



# POSITIVE TRAINING GUIDE

Teaching your dog new things should be fun for you and the dog. If you understand how your dog thinks and learns, you will be able to communicate with him or her. Wouldn't it be nice to have a willing participant rather than confrontation and coercion? Using positive reinforcement is fun in all aspects in your life, whether it's getting your partner to do a chore or having your dog sit for visitors.

1. **Rewarded behaviors will happen again!** This science based principle is a key component of reward-based training. It works on humans and most species on this planet. *Dogs do what works for them.* If your dog receives praise and a treat for sitting, he is more likely to sit the next time you ask. If he knows that jumping on you will earn your attention, he will keep jumping, as attention is rewarding. Say this each day, "rewarded behavior will occur again!" Also know that some behaviors are self-rewarding, like barking or chasing a rabbit, keep on reading for help with these.
2. **Dogs learn by association.** Dogs navigate their lives saying to themselves, "is it good for me, is it bad for me or is it neutral". It's relatively easy to pair a piece of food with an occurrence that is negative for your dog. For example, if your dog is afraid of large dogs, as soon as your dog notices the dog, start delivering tiny, yummy treats while keeping distance from the large dog. It is important that the reward be associated with the scary thing, so timing is of the essence. Yet, punishing your dog for something he might have done minutes or hours prior is pointless. Your dog is not able to associate this punishment with what he did earlier. He now will just realize that you are mad and may cower to you. He also can learn to fear you in certain situations, like when you come home.
3. **It's more effective to reward behaviors that you want, rather than punishing those that you don't.** It's easy to notice what your dog does wrong, but it takes good observation skills to notice your dog getting it right. What if your dog doesn't bark as another dog walks by, Yahoo, reward this good behavior. As your dog is looking at the other dog, put a treat on their nose and say, "good dog". Or maybe you know he is going to bark, so you get ready with your yummy treat and then deliver the treat **before** your dog barks. Do this 20 times and now your dog's association is 1. "Hey, I like other dogs" 2. It's better to look at my human than bark at dogs. When your dog is getting it right most of the time, now you can reward intermittently. **So train yourself, is your dog getting it right, REWARD IT!**
4. **The reward must be something the dog wants/loves.** Offering your dog a large, bland, flour biscuit is like offering you a piece of dried, stale toast for cleaning the bathroom. The most important tip here is to find what makes your dog leap for joy! This might be cheese, meat, bacon or treats that are super yummy. The treats should be tiny, even if you have a 100lb dog. This way you can deliver several, this makes it more fun for the dog and lets you reward a good behavior. Also, a reward might be a toss of the ball, a tug with a toy, sniffing a favorite spot, meeting another dog, petting in his/her favorite spot and sweet talk. It's whatever your dog likes!
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1. **Rewarded behaviors will happen again!** This science based principle is a key component of reward-based training. It works on humans and most species on this planet. *Dogs do what works for them.* If your dog receives praise and a treat for sitting, he is more likely to sit the next time you ask. If he knows that jumping on you will earn your attention, he will keep jumping, as attention is rewarding. Say this each day, "rewarded behavior will occur again!" Also know that some behaviors are self-rewarding, like barking or chasing a rabbit, keep on reading for help with these.
2. **Dogs learn by association.** Dogs navigate their lives saying to themselves, "is it good for me, is it bad for me or is it neutral". It's relatively easy to pair a piece of food with an occurrence that is negative for your dog. For example, if your dog is afraid of large dogs, as soon as your dog notices the dog, start delivering tiny, yummy treats while keeping distance from the large dog. It is important that the reward be associated with the scary thing, so timing is of the essence. Yet, punishing your dog for something he might have done minutes or hours prior is pointless. Your dog is not able to associate this punishment with what he did earlier. He now will just realize that you are mad and may cower to you. He also can learn to fear you in certain situations, like when you come home.
3. **It's more effective to reward behaviors that you want, rather than punishing those that you don't.** It's easy to notice what your dog does wrong, but it takes good observation skills to notice your dog getting it right. What if your dog doesn't bark as another dog walks by, Yahoo, reward this good behavior. As your dog is looking at the other dog, put a treat on their nose and say, "good dog". Or maybe you know he is going to bark, so you get ready with your yummy treat and then deliver the treat **before** your dog barks. Do this 20 times and now your dog's association is 1. "Hey, I like other dogs" 2. It's better to look at my human than bark at dogs. When your dog is getting it right most of the time, now you can reward intermittently. **So train yourself, is your dog getting it right, REWARD IT!**
4. **The reward must be something the dog wants/loves.** Offering your dog a large, bland, flour biscuit is like offering you a piece of dried, stale toast for cleaning the bathroom. The most important tip here is to find what makes your dog leap for joy! This might be cheese, meat, bacon or treats that are super yummy. The treats should be tiny, even if you have a 100lb dog. This way you can deliver several, this makes it more fun for the dog and lets you reward a good behavior. Also, a reward might be a toss of the ball, a tug with a toy, sniffing a favorite spot, meeting another dog, petting in his/her favorite spot and sweet talk. It's whatever your dog likes!
5. **What do you want your dog to do?** So let's say your dog jumps on you and others when he meets/greets. If you train your dog to sit, and he only gets petted/attention when he is sitting, now he won't jump because the sitting is more rewarding. If he barks at people when they walk by, call him to you and have 3 seconds of silence and then deliver treats. When you see a behavior you don't like always stop and think about it "What do I want my dog to do instead of \_\_\_\_\_" It's a fun way to problem solve and train your dog something new.

