

Teaching New York City dogs Yiddish

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NEW YORK (FOX 5 NEWS) - On a recent overcast Sunday morning, a group of New Yorkers schlepped to Central Park with their dogs to teach them some new tricks with an age-old twist.

"Zitz! Shtay! Gut!" yelled the dog trainer.

The commands were in Yiddish.

"Yiddish has always been the universal language and you never know when Teddy might need to respond to Yiddish commands," said Harvey Sawikin, who brought his cockapoo Teddy to the event.



The class was the second of its kind, put on by the progressive Jewish organization the Workmen's Circle. In fact, so many dog owners wanted to participate, the waiting list was 40 people long.

"There's been across the board a desire to get into this program," said Ann Toback, the executive director of Workmen's Circle.

The dog trainer leading the class, Miguel Rodriguez, said some dogs may take to Yiddish better than English because of the sharp consonants like the "zzz" in zitz.

But Toback, who came up with the idea for the program, said the real point of teaching dogs Yiddish is for their owners to take something away from it.

"For sure if your dog can do it, it becomes a lot less intimidating doesn't it?" she said.

Toback said more "Yiddish for Dogs" classes will be held down the line and Workmen's Circle is even thinking of hosting a "Kibbitz with Cats" so cat lovers aren't left out.