

Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society K-9 College

POSITIVE TRAINING GUIDE

1. Reward behavior that you want to reoccur and reward it generously and often. This is the key component of reward based training. It's a tricky thing to work with because we are more likely to give attention to an undesirable behavior. Waiting for the right thing to happen and then rewarding it will make it more likely to happen again.
2. Dogs learn by association. Your reward has to follow the correct behavior within a second or so. To take it a step further, the words you are going to use to tell the dog what to do need to be closely associated with the correct performance at first and later used before the behavior to trigger the right response. Words alone cannot make behavior happen.
3. Look for behaviors you want and reward them instead of punishing behaviors you don't want. Notice and reward good behavior, actively, as though your life depended on it.
4. Extinction: A behavior that doesn't receive a reward becomes far less likely to happen. Dogs get some automatic, biological payoffs for behaviors they exhibit so preventing those behaviors is a way to get them to become less prominent in the dogs repertoire. Ignoring behavior you don't want will help to extinguish it as long as you take steps to keep the dog from getting some other kind of payoff for it.
5. Positive reinforcement must be positive for the dog. Watch your dog's responses to the rewards you present and don't be timid about experimenting to find food, toys, words and actions your dog finds extra special.
6. Learn to present Jackpots: This is something highly valuable and way above the usual rewards. An example of a jackpot is saving the meat patty out of your burger and giving it to your dog, without advance notice when he or she does something especially well.
7. Raise the standards for performance very gradually (easier said than done). Reliable behaviors are built on successful repetitions of each step of the task. Don't go to the next level until the first one is 90% rock solid.
8. Behavior is not dependent upon food being present if trained correctly. There are many people, trainers included, that are afraid to use food reward training. Phase food out gradually by replacing it with real life rewards. Associate praise and petting with food treats before using praise and petting alone for rewards. Remember that you are giving your dog information about what is good to do and what isn't.
9. Find an alternate behavior. When you want your dog to stop something that you consider naughty or unpleasant, think what you would want him to do instead and train an active, positive behavior in place of the one you don't want. For instance, if your dog mobs visitors when they arrive, you could teach your dog to go get a toy to present to the visitor. This takes the dog away

from the most exciting action and brings him back into it calmer and with something to do. You could add a sit to that presentation to make it special.

10. Training should feel relaxed and fun!

Keep a relaxed, observant attitude when training.

Try for a calm assertive energy on your part

Quit the session when you start to feel cranky or frustrated.

When teaching a behavior, think of the ways you can use it in real life.

Once a new behavior has been accomplished, put it to work your daily routine.

Remember, behavior will always drift to where the reinforcement flows.