

Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary

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www.OurCompanions.org

Training Manual

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Positive Reinforcement What is It?

The dolphin gets a fish for doing a trick. The worker gets a paycheck for working. The dog gets a piece of chicken for returning when called. The cat gets comfort for sleeping on the bed. The child gets dessert for eating her vegetables.

A *primary* positive reinforcer is something that the animal does not have to learn to like. It comes naturally they include food, often include the chance to mate, the chance to engage in instinctive behaviors i.e. chasing prey, and for social animals, the chance to interact with others.

A *secondary* positive reinforcer is something that the animal has to learn to like. The learning can be accomplished through Classical Conditioning. A paycheck is an example of a secondary reinforcer for people.

Animal trainers will often create a special secondary reinforcer they call a *bridge*. A bridge is a stimulus that has been associated with a primary reinforcer (food) through Classical Conditioning. You can classically condition a clicker by clicking it and delivering some desirable treat, many times in a row. Animals that have learned a bridge react to it almost as they would to the reward that follows. More about the use of a bridge later...

Advantages to using Positive Reinforcement:

- Positive reinforcement is at the core of learning since it **teaches dogs how to win** i.e. what behaviors will be rewarding.
- Positive Reinforcement **builds passive control in a headstrong dog**, by motivating him to cooperate, even off-leash. This is a wonderful training technique for high energy and high drive dogs.
- Positive reinforcement training **builds confidence** in a shy or fearful dog.
- Clicker-type Positive Reinforcement training **increases a dog's problem solving ability**.

Training Tips

- The more time you put in, the more success you'll enjoy, but at the same time, keep training sessions short 15 minute sessions two or three times a day.
- End on a high note EVERYTIME!
- Use a normal, even quiet voice when training. Your communication should be positive.
- Don't get frustrated—we hear a lot of folks saying “my dog is stubborn, out of control, and driving me crazy!” Try to reframe your view of your dog. Say to yourself: “My dog is determined, energetic, and full of personality.” Take advantage of these drives during training and teach your dog how to win the rewards he or she wants!
- Say your commands once.
- In time you will become very attuned to your dog and vice, versa, and your bond will grow and develop in ways you never imagined!
- Be generous with your food rewards. However make sure your treats are small in size (a little goes a long way.) More about tempting treats later.
- Be PATIENT, CREATIVE and KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR!

Getting Started

1. First, you need to introduce a bridge word. Decide on a simple word or sound you will use to tell your dog she is correct and the reward is coming.
2. Pick a place with no distractions and say your bridge word or sound. Immediately give the dog the treat, Repeat this 10 to 20 times until she is looking at you in anticipation every time she hears the bridge.
3. Examples of bridge words are “Yes”, “Yeah” and “Bravo.”
4. An excellent time to teach this is when you are hand feeding her meal.
5. You will now use your bridge at the second she does something correctly. Remember, GOOD TRAINERS are quick!

Training Treats

What does YOUR dog find reinforcing? Dogs are all individuals, with their own unique preferences. What one dog finds rewarding can be boring to another. So what kind of training rewards should you use? Sometimes the difference between a brilliant obedience pupil and a dog who completely ignores you is just a matter of discovering which treats YOUR dog finds rewarding.

In general soft treats are best ~ something the dog can swallow without taking his attention off of you. Most dogs have to drop their heads in order to chew hard treats like biscuits and leave behind crumbs that they are eager to clean up. Soft treats manufactured for dogs often contain large amounts of chemicals, dyes, sugar and salt-staying away from commercial dog treats is an excellent idea.

Try some of these tested favorites ~ but remember, just because you think it sounds good doesn't mean your dog will love it ~ trying each of the following will let you know which items your dog finds really rewarding, and which are only so-so.

Ideas for training treats:

- Bacon
- String Cheese, cheddar cheese cubes, Swiss cheese
- Steak* (broil until medium-well, cut into bite-size pieces)
- Cheese Tortellini (use raw or boil)
- Oinker roll/Rollover
- Beef Heart/Liver*
- Chicken gizzards/livers/hearts*
- Hard-boiled Eggs (Peel first!)
- Roast Beef, Bologna, chicken Breast (have the deli clerk slice you a 1" thick piece that you can cut into chunks)
- Peanut Butter Sandwiches

*note - because you will be carrying treats in your pockets and handling them frequently, you should make sure that all meat items are properly cooked and safe for human consumption.

