and cover their ears. After the song, praise everyone for doing a great job. Talk about how some of the actions the students may have done during the song might be a problem in a real situation. Talk about why some dogs bite (i.e. scared, hurt, taught to be mean). Remind everyone that they should stand like a tree to be safe.

Show Conclusion: Always thank your audience for their help and for inviting you. Review all the concepts learned, and have Rags wave good-bye. It's helpful to remind the audience to remain seated until the teachers tell them when to stand. Wave good-bye yourself and begin to pack up. Depending on where you are performing, some students may rush the stage. It's a good idea to have Rags go straight into a box, before this happens, as they may grab at him and ask to hold him. It's best not to allow the children to use Rags as he may get tangled, torn, or have broken strings.

Caring for Rags

Rags will give you years of use with very little maintenance if certain precautions are taken with each use.

1. Take care to keep Rags clean. If performing outside or on a dirty floor, use a cloth or rug to perform on to help keep Rags clean. Use a damp cloth to gently spot clean any dirt.
2. When storing Rags, bring all the strings together and wrap with the Velcro included to keep him from tangling.
3. If Rags gets tangled, gently try to manipulate his body or the control to untangle the strings. In the case of a bad tangle, you may have to untie his strings at the hook eyes and retie once untangled. Pay attention to where the strings are attached. When properly stored after each use, tangles should be rare.
4. Do not allow small children to handle the marionette control. Teachers using Rags in a classroom need to be sure to teach children how to properly care for Rags if they will be using him. Please be aware that Rags will not hold up to rough handling, and it may be best to not allow children to control him.
5. Remind child volunteers that come up on stage to be as gentle with Rags as they would need to be with a live dog. Remember, Rags is there to help children role-play what to do with a real dog. Gentle handling will allow Rags to work for years to come.

6. If Rags breaks a string, use .22 gauge nylon fishing string to replace the entire string. Use a needle to sew the string through Rags' fur. Do not tie a tight knot around the fur or the material may tear.
7. Keep some nylon string and scissors on hand in case a string breaks before a show. You can temporarily repair a string by tying a piece of nylon string in at the break.
8. Store Rags in a box that is large enough for Rags to sit in loosely without being squashed. (Plastic boxes work well to keep Rags in the best condition, and they are easy to transport.) If Rags does become squashed move the stuffing around until Rags' shape is regained.

Enjoy Rags and spreading humane education to young people everywhere. If you have any questions or problems whether it be with Rags or how to do something, please do not hesitate to contact Cheryl Falkenburry:

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Appendix A

The “I Quit!” Song

Sung to the tune “The Twelve Days of Christmas”

By the time she was a year old, my doggie gave to me,
a litter in a basket.

After two years together, my doggies gave to me,
12 spotted pups
and a litter in a basket.

After three years together, my doggies gave to me,
36 mutts, 12 spotted pups,
and a litter in a basket.

After four years together, my doggies gave to me,
108 hounds, 36 mutts, 12 spotted pups,
and a litter in a basket.

After five years together, my doggies gave to me,
324 tails a-wagging, 108 hounds, 36 mutts, 12 spotted pups,
and a litter in a basket.

After six years together, my doggies gave to me,
972 dogs a-barking, 324 tails a-wagging,
108 hounds, 36 mutts, 12 spotted pups,
and a litter in a basket.

Next time I'll spay, so my dogs won't give me 2,916 pups a-yipping
972 dogs a-barking, 324 tails a-wagging,
108 hounds, 36 mutts, 12 spotted pups,
and a litter in a basket.

I QUIT!

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Appendix B

Stand Like A Tree

*Arranged by Mitch Tony
Words by Cheryl Falkenburry
Performed on CD by "Full Circle"
Laura Coombe, Doug Hepler, and Mitch Tony*

There are dogs in this world that are loving and kind.
They wanna be your friend...and that's just fine.
There are dogs in this world that are scared and sick.
Some are taught to be mean...and they growl like this...
GROWWWLLLLLL

Those are the ones to stay away from
Don't run, don't scream, don't turn around and shout
There are some things you can do if a strange dog comes towards you
And there's no one around to help you out.

Stand like a tree (*stand like a tree*), hands at your side (*hands at your side*).
Don't move around (*don't move around*), don't even cry (*don't even cry*).
Eyes straight ahead (*eyes straight ahead*), he'll let you be (*he'll let you be*).
If you stand there tall and proud just like a tree.

VERY GOOD NOW...

Don't stare at him (*don't stare at him*), don't spin around (*don't spin around*).
Be like a stone if you should fall to the ground
When that dog sees (*when that dog sees*, you're like a stone (*you're like a stone*),
He'll see that you're not scared, and he will go on home.

Just curl right up (*curl right up*), tuck in your knees (*tuck in your knees*),

Fists over your ears to cover them up if you please...
Hold very still (*hold very still*), don't make a sound (*don't make a sound*),
Just act like a rock lying on the ground.

BUT IF YOU'RE STANDING UP, WHAT DO YOU DO?

Stand like a tree, that's the way to be.
Don't stare, don't scream, don't turn around and flee
To be safe...as we can be...
We should all stand tall and proud just like a tree
We should all stand tall and proud just like a tree

There are dogs in this world that are loving and kind.
They wanna be our friends and that just fine.

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