

The Top Eight Training Errors

- 1. Starting too late:** Most people start training far too late. After your puppy is three weeks old, the deadlines for learning and socializing are looming.
- 2. Poor timing of rewards and punishments:** A dog must make an association between his actions and the consequences. Use of the “reward marker”, whether it is a clicker or your voice is one of the most important parts of the training process. Training involves a three step process:
 - 1. Get or wait for the behavior to happen,**
 - 2. Mark the event right as it happens.**
 - 3. Reward within 1.5 seconds.**Naming the behavior can wait. Just use this three step process for everything. If you want quiet behavior, notice it, mark it and reward it. It will become more frequent.
- 3. Stinginess with praise:** Pair verbal praise with food and toy rewards and be generous with praise and with food rewards at first. Fade the food rewards as you go and continue to be generous with praise. Make the transition gradual by praising just before you mark and treat.
- 4. Rewarding unwanted behavior:** Dogs often train us without our realizing it. They tighten the leash and we obligingly follow, they scratch on the door and we magically appear to let them out. They jump on us and we touch and talk to them. Any of these can blossom into annoying and sometimes dangerous demands. Every bit of the time you spend with your dog is training time. Be careful to select and reward only those behaviors you want to make strong resilient. Teach your dog the “That’s enough” cue so you can turn behavior off.
- 5. Not letting the dog do the job:** Old fashioned training often involved pushing, pulling and collar corrections to force the dog to do what we wanted. Modern methods recognize that the real power lies in the dog volunteering to do what we want and getting it marked and rewarded. We get the dog’s cooperation this way and learning becomes fun for both the dog and his person.
- 6. Failing to have fun and be fun:** Training should be an enjoyable experience for both you and your dog. Make yourself attractive and exciting so your dog enjoys being with you.
- 7. Training in only one place or at only one time of day:** It’s easy to be relieved once you have your dog trained and under control at home but if you train only in isolation, your dog will only respond to you in those limited situations. If you want your dog to behave everywhere, you have to spend some time training everywhere.
- 8. Forgetting he’s a dog:** Dogs are a lot like us, but not enough that we can expect them to have human morals and motives. They are not devious, spiteful or stubborn but they are opportunistic. If they can have fun or get something by digging, barking, pulling or any of those undesirable behaviors, they will. Educate yourself about how dogs think and learn and you will be way ahead of the game.