* Doesn't matter is you are training a Great Dane or a Chihuahua remember use small pieces of food no bigger than a dime.

GOOD TRAINERS ARE GOOD AT REINFORCING

They are:

1. **QUICK:** Precise timing is the key to successful training.
 2. **GENEROUS:** They use lots of reinforcements.
 3. **UNPREDICTABLE:** They vary when, how much and how they reinforce.
 4. **VARIABLE:** They use many different reinforcements.
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1. Make sure to reinforce behaviors that you like and want to increase.
 2. Make sure your dog loves the type of reinforcement that you are using.
 3. Keep your sessions short and interesting. Always end on a positive note!
 4. Use a bridge ~ a word or sound that means "You're Right!" ~ at the second your dog does what you want. Yes! or a clicker are examples of good bridges.
 5. Use a lure ~ it allows you to show your dog what to do without physically touching, forcing or using the leash to push or pull him into position.
 6. Make sure to phase out the lure as soon as possible.
 7. Train your dog to target to your left hand...more about that later!
 8. Decide on a release word. Examples of release words are "Okay", "Yeah", "Break" to signal that the dog allowed to move from the position or activity in which he was engaged.

A Word on Your Voice

The **tone of your voice** is very important.

Women have an easier time reaching the high pitched, soft, falsetto tone used to let the dog know he did something good the "Good Dog" tone..

Men have an easier time with the "Command" tone - the one that is neither good nor bad, but has a firm (usually lower) tone. Many people have a difficult time getting their dogs to obey their "Command" tone of voice. Often it is because they "tell" their dogs in the form of a question: "staaaaayyyy?" - with a voice raising at the end of the command.

Remember, commands must be firm, short, and to the point, with the tone going down at the end, never letting the word drag on.

Attention Games

1. Watch your dog over the next week. Whenever you notice him giving you quiet attention, reinforce him calmly with your attention, a touch, praise, part of his meal or a toy. Completely ignore any pushy or rude attention.
2. When you are in a quiet area call your dog's name one time only, clearly, using a quiet voice. When he looks at you, instantly praise while he continues to look. (This is a great time to incorporate your bridge word.) Reward with tiny pieces of a treat, part of his meal or favorite toys. Repeat this at least five or six times a day.
3. If your dog jumps up on you, immediately lose interest in him. Turn your back and withhold reward. The instant his feet are back on the ground, continue your verbal praise and reward him.
4. In the beginning you can use a treat as a lure to help your dog look at you. Hold the treat up near your eyes or place the treat between your teeth to help him look up. Reward short positive eye contact. Do not force eye contact on your dog, but praise natural gentle glances.
5. As soon as your dog begins to understand the game, keep rewards hidden in your pocket. Produce the reward as soon as he comes and looks at you. Vary your rewards...sometimes food, sometimes toys, sometimes games, sometimes rubs. Be as variable as you can be. Keep your dog guessing what type of reward he will receive.
6. If he doesn't look at you when he hears his name, try hiding on him or try getting out his favorite toy and throwing it in the air. Ignore him if he tries to join in the game.
7. Begin training in the kitchen gradually move to other locations in the house and then head outside to introduce more distractions.
8. You should begin to see a substantial increase in your dog's attentive behavior, especially when he hears his name. If you do not see improvement, make sure that you are not using his name to scold him or using his name excessively similar to nagging him.

The lure

How to Use it and Lose it!

1. Put a treat in your hand so that your dog can see it. Use your hand to lure your dog into the position you want. When he is in the correct position, immediately use your bridge and then give him the treat.
2. When he is reliably performing the behavior you want, continue to use the lure, but no longer give it to him. Use your bridge word, surprise him and have the treat come from somewhere new...treat him from your other hand, from your pocket, from another family member, from a counter top, or from a cabinet. Start varying the types and the amount of reward you are using. Sometimes food, sometimes a toy or a game, sometimes access to outside or to the car...sometimes a small reward and sometimes a big one. Remember, GOOD TRAINERS are quick, unpredictable, variable and generous too!
3. Now, use your lure hand with no food in it to lure your dog into position. This hand motion will become your signal to get the behavior. If he performs the behavior, use your bridge word and give him a special reward and be very generous. If he doesn't respond, drop your hand to your side, wait a few moments. If he still doesn't respond, ignore him for a little bit and then try again. Do not punish or correct the dog if she doesn't respond the way you would like. Be patient.

