Dog Training 101

What is reward based training and why do we support it?

Animals will repeat behaviors that are reinforced (Including humans).

The more you like what your dog is doing, the more you reward them for it. The more they are rewarded, the more they repeat the action.

The great thing about this is that you can train from your couch: Catch your dog doing something right and reward! Example: Is your dog lying nicely on their bed while company came over? Be sure to reward that. The next time someone comes over, there is a better chance that the dog will offer the same calm behavior. Using rewards does not mean that you are spoiling the dog, it means that you are communicating in a clear, non-aversive way. Think of it as a paycheck with an occasional bonus for a job well done. It is also low stress training. If we used physical or verbal corrections, it does not strengthen the bonding process. This training is great for pets of any age, it is never too late to start.

How do I motivate my pet?

 Common rewards are: food, play, toys, attention and more. Make a list of what your dog loves the most and use that to your advantage! Food is one of the most common rewards because it is easy to access and distribute, but here are some nonconventional rewards:

Do you have a dog who loves to sniff while on a walk? Let them track a scent as a reward!
 How about a ball obsessed dog? If your dog sits politely, play a quick game of fetch!
How about a dog who loves attention but jumps all over you? Only give the dog affection when they are calm.

This type of training is fun, easy and safe. Consistent and kind can produce amazing results and can build a better relationship with your pet!

Now let's move on to how to teach some basic cues!

SIT

Use a treat at the dog's nose to lure the head up and back. Keep food lure close to nose and the dog's head goes up and back, the butt goes down. As soon as the dog's butt hits the floor, mark the behavior ("Yes!") and reward.

Your dog can sit before leashing up and before going outside. Sit is one of the first things that we recommend teaching your dog. Why? A dog cannot pull on leash , lunge, jump up, and more if they are in a "sit". This makes "sit" a very important cue, since it prevents so many unwanted behaviors!

DOWN

Begin with your dog in the sit position.

Put a treat to the dog's nose, with your palm facing down, and slowly lure him down with the treat. The treat should be in front of his nose, moving straight down towards his front paws.

Once his head is at his feet, slowly move the treat in front of him towards you. Some dogs may need to have the treat brought down in front of them and then around towards their shoulder, making a C curve. The turning of the head is sometimes the trick to getting the dog into the down position.

As soon as the dog is down, say "Yes!" and treat.

STAY

Distractions will be added a little at a time, this sets your dog up to succeed! Never try too many distractions at once. So if you are working on teaching the dog to hold the "stay" for a longer than normal time (2 minutes instead of 30 seconds) do not add a distraction such as running past the dog at the same time. Instead teach each, one at a time. Start with your dog in a sit or a down. Palm out (like a stop sign), tell your dog to "Stay" Below is an example of how to begin teaching a Stay:

Sit for 5 seconds

Sit for 10 seconds

Sit while you take 2 steps back and return

Sit for 10 seconds

Sit while you take 1 step to the right and return

Sit while you take 2 steps back and return

Sit while you take 2 steps to the left and return

Sit for 15 seconds

Sit while you take 3 steps back and return

Sit while you clap your hands softly once

Sit while you count out loud to 20

Sit while you take 3 steps to the right and return

Sit while you clap your hands softly twice
Sit for 5 seconds
Sit while you take 1 step back and return
Sit for 10 seconds

Polite Greetings (not jumping on people)

A common training problem that people typically face is that many dogs try to jump up when greeting people. Many times, dogs receive attention for jumping up. Even if the dog is told "No!" or is pushed off, it is still receiving attention. If your dog jumps, simply have the person back up. The lack of attention is a better way to teach your dog than an aversive method will.

Use consistency to get good results. Stick with "Four on the floor". (All four feet should be on the floor when greeting anyone.)

- Have another human help you. Wait for your dog to make eye contact. As soon as your dog looks at you, say "Yes!" then reward. Repeat.
- Next, allow the person to approach your dog if all of your dog's paws remain on the floor. Keep the leash loose and have the person put their hand out and low. If, at any time, your dog does not have four paws on the ground, have the person back up. When the dog's nose touches the hand, say "YES!" Since your dog has gotten used to hearing this word for checking in, they probably will turn to you for a treat. Reward your dog and have the person walk away. Eventually, the reward will not be food, but having the dog interact with the person.
- Wait for your dog to sit or a down instead when the person approaches.

As your dog gets better at this exercise: Practice in many locations, with many people. Take it off leash (in a contained area). Increase how long a person is interacting with the dog.

If you have a multi-dog household, it can be helpful to train one dog at a time. The excitement of a new guest can cause even well behaved dogs to act out.

If your dog has a mat or bed that they go to, you can teach the dog to go to their mat or bed after greeting. Some dogs even learn to retreat to their area as soon as they hear a door knock. When they go to their bed or mat, you can reward them with a favorite toy or treat.

Some dogs offer better greeting styles if they already have something in their mouths, such as a favorite rope toy, a ball or a stuffed toy.