6. **Go Slow!** When training a down stay, start with 1 second, add another second, then add 3 seconds, then go back to the 1 second stay. Then stop and play with your dog. In the next session, which could be an hour later or the next day, add in seconds, train for 3-4 minutes, and then stop. Tip: If you move around or there are distractions, this is making it much harder. So start in your house and then try it in your yard, then try in a public place. When you change location, make it a shorter time (easier). So for example you got a 20 second stay in your living room, so go to a quiet park and ask for a 3 second stay, reward, try again by adding 2 seconds. Going back and forth from short to long makes it interesting for the dog and also it mixes it up so they can't predict what you are going to do. You will make them think and learn and have fun. If your dog is constantly breaking before you release, ask yourself, are you going too fast?, are there too many distractions, back track and try again.
7. **Rewards can be reduced, but not removed**  
It's best to slowly reduce the number of treats and replace with life rewards, going out the door, praise, games. I am a believer in having treats on you all the time when you are out and about. You don't have to reward every single "good deed" but you definitely want to be ready to reward great behavior, say a really fast recall. This keeps the behaviors you want solid. Always use lots of treats when you are training a new behavior and when you are practicing that new behavior in a whole bunch of different environments or if you are trying to fix a problem. Once you know that your pup can do this behavior anywhere, then eventually, rewards should become fewer and farther in between – but they should not stop altogether. ***You wouldn't want to stop getting paid once you got better at your job, so don't forget to reward at times for job well done!***
8. **Punishment** – may stop the behavior, may interrupt the behavior, but it likely doesn't stop the behavior in the future. Bottom line, it is not that effective. Escalating the punishment from verbal to physical, doesn't work also, the dog will learn to fear you. For example, those that use a spray water bottle to stop their dogs from barking, have to use this method for the rest of the dog's life usually. Rewarding the dog for being quiet will change the association to a positive one and the dog will change his mind about the situation and the problem barking will cease.
9. **Removing the reward** – Sometimes removing the reward can help solve a problem. Timeouts work with children, this is removing free time. Tip: dogs must have the reward or removal immediately before/after the behavior. Let's say your dog has started to bark when you throw the ball. The ball throw is the reward. So as soon as your dog barks, put the ball down and walk away. Try again in 20 seconds. Repeat. When your dog does not bark, throw the ball. Here's another one, your dog goes wild when you come home: You open the door, the dog is vocalizing and jumping, you close the door. Try again, again, again.... When your dog can have 4 feet on the floor, quickly pet him and give him attention while he has all fours on the floor. If your dog barks outside, he should lose his outside privileges, have him go back inside for a few minutes, try again. The message is "you can be outside if you are quiet". This can be an effective method in extinguishing behaviors that are undesirable.
10. **Incorporate training in your daily life.** Ask your dog for a wait at the door; don't open the door until your dog pauses. Add a few seconds each day/week. This is something that happens each day and so very useful for you. How about a wait for the dinner bowl also? You can practice having your dog come to you on your daily walks, on leash or off. Call him to you, reward immediately, have him sit, reward again, then say "go play". This will become a fun game to your dog and his recall skills will improve daily.
11. **And last but not least... Management!** Sometimes we haven't trained a behavior yet or it's not reliable enough, so we use management like a leash. Or we tether the dog outside or use a fenced in yard. Management will always be part of the equation with our dogs and don't be afraid to sue them. Sometimes just closing the blinds on a window can remove the stimulus so your dog doesn't bark.