DROP IT, OUT OR GIVE

“Drop it”, “Out”, or “Give” is another extremely important command. Just imagine your puppy or adult dog sneaking away with one of your slippers in his mouth! You calmly say “Drop It” and he releases the item on command.

Buy a few new toys, or use a toy he is fond of but not CRAZY over. Kongs or tennis balls may work well to start. Do not try this first with high value items i.e. bones or pigs ears.

1. Choose a good size room in your house where you can close the door to make sure FIDO can't run off on you with the toys. Have your treats ready.
2. Begin to play with the toys tossing them to get his attention, make sure to use more than one toy.
3. When he has a toy in his mouth offer him a treat (show him the treat as to offer a trade), when he drops the toy, immediately use your bridge word and reward. He may pick up the toy again and start playing – that is fine. Practice this three times a day for a week.
4. This time make sure you have another toy ready in your hand. Repeat step 3, offer him the treat, when he drops the toy, immediately use your bridge word, reward and toss the other toy.

5. When he is reliably dropping the toy you can add the command "Drop It".
6. Once he is reliably dropping on command you can also try including this in your game of Fetch. Allow him to bring the retrieved toy back, show him the toy in your hand. As he releases the toy from his mouth, say "Drop It" and throw the other toy for him ~ this is his reward for the give. Always try to refrain from grabbing at the toy he has dropped. Always have another toy handy to toss.
7. In a few weeks you will be able to give the command and he will automatically drop the item in his mouth. Be variable with your rewards, use food, praise or toss another toy.

Leave it

The world is full of interesting things to capture your dog's attention. Some of it could get him into trouble. You do not want him eating a piece of rotten food from the ground on your daily walk, or sniffing an unfriendly dog, or eating a piece of candy your child has dropped. Teaching a "leave it" is the same as teaching your toddler "don't touch". It could save your child from an accident or injury and the same goes for your dog.

1. Let the dog see you drop several treats- This one is easier to do kneeling down next to the dog.
2. If he heads for the treats quickly cover them with your hands.
3. When he looks away from the treat use your bridge word and give him the treat. Continue with all the treats.
4. Repeat the above and this time wait until he makes eye contact with you use your bridge word and treat.
5. You can take this opportunity to say "Good Leave it" to communicate what he did was done correctly.

After a few days of practice try the exercise in your home with some planted or thrown food. Have him on a leash and when he locks onto his target stand firm. Wait until he makes the choice to look at you and turn away from the food. When he does bridge and reward him. Once he has a clear understanding of the exercise you can name the behavior. "Leave it" or what ever you choose.

Another variation: (You will need another family member to play along)

Show the dog that there is food on the floor next to your helper. Walk the dog past the food and if he tries to snatch it, the helper will quickly cover and hide the food with his hands, foot, or bowl. No matter what the dog tries, he is thwarted from getting the food himself. When he chooses to leave it and turn his attention to you, use your bridge and reward generously.

RECALL

All of us want a dog that always comes when called. It is one of the most important commands to teach your dog. Having a dog that reliably comes when called could actually save your dog's life. Unfortunately dogs are not born knowing how to come when called. The good news is that there is an effective, easy way to teach your dog to drop everything and come immediately no matter what.

ARE YOU READY TO BEGIN?

When you were playing the name game with your dog (having him look at you when you say his name) you were laying the foundations for the recall. When you are in your house, if your dog is looking at you and coming to find you when he hears his name, you are not only ready to begin, on your way to a reliable recall. If your dog is not responding reliably to his name, practice the name game & attention game for a week before beginning the recall.

LET'S GET STARTED!

