



Resources for Pet Owners



Tips for Successful Training

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1. **Don't think of dog behaviors as "good" and "bad"** – those words carry too many human moral implications which have no place nor meaning in a dog's existence. Instead, think of their behaviors in terms of **desirable and undesirable**. Many dogs love to jump up on people. This is a natural expression of affection for the dog and not a "bad dog thing". It is, however, undesirable in many human situations. The dog did not do a "bad". He simply did something we find undesirable. By thinking in this way, we can avoid becoming angry at the dog and quite possibly making him afraid and distrustful of us. Instead of punishing the dog, we teach him an alternative behavior such as "SIT" (desirable). If he's sitting, he can't be jumping! Your most important asset in training your dog is **PATIENCE**. When you get mad or lose your temper, you both lose. Period.
2. Set your dog up for success! Manage his environment so he can't make mistakes. When training, keep your criteria low enough that the dog can usually be successful. **Always Give Your Dog 100% of Your Attention When Training**. If you are paying close attention to the dog, you will develop the insight necessary to correctly time your praise and rewards (or corrections) to reinforce the behaviors you desire.
3. Begin with a high rate of reinforcement. Your dog won't be spoiled, he will be eager to work because it's fun. **Use really good treats**. Keep treats stashed in bowls out of the dog's reach all over the house. That way you can reinforce desirable behaviors anytime. **Instant praise**, followed by rewards help him learn and keep him interested and motivated! You can go to random rewards later when he understands the exercise thoroughly.
4. Train many exercises off-leash whenever it is safely possible and practical. Remember, the leash is a tether for safety – it's not necessarily a training tool.
5. Divide your dog's food into tiny portions and have him work for it throughout the day. Several short training sessions will accomplish more than a single long one. Watch you dog and you will soon be able to tell when he begins to lose interest. End the session with a short game before he gets bored. Repetition is necessary for learning to occur, but too much repetition at one time kills enthusiasm and actually inhibits learning.
6. As your dog learns a behavior, change the picture a little bit every time you ask for that behavior. Change you position. Change locations. The only thing that should be consistent is the cue. This will help him learn to perform the correct behavior regardless of location or distraction. Don't push him too fast. If you have a problem, back up to his "comfort zone" and advance more slowly. **Above all, BE PATIENT.**
7. **PRAISE every reasonably decent exercise**, but begin to randomize your rewards (every 2nd – 3rd exercise, etc.) so that the dog is never quite sure when he will be rewarded. Focus your attention on him and **Reward His Better Performances**. You are now beginning to fine-tune your dog's performance while developing his gambler's instinct. The dog is learning that **PRAISE** (you did good!) is instantly forthcoming, while the treat is not always available or may be delayed. He is never quite sure which performance will produce the reward so he tries harder. After several weeks of training

with treats immediately available on your person, begin to leave them on a table. It's okay to delay delivery of the treat for a moment while you walk to a bowl. Continue randomizing rewards by treating only his better performances.

8. Reinforcing desirable behavior is like putting money in the bank. It earns dividends by strengthening the bond with your dog. The more \$\$\$ in the account, the more you can draw on it later when you need it. Punishment, even if effective, removes money from the account and weakens the relationship.

9. Ignore undesirable behavior as much as possible. If you do need to use a correction, evaluate its effect. Did the undesirable behavior not only stop temporarily, but happen less frequently? If not, it wasn't a correction – it was just abuse.