

PROPER PAWS DOG TRAINING

# PLAY AND TRAIN

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## Housetraining and Crate Training

While housetraining a dog is a relatively simple concept, it can be quite challenging. The key to successfully house-training your pup is consistency, and following two basic concepts 1) if a behavior is reinforced it will repeat 2) if a behavior is prevented (soiling the house) it will go away.

Begin with the pup in one smallish, puppy proofed room, or even restricted in part of one room. The room should be central to the activity in the house and contain the dog's crate as well as easy access to the outdoors, but also allow the pup to have a quiet corner to retreat to for resting. Baby gates and lattice (for larger openings) work well to contain puppies while allowing people in and out. For larger open floor plan areas the use of exercise pens to provide a puppy area can also work. Tethers are also a great tool for open concept floor plans or when you are busy and need to do more than watch the new puppy all day!

### Three Basic Rules of House Training

- The dog is outside while you are actively watching him and reinforcing any pees or poops right as the deed is finished.
- The dog is inside under CONSTANT, ACTIVE supervision.
  - or
- The dog is tethered to you, crated or gated off in a small, puppy proof area.

### Four Steps for Successful Housetraining

1. Create a schedule
2. Prevent accidents
3. **Reinforce for correct action i.e. every time your dog goes to the bathroom outside, click and reinforce with your dog's favorite treat as soon as the deed is done.**
4. Progress slowly

### Create Schedule

Create a schedule that includes the times for feeding, water, crate and playtime. Knowing when the food and water goes into your puppy will result in predictable needs and therefore reduced accidents. Remember, if the puppy has an accident it is not because they are bad, it is because you were not paying attention! Most puppies can be put on a schedule that allows them bathroom breaks every 1-2 hours to start, if they are using a crate. A puppy that is out of his crate and active may need potty breaks as frequent as every ½ hour. A general rule of thumb is

that a dog can comfortably 'hold it' during the day for 1 plus the number of months old they are, so a 2 month old dog should be able to go 3 hours between breaks **when crated**. This is a maximum number and should not be the norm. The exception to this is at night, even an 8-9 week old puppy can generally make it through 6-8 hours at night without a break. *Smaller dogs may need more frequent breaks.*

The schedule you put together will depend on your needs as well as your dogs, but you should consider the following things. A young puppy should not be left in the crate more than a couple of hours at a time during the day, followed by an hour or two of well supervised play time. As with young children, puppies do need lots of sleep, schedule those naps to occur while the dog is in the crate. Early evening is a time of much activity in most households with dinner prep, homework, and other activities, consider scheduling your pup for crate time during this evening rush time to avoid accidents and reduce unsupervised interactions with children.

### **Prevent accidents**

Unless you are with your dog 100% of the time he/she should be confined in a "den like" area or his crate. Anticipate your dog's needs and take frequent breaks until your dog develops a routine. When accidents do happen, put the dog away and clean it up with enzymatic cleaner. No punishment, no hoopla.

### **Positively Reinforce the behavior you want**

Have a pocket full of GREAT treats ready at all times and be ready to deliver – right AFTER the deed is done! Timing matters. If you start to praise/reinforce the dog as he begins to eliminate the pup may not finish his business, so hold your praise until he's all done! If you don't deliver on the reinforcement until after the dog comes in the house it's too late! Reinforcement means food! Happy words are great but most dogs are not reinforced with happy noises (yes they get excited but not necessarily reinforced), food is a primary reinforcer and is something that the dog will work for.

### **Progress Slowly**

Once the dog is reliable in one room for 2-3 months, you can expand his indoor area one room at a time. Go SLOWLY. Be sure to be present in the new room 100% of the time during its introduction, use the same rules in each new room as you did at the beginning of the process.

### **Other Hints**

If you have an older dog or your previously well behaved puppy suddenly starts having accident, make sure there aren't any underlying medical issues such as urinary tract infections which can be a cause of housetraining regression. Schedules help, keeping feedings and playtime on a tight schedule will help to reduce accidents and create more positive opportunities.