1. Many of you may have already taught your dog a recall that goes like this: You call your dog and he comes to you but on the way stops to smell the roses. He gets there but in no hurry. If your dog knows that recall, keep it and use it when you don't care how quickly your dog comes to you.
2. Decide on a new signal for the recall. It should be clear, carry a long distance and not be used for anything else. Start the signal with your dog's name. "FIDO COME NOW, FIDO COOKIE" are examples of possible recall signals.
3. Your recall signal should be unique. For the next two weeks use it only two times a day and only when the following conditions are met.
 - a. You are 100% certain that your dog will come to you. He can already be coming to you when you call or he can be very close to you, just be certain that he will come to you. Try this in areas with no distractions.
 - b. You are prepared to reward him like he just did **ABOSLUTLEY FABULOUS**. Reward with treats, praise, rubs, dinner, car rides, toys, games.... anything your dog loves...use your imagination! Make the reward **BIG, UNFORGETTAGE, and SPECIAL**.
 - c. Say your signal **ONE TIME ONLY**. As he turns towards you or starts toward you immediately reinforce with your bridge. Praise him as he comes towards you being careful not to repeat your signal.
5. When your dog comes to you, begin to reward him when he is in front of you close enough that you don't have to reach for him. Prolong your reward so he will be in no hurry to leave you. Handle his collar while you continue to reward him. Before he loses interest in being with you, stop reinforcing, release him and tell him to go play.

6. Reward your dog whenever he comes to you, no matter which signal you use. Always reward him when he checks in with you during the day. Remember to never call him to you for anything that he considers unpleasant. Go and get him instead.

7. Play lots of recall games at home. Use your imagination and have fun!

8. Remember, use the recall two times a day for two weeks when you know he will come and you are prepared for huge rewards. You will have a dog that always comes to you when called!

sit

Hold a soft treat in your fingers and lure your dog into a sit by slowly moving the treat over the dog's head until he sits. As he sits use your bridge and reward him. Before he gets up give your release word.

2. When he is sitting quickly, continue to have food in your lure hand, but when he sits don't give it to him. Use your bridge, but reinforce with a rub. You are beginning variable reinforcement. Give him a treat from your other hand, throw a ball, release and let him go out...use your imagination.

3. Now lure him into a sit with no treat in your hand. This is now your sit signal. If he sits, bridge and give him a BIG reward. If he doesn't sit, ignore him. Wait a little bit and try again. Wait quietly a little while after giving your signal. Give him time to make a right choice. Make sure that your reward is noticeably better than when you use a lure.

4. When your dog is responding consistently to your hand signal you can add a verbal signal. Say, "SIT", hesitate a second and give your hand signal. Gradually hesitate a little longer between signals. Soon your dog will start responding to your verbal signal. Now you can use either signal when you want your dog to sit.

5. By using your release consistently before your dog moves from the sit, you are actually beginning to teach stay! Watch your dog closely and try to anticipate when he is going to break position. Continue to keep your dog sitting for longer periods by reinforcing while the dog remains sitting.

6. Encourage your dog to tolerate and enjoy hugs and pats while he is sitting. Use lots of reinforcement to reward his successes. If he tries to get up, use your hands to help him remain sitting. Stop reinforcing until he is sitting willingly. Remember to release and briefly ignore after every sit.

7. You can practice many times a day, but keep your sessions short.

THE SIT...STAY...FOR CONTROL

STAY MEANS: "DON'T MOVE FROM POSITION UNTIL I COME BACK AND RELEASE YOU."

If you have consistently used your release to signal your dog that he may get up, he is already learning to stay.

1. Signal your dog to sit on your left side. Hold your dog's collar in your left hand.
2. At this time lean down yourself, kneel or have someone help you and place four small treats two feet or so in front of your dog. When he attempts to get up and get the treats gently put him back in position until he stops trying to get up. This may take a while the first time. Be patient. Let him figure it out.
3. When he sits for a few seconds without trying to get up, reach for one of the treats with your right hand. If your dog remains in position, quickly use your bridge and pick up a treat and give it to him, praising softly. Help him stay in position with your left hand. As long as he stays in position, repeat this until the treats are gone. Give your release.
4. If your dog struggles or attempts to get up when you pick up the treat, immediately drop the treat back on the floor. Quietly reposition him until he is sitting on his own again. When he is again sitting on his own, continue step 3.
5. When you have delivered all the treats from the floor, continue to praise and rub for a few more seconds. Give your release. When he gets up, ignore him...make sure to only reward on the stay not the release.

Down...down stay

Down...Stay...is the most useful control exercise that we teach. Dogs can and do spend long periods of time lying down anyway, so it is the exercise we use when we need control over a long period of time.

1. Select some treats that your dog really likes and put them in your right hand. Kneel beside your dog with him on your left. This can be taught with your dog in a sitting position or standing position.

2. Show your dog the treats in your right hand. Bring the treats up to his nose but don't let him have them. Bring your hand slowly down to the floor a couple inches in front of your dog's feet.

3. DON'T SAY ANYTHING! JUST WAIT...he can sniff and lick your hand but don't let him have the treat.

4. It may take a bit of time but he will lay down to get at the treat in your hand. When he does...open your hand immediately...give him the treats and praise enthusiastically!!!

5. Before he gets up on his own, give him the release signal. Repeat a few times until he gets the idea. Remember to say nothing until he is lying down.

7. Work to keep your dog lying down for longer periods of time. Praise him quietly for staying down, give him small pieces of treat, pat him in his favorite spots. If he insists on getting up, release him...and ignore him.

8. When he is going down dependably, no longer put the food in your right hand. Continue to use your right hand to signal him to lie down, but give him his reward after he is down. Remember to be variable with your reinforcement...sometimes a bunch of treats, sometimes a good ear rub, sometimes lots of praise and a treat...keep him guessing!

9. When he is going down dependably you may add a verbal signal...Spot...Down...or whatever you wish. Give the verbal signal first and then the hand signal..

Loose leash walking

Lots of owners are being dragged & pulled while walking their dogs. Not so enjoyable is it! Why do they do this? First of all, dogs do it because it WORKS. Also, dogs have a very strong urge to resist pressure. When they feel the pressure on their necks, they can't help but pull against it. That's why sled dogs have so much fun! So, how do you get the dog to stop pulling?

DOGS AND OWNERS BOTH NEED TO LEARN THAT THE LEASH IS ALWAYS LOOSE AND PULLING WILL GET YOU NOWHERE!

The leash is your connection to one another and allows you to go out in public together. Whether you are out for a walk or just standing still, neither you nor your dog should be pulling on the leash. Your leash is a training aid and a piece of safety equipment. To be an effective training aid, it should never be tight and should be used as little as possible.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS: The first thing you want to do is EXERCISE him. Start off with 40 minutes of fetch and a game of Frisbee.

1. Prepare your dog to go for a walk. Put on his leash. If you want him to walk on your left side, put the leash in your right hand. Leave your left hand free to reinforce him.
2. If he starts pulling, stop at this point and turn into a statue. Wait as long as it takes for him to settle. It's best to be patient and wait for him to turn on his own, but if he's taking forever, say his name (if you've been doing your attention work he'll turn around for that). Praise & continue walking forward.
3. If he starts to pull ahead without you, or becomes distracted by something in his environment ask for moving attention. Back up briskly. When he is following you attentively, reinforce him and begin moving forward.
4. Reinforce attention and all attempts he makes to keep the leash loose. Be generous!
5. If he charges out to the end of the leash, stop and turn into a statue. Repeat step 2 above.
6. When he is attentive again, repeat step 3. Continue this procedure for the remainder of your walk. You make no forward progress if the leash is tight. When the leash is loose, you reward your dog by continuing the walk and giving him praise, treats and pats.

Some dogs get the concept quickly, others have the pulling habit ingrained so well they have a more difficult time. They are not stubborn, just well trained pullers!! Eventually, though, your dog will figure out that pulling no longer gets him where he wants to go. Now, to get there he must *not* pull.

In closing...

The relationship between you and your canine companion has the potential to be one of the most loving and rewarding relationships in your life.

Just remember the keys to good training: patience, consistency and generous rewards. Every effort you put forth in training and understanding your dog will be returned to you again and again.

Thank you for adopting your friend. Please contact us at Our Companions if you ever need further advice or assistance.

Credits

Our Companions Training Guide was created through the contributions of several volunteer trainers . Some content was reproduced from:

- Operant and Classical Conditioning: Stacy Braslau-Schneck & Tails-U-Win! Training Center: Leslie Nelson