Loose Leash Walking

Start in a location with minimal distractions, such as back yard or living room. Before taking a walk, it can be very helpful to exercise your dog before for a bit. Keep in mind that your dog is learning a brand new behavior. Be patient and do not get frustrated. Thus far, they have had a lot more practice offering behaviors on a walk that we don't care for, so it may take a time to learn what us humans expect from our dogs!

Getting started:
- A 3-6 ft leash. Preferably a sturdy nylon or leather. Chain leashes can snap or hurt us humans and retractable leashes are not ideal for teaching loose leash walking. This is because retractable leashes work on tension and make it difficult to maintain control.
- A properly fitted collar and/or training aid. Recommended collars are: flat buckle, no slide, or martingale. Recommended training tools: Easy Walk Harness or Gentle Leader Head Collar.
- Food reward.

Begin the walk by asking for a sit. Reward your dog and then as soon as you start moving reward. Catch your dog walking nicely and reward frequently BEFORE they pull! When you begin, you should be rewarding at least 6 times per minute, using your voice "Yes" followed by the food reward. As your dog gets better at walking nicely, you will reward less frequently but still remember verbal praise! If your dog pulls, simply stop moving, and do not tug back on the leash. Tugging on the leash will only encourage pulling. The moment your dog stops pulling, say "This way!" and start moving in the opposite direction. Repeat any and every time your dog does this. You may only go two steps at a time, but soon your dog will learn that any time he or she pulls, the walk is put on hold and then reversed. Adding sits every few feet helps with leash walking.

Recall

A good recall is an important obedience skill that, at some time, may be crucial for your dog's safety.

Common issues:
- Expecting too much, too fast.
- Punishing your dog or ending the fun once he or she comes back to you. Would you return if every time you were called back, the fun ended or you were punished? For example- Your dog is playing with another dog. When the dog is called to come, the dog is put on leash and is put inside. Not very motivating! A better solution? Frequently interrupting play, to receive a reward and then sending your dog off to play again.

- Making a recall a game of "Catch me if you can!" - if your dog learns that when he or she does not come back to you, it will result in a game of you chasing him or her.
- Being less exciting than whatever is going on around the dog. Calling your dog in a monotonous or stern voice while standing still is not going to entice your dog to come back to you. Instead, act and sound like you are having a blast!!!

Start in a location with minimal distractions. This could be your fenced yard, inside your home, or anywhere else your dog is comfortable. Have the toy or treats hidden from view. This is so these items will be a surprise reward, instead of a bribe to lure your dog close to you. A long lead can be used to maintain control of your dog until their recall is strong. Allow your dog to wander off. Call your dog in a very happy, excited voice- "PETEY!!!!!!! COME!!!!!!!!" You may need to move backwards and crouch low to the ground.

When the dog returns to you, say "Yes!!", then pull out the toy and initiate play or if you are using treats, begin continuously feeding.

After about 20 seconds are up, stop rewarding. Repeat this several times and then add more distance. As your dog responds and has a pretty reliable recall without distractions, you can add distractions. Examples: a ball rolling across the room, a different environment, or anything that may take attention away from you.

The more you practice, the more distractions and distance you should be able to add. If they are doing well and you are in a safe, contained area, you can remove the long leash.

Why does this method work so well? Your dog is having fun, they are learning that the fun does not end when they come back to you, and it is building a solid foundation of training.

Leave It!

Teaching your dog to leave an object can be important to your dog's safety. Imagine if you dropped medications on the ground, or were on a walk and passed by garbage on the ground. Teaching a dog to leave something alone is extremely useful in the real world.

Do not yank or pull on your dog's leash. If your dog depends on a correction to leave an object alone, has the dog truly learned what you want him or her to do? What will happen if your dog is off leash? Chances are slim that they will listen to you.

This exercise will teach your dog 2 things: To choose to leave something alone AND check in with you willingly.

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Getting started:
- With your dog on loose lead, drop a piece of kibble and quickly cover it up with your shoe. In a firm voice say" LEAVE IT!"
- AS SOON as your dog moves away from your shoe (stops sniffing or pawing at it), say "Yes!!"Then reward from your hand.
- Repeat this until your dog is no longer going towards the shoe, and is waiting patiently for the treat from your hand.
- Now try leaving the kibble uncovered by your shoe. As soon as your dog goes for the kibble, say "Leave it". If dog leaves it alone, say "Yes! "Immediately and reward. If your dog still tries to go for the kibble, simply cover with your shoe and start with step one again.

Once you get to the point where you are able to drop the kibble on the ground and are able to say "Leave It!" without covering the kibble with your shoe, challenge your dog. Some options:
- Drop more than one piece of kibble or drop a more exciting treat
- Walk by food on the ground in a pile on loose leash (you may need a second person to cover this pile with their shoe if needed)
- Begin at step one in as many locations as possible, indoors and outdoors
- Try the exercise but replace the treat on the ground with a toy