Training your dog in every room of the house gives the dog supervised practice being in the rooms they are eventually going to have free access to. This makes housetraining those rooms easier.

Reading your dog's signals, all may be indicators that your dog needs to eliminate, don't wait until the puppy is squatting to get them outside!

- whining
- circling
- sniffing
- just woke up
- just got out of crate
- just ate/drank
- suddenly stops playing/chewing and starts sniffing or runs away
- heads toward an area that has been soiled before with nose to the ground
- paces near the door

Keep the dog on the leash when you take them out to eliminate, this helps to direct them to the correct spot and will prevent having a dog that will not eliminate while on leash. Many people like to train their dogs to eliminate in a particular area of the yard, initially the emphasis should be on eliminating outdoors vs indoors. Later, to distinguish the correct outdoor area, be sure that all bathroom breaks are supervised on leash, lead (or carry in the case of a very young or very small pup) the dog directly to the designated area and as soon as the elimination has occurred mark and reinforce with yummy treats!

***Tip: Make sure your puppy eliminates before you play with them, this will help instill a sense of urgency about getting their business done and avoid issues in the future. Also, if your pup really likes being outside make sure you play with your puppy outside for a while after they have eliminated to further reinforce the business first, play second concept.***

One alternative to creating a schedule is to tether the young pup to you as you go about your business in the house. This keeps the pup from wandering off and doing his business without you seeing him and keeps you very aware of your pups every move. I love this technique as it also gives the puppy an early understanding of the leash, but it is not for everyone.

A word about paper-training or the use of pee pads: It seems harmless to leave pee pads out "just in case" however, pee pad training your pup will make the overall job of house training harder as it will give them the chance to practice the behavior of eliminating inside. By ensuring (with frequent trips outside and reinforcement) the pup relieves itself only outside, you're teaching it that outside is good and inside is not. Using newspapers or pee pads will contradict this training and cause confusion for the dog.

**Using a crate** can make housetraining a lot easier, it also creates a place where your dog can go and get some alone time.

Use the crate when, you are too busy to watch the pup, you are leaving the house, your puppy gets the “zoomies” and needs some time to wind down, when you need a break or when you are sleeping. Also, if the dog has just been outside and has not relieved himself, put him in the crate and try again in 10 minutes.

***Tip: If the dog has just been outside and has not relieved himself, put him in the crate and try again in 10 minutes. Set a timer so you don't forget your dog is in the crate and probably needs a potty break.***

### Getting Puppy Used to His Crate

Some breeders will have already acclimated your new puppy to a crate before you get it, but if you do have a dog that is not comfortable with the crate yet, the guiding word is go slow! That means you may have to set up an alternative area that can contain your puppy safely when you can't watch them. One solution is an exercise pen, set up so that your puppy can access their crate (door stays open all the time) and a small area (about the same size as the crate) just outside the crate. Exercise pens can be arranged to make this happen and then expanded as the puppy grows. Remember this is where your puppy is going to rest, it is NOT a play pen in this use, it is an alternative to a crate so it should be small.

Now you can start training your puppy to be comfortable in the crate. This should be your first training task (aside from housetraining) and practiced many times during the day. Start by luring the dog close to the crate with a yummy treat, toss it just inside the crate and let the dog reach in to get the treat. Do not try to push the dog in the crate or close the door. Walk away and repeat the process often until the dog is easily reaching in to get the treat. Then toss the treat a little further into the crate each time, until the dog easily walks into the crate. Remember, even when he goes all the way into the crate let him turn around and come right back out. Repeat this process many times a day until the puppy happily runs into the crate in anticipation of those yummy treats!

Once he's happily entering the crate, toss several treats or a chewy bone into the crate and begin closing the door for just a second or two while he eats his treats. Once he's finished, let him right out. Repeat this several times each hour. Then begin increasing the time he stays in the crate a little bit at a time. As you increase the time, toss a bone or a stuffed Kong into the crate to keep him busy and happy while the door is shut. You can use meal time to feed him in his crate too. You can also use nap time to help him become comfortable, lure your tired/sleepy puppy into the crate for his naps, shut the door to the crate and let him fall asleep. Be sure to check on him so he can get out as soon as he wakes up!

For a dog that has had a bad experience with a crate or some rescue/shelter dogs that have a bad reaction to the crate, talk to me about the crate desensitization procedure.

Keep this routine up until your puppy understands that crate time is good time, filled with fun toys or chew bones, and a place to go when they are tired and want to get away.

There is a series of videos on You Tube showing Crate Games you can play to help this process.

*Figure 1: Crate Games*

<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HNO79bZMY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HNO79bZMY</a>
<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYrfukNjXtQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYrfukNjXtQ</a>
<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys8AgEkeKE">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys8AgEkeKE</a>

#### Where to put the crate.

Locating your pup's crate is often the key to success. It should be in the room you use most often, but tucked off in a corner so when the pup is asleep he won't be getting 'his cage rattled' by thundering hordes of kids as they stampede past or the door as it gets opened and closed. The crate should be big enough for the pup to comfortably stand, turn around and lay down again. Many large crates now come with dividers that can be used to make it smaller for the new pup and grow with the pup to full size. Consider draping the divider so that the pup can't see all the empty space behind it.

***Tip: I always recommend that new puppies sleep in a crate next to your bed, especially for the first couple of nights as they acclimate to their new home. This allows you to reassure them if they wake up that first night or two (often they don't really need to go out, they just need to know they are not alone) as well as take them out if needed.***

### What if the dog barks to get out?

Eventually every dog will try to bark to get out of their crate. It is **vitaly important** that you do NOT reinforce this by actually letting the dog out, or making a fuss over him as he barks (i.e. telling him 'don't worry its ok'). If ignored, most dogs will settle down when left in their crate.

HOWEVER, if you think the dog needs to relieve himself, quietly take the dog out to his potty place, let him relieve himself then take him directly back to the crate with no fuss, add a long lasting chew toy to keep him busy once he's back in the crate.

If the dog is barking, whining and carrying on and you can't stand it anymore, distract him with a sharp noise, or tongue click then slip a high value, long lasting chew bone into the crate and after the dog has settled down and been quiet for 20-30 seconds invite him to come out. It is important that the dog NOT associate barking or whining with being let out of the crate.

## Basic Training Tenants

Before you begin teaching your dog anything there are a few basic training tenants that apply to ALL training exercises.

1. If you reinforce behavior it will repeat.
2. A reinforcer is something your dog will work for! Pats on the head are generally not reinforcing for puppies, nor is 'Good Dog!'. Most puppies will work for their food, some will work for play too!
3. If you ignore a behavior it will eventually go away, unless the dog is getting reinforced from the behavior in another way (like jumping up and getting food off the counter).
4. We don't call them commands any more, we call them cues. A cue is a signal you give your dog to tell them what behavior you want. It can be a word, a hand movement, or something as subtle as where you are looking and how your feet are arranged. The point of dog training is to get cues that work, every time without hesitation on your dog's part, in any situation, that is called fluency.
5. If you punish your dog or force him to do something, there can be unintended consequences, which may include aggression, the dog 'shutting down' (not offering any behaviors) and/or the dog becoming fearful of you.
6. Behaviors are not good or bad, they are just behavior. For instance, barking at the back door to be let in can be 'good' but barking every time someone walks by the house is generally 'bad', but the behavior, barking is always barking to a dog. Labeling the behavior tends to make us humans label the dog (good or bad) too.
7. Dogs do not understand negatives, you can say NO all you want, and while it may interrupt a behavior in the moment, it will never teach your dog what not to do. You must instead, teach your dog an appropriate alternative behavior to do instead, like sit when greeting, walk on a loose leash instead of pulling, coming instead of running away.
8. If you use any word too much, the dog will learn to ignore it, similar to how your kids ignore you when you say, 'Clean your room' too many times, or how you ignore your kids when they say, 'Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom'. It's a thing called Learned Irrelevance, it's real, so GIVE YOUR DOG A CUE ONCE AND ONLY ONCE.
9. Be Consistent – always use the same word, group of words, hand gesture, or body posture to mean the same thing.
10. **Timing is CRITICAL** – When using a marker (click or verbal marker) the marker must occur as soon as your dog has completed the behavior. Not a moment before and not several moments later. If you don't use a marker like a clicker or the word 'yes', you only have a second and a half to deliver a reinforcer in order for the dog to associate the reinforcer with the behavior. When using a marker, it is **very important to mark the behavior** with a click or word FIRST, then follow with the reinforcer! Click/Yes THEN treat.

11. Dogs are not verbal and do not understand what we are saying, giving long explanations or diatribes really does not accomplish anything – this is a case where less (talk) really is more. They DO notice body gestures and eye contact. Keep extraneous body movements to a minimum (they will confuse your dogs) and encourage your dog to look into your eyes (look to you for guidance).
12. Your dog is your friend and your partner, he/she wants to please you, remember that and be patient, loving and understanding. If the dog isn't responding the way you want, it's not because they are stubborn or stupid, it's probably because they are confused or just haven't REALLY learned what the cue means yet.
13. **PLAY with your dog.** Life is not about just doing the work, it's about enjoying your time together. Play games; teach tricks, run together, do anything you both enjoy!

Figure 2: Basic Training Concepts Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bs\\_M9Fzc94U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bs_M9Fzc94U)

### Practice

The area where most people have difficulty in dog training is practice. Timing can be learned, what you should do can be learned, but all the learning in the world will not do you any good if you don't practice with your dog. Your dog relies on you to make progress, if you don't practice the exercises he simply will not progress. The best and easiest way to practice is to incorporate your training process into your day to day activities and make a game of the skill you are practicing. So have your dog 'wait' at every door, ask for a sit, down or wait every time you feed, ask for 'watch' while you are busy cutting up food for dinner, practice down or Go to Mat while you eating dinner, play the recall game in and out of the back door when you call the dog to come inside. If you want to practice recalls, try tossing a treat away from you and saying 'come' as the dog comes back (remember you have the treats!). Try to think of training as a game, we are teaching our dogs a series of tricks, very useful tricks but tricks nonetheless. Incorporate games into your training and jolly it up! In other words, have fun with it.

### The Release Word

In every stationary exercise we do, the dog will be expected to hold that position until he/she is released. This is not a stay, stay is a separate behavior in and of itself. It would be impractical

and confusing to constantly repeat your cue to keep the dog in a sit or down position so we teach our dogs to stay in whatever position they are left in until such time as we release them or give them another cue. This necessitates the use of a word to signal their release, and we use the same word to release from all exercises.

As with all the other exercises you can use whatever word you want, but I will caution that the use of a common phrase such as 'ok' can be difficult and confusing, as this is a word used frequently in conversations. Other possible words to use are; all done, release, finished or free dog.

### Picking your Reserve Words

Reserve words are the words that you will use for telling your dog what you want them to do. They may also be referred to as cues. These are special words and you should be mindful of using them carefully around your dog so that the dog regards them as special. Any time you use a cue you should be able to reinforce the behavior, especially in the beginning.

As noted in the list below, it is important to use one word per behavior. Dogs are not naturally verbal and do not understand language per se, what they do is associate a sound or group of sounds with a particular behavior. It is important then to be sure the sounds (i.e. words) we choose are consistent and not too similar to other words we choose to label different behaviors. Always use one word to mean one act, i.e. sit means put your butt on the ground, down means to lay down (not get off the couch), 'let's go' means walk with me on a loose leash, as opposed to 'heel' which is walk with me in a precise location, stay means 'don't move until I come back to you' and wait means 'stay there until I give you another cue'. It doesn't matter what words you choose to use, as long as you are consistent.

Try to remember that dogs don't understand the variations of a word either, so if you teach your dog to come using, 'Fido come', don't expect him to respond reliably to 'Come, Fido', or 'Come here, Fido' or 'Here boy' or 'Fido, come on'.

Interestingly enough, although a dog can only learn one meaning for each word, you can train a dog that different words mean the same thing. So, once you've trained the dog that 'SIT' means sit; you can now train him that the 'SENTARSE' (the Spanish word for sit) means the same thing! So you can have 5 different words for sit, but again, these words can only mean sit.

It's always a good idea to sit down BEFORE you start teaching your dog and define for yourself and anyone else who is training your dog EXACTLY what words mean what action. Below is a list of the cues I typically use and their associated meaning.

**Sit** = sit your rump on the floor right now and stay there until I release you

**All Done** = OK, you can get up now, good job!

**Down** = put your belly on the floor and stay there until I release you

**Off** = Get off the couch, chair, counter, person, etc.

**Dog's Name, Come** = Come to me

**Let's Go** = Walk with me without pulling, generally on my left side.  
**With Me** = Walk with me right at my left side on a loose leash, AKA Heel  
**Watch** or **Look** = look into my eyes  
**Stand** = stand on all four feet and hold still  
**Wait** = Stay here until I give you another cue (like come or all done)  
**Out or Drop** = drop whatever is in your mouth into my hand  
**Get it** = go get an object and come back to me  
**Leave it** = Look at me, don't sniff it, don't look at it and by all means don't eat it!  
**Touch** = touch your nose to my hand  
**Go To Mat** = go to a specific mat, platform or station and hang out there until I tell you otherwise

### Body Language

Dogs are visual, people are verbal. Dogs will pick up on visual cues you give them faster than verbal ones, so we generally train dogs to do behaviors with signals first and then add the verbal cues later. As with the words we choose, we need to be aware of our body movements. They see these body movements as signals so we want to be sure the signal is consistent and we are not inadvertently giving signals, like leaning over when we ask the dog to sit or down. It is hard sometimes to recognize what your body is doing when you are concentrating on trying to train your dog, and it helps to have family members in the room or a video camera, so they you can get feedback on exactly what you are doing with your body.

***Tip - always try to stand up straight, leaning over your dog is a common mistake and can make some dogs fearful as it is an intimidating posture, it can also encourage other dogs to play as they may see it as a play bow behavior which is an invitation to romp!***

### Training Progression

Each of the instructions for the basic behaviors included in this manual are step oriented, do step 1 first, then step 2 etc. Some dogs progress through these steps faster than other dogs, particularly if they are getting lots of practice! There's nothing wrong with going on to the next step even if we haven't covered it in a training session yet, but before you move ahead, your dog must be able to do the step with 80% accuracy. Do not cheat on this test! It is better to be sure than to rush through the process, building a solid foundation will make for a far better outcome. It's also ok to stay on the step you are working on even if we've covered the next step in class.

Basic training involves 5 steps;

- Establish a new behavior so that it is predictable
- Add a verbal and/or visual cue
- Modify the behavior to its finished form
- Generalize the behavior to different environments and increased distractions
- Maintain the behavior using a variable reinforcement schedule.

When you are trying to establish a new behavior, you have to capture it in its simplest form and reinforce it EVERY time it occurs, then we add a cue just prior to the behavior happening. We then shape that initial behavior into the finished product by reinforcing only the BEST behaviors (the fastest sit, the longest down stay, the best heel position). The next step is to take the behaviors 'on the road' and train them in many, many different locations, and with increasing levels of distraction. Finally, we put the behavior on a RANDOM VARIABLE reinforcement schedule, only giving treats every so often, this cements the behavior in the dogs mind and keeps them guessing as to which time they will get "paid" for doing the behavior.

*Tip: Many people try to get to step 5 too quickly! It is better to practice with lots of reinforcements for a longer period of time, than it is to cut out the reinforcers too quickly.*



## Positive Motivators and Marker/Clicker Training

Positive motivation works better than compulsion or punishment, that is a proven fact, but it only works if the reinforcers you are using motivate YOUR DOG. It really doesn't matter if the treats you buy are all natural, organic, or the most expensive treat on the shelf at Pet Land, what matters is DOES YOUR DOG LOVE THEM? If your dog isn't food motivated that's OK too, many dogs are trained to very high levels of obedience using play and/or toys as motivators. Do you know what motivates your dog? Use the space below to make a list of your dog's top ten motivators IN ORDER, with the most motivating at the top. It's important to know this list well, as there will be times you will need to ramp up the motivators to overshadow the distractions around you. If you can't come up with ten, start doing some experimentation to find out. Don't just rely on commercially prepared dog treats either; try some leftover chicken from the fridge, how about hot dogs, cheese, carrots, cheerios. If it's not food, which ball does your dog like best, the red one or the yellow one; does he prefer stuffed toys, or hard toys, toys with a squeaker or none?

A note on using 'people' food as reinforcers. Many people seem to think that by limiting their dog's treats to commercially prepared treats for dogs, their dog will be less likely to beg at the table or counter surf. The ONLY way your dog will learn to beg at the table or counter surf is by being reinforced for those behaviors. If you don't want your dog begging at the table, set your dog up for success by tethering the dog on their dog bed during dining hours and providing the dog with a high value, long lasting chew treat. Keep the dog from developing counter surfing behaviors by making sure there is nothing on the counter the dog can get, and tethering them away from the counters when there is. Even paper can be reinforcing to some dogs, so be sure nothing is left within reach!

Some people think using treats during training is a form of cheating and that dogs should perform all these behaviors because they love you. Dogs are not that different from people, when people work they are generally paid for it. Think of the treats as a way to pay your dog for working. Also, remember that if you only got paid for your job while you're were learning it and once you learned how to do your job you stopped getting paid, chances are you wouldn't continue working at that job for very long. Once the dog knows the behaviors, his pay period will be less frequent and random, but they will still need to get paid.

Once your dog REALLY understands and responds VERY consistently to the basic cues (sit, stay, down) then treat reinforcers should be given randomly or they can be replaced by other positive motivators, like petting or a toy if that's what is valuable to your dog. It is important to remember that in order to eliminate a bad behavior we ignore those behaviors so if you totally ignore the good behaviors or give a 'reinforcer' that isn't valuable to your dog (like a pat on the head) the dog is likely to stop giving the behavior you've requested.

What Motivates Your Dog?

Just like people, different dogs respond to different reinforcements so use whatever works for your dog! If your dog responds to loving and hugs, great, but if it happens to be chicken, hot dogs or cheese, that motivates them that's ok too! By the way, there are lots of dogs who would prefer to work for play! You need to observe your dog and find out what matters most to him/her. If you do use treats with puppies, be sure they are soft, easy to digest and **TINY**, you're not feeding dinner you are training!

Your job is to figure out exactly what motivates your dog and how much of a motivator it is. Most puppies will work readily for their kibble, but some may need higher level reinforcers to start off and most will need even higher level reinforcers when you introduce distractions. Bear in mind that if you use the same type of treat all the time your dog may lose interest in it, so it's best to have a comprehensive list of treats or toys and rotate them so your dog doesn't get bored.

By the way, if its toys your dog loves, then reserve several of his favorites for training time. Put them away in a special place and ONLY bring them out for training.

**Homework:** *List your dog's 10 best motivators below, with #1 being the highest value motivator for your dog.*

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

Using a Marker/Clicker it's all about Timing

We use the marker/clicker when we are training a new behavior to tell the dog when they've done the right thing, but dogs don't come pre-programmed to know that's what a marker/clicker is for. We have to train the dog to associate the marker/clicker with something they really like, like food. **To do this we 'load the marker/clicker'**. For the first week of training a couple of times during the day you will take 5 pieces of food, approach your dog, use the marker/clicker then immediately give your dog one treat, wait 5 seconds, click again give a treat, wait 15 seconds, click and treat, wait 1 minute, click/treat, wait 10 seconds, click and treat.

When you use the marker/clicker the sound indicates to the dog a treat is coming. I like to think of it as a promise, so every time you click, you must treat! This is called classical conditioning, just like Pavlov did with the dogs and the bell at feeding time.

Once the dog understands that the marker = treat, then you can use the marker to indicate when the dog has done something correctly. Dog does behavior, we mark it, the marker = reinforcer, THEN we deliver the food reinforcer. This allows a much greater level of precision in

communicating to the dog exactly what they did that earned them the reinforcer! In addition, it puts the food at the end of the process after the behavior and means you don't have to hold the treats in your hand while training and the dog will not be looking at your hand or anticipating the treats. This will reduce the likelihood that the dog will work only if food is present, since the food will be out of sight until AFTER the dog does the behavior correctly.

You don't HAVE to use the clicker if you are not comfortable with it. You can accomplish the same thing using a short word or sound like the word "Yes!", or "Nice!", or "Good" , just don't use something you are going to use a lot like Good Boy. Some people find it difficult to juggle a puppy, treats, leash and a clicker, so if you are more comfortable not using a clicker, do the same exercise using a word like 'Yes!'. In this text I will consistently use the indicator click/treat (C/T), you may substitute another marker, for example a word like "Yes!" and treat. I will use the terms click or mark interchangeably, know that either is correct.

Timing is critical, if you click or "yes!" just as you dog completes the behavior, he will be able to make the association quickly. If your timing is off and you mark before, during or after the behavior, the dog will get confused and will not learn the behavior as easily. Here are a couple of exercises to practice your timing without the dog. Drop a book on the floor. See if you can mark, just as the book hits the floor. Toss a tennis ball into the air. See if you can mark at the highest point of the toss or as the ball hits the floor. Have someone else watch you (or video tape yourself) as you do this to help you know if your timing was correct. Watch your spouse/child/friend eating. See if you can mark the moment they put the fork in their mouth. Practice these types of games without the dog first so you can develop your timing before you start training the dog.

Using a marker/clicker is a skill which you will get better at the more you use it. It helps to remember that once the marker/clicker is 'loaded' it acts to communicate to the dog that they've done the right thing. This means you **don't have to rush to get a treat to your dog's mouth**. In fact, it is important that you NOT MOVE while you are clicking, this ensures that the only thing the dog is thinking about when you click is what he is doing! So when using the marker/clicker we follow a four beat action;

- a) Click/Mark
- b) Pause
- c) Reach for a treat
- d) Deliver the treat

Following this pattern will give you the best results!

*Figure 3: Clicker Training Basics*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAfY0Rp-0VI>

## Training Techniques

### Food Luring – aka Treat Magnets

Food Luring is a technique we use in the early part of training to get the dog to do a particular behavior. It is also a great management technique for when you aren't training but you need the dog to do something, like get the young puppy or dog to move from point A to point B and they are distracted by their environment or haven't learned to walk politely on leash yet. We stick a hunk of something yummy near the end of their nose and lead them to where we need to be. Luring typically takes the form of a 'magnetic connection' between your fingers (full of food) and their nose. Similar to playing with magnets as we did when we were kids, if you pull the food too far away or too fast you will lose that connection and the power to lure the dog. So the trick is to go slowly enough that the dog's nose stays 'connected' to your fingers but fast enough so that the dog keeps moving.

### Capture

Capture is a technique we use to let the dog know when they've done something we want them to do. It's a great technique to use with young puppies teaching them the basic of sit, down and come as well as with older puppies and dogs when teaching tricks or more advanced behaviors. There is no antecedent or cue when you are using a capture method. The goal is to mark and reinforce the behavior you wish to have happen more often.

Some examples of capture training include: marking and reinforcing your very young puppy every time they sit, down, come or eliminate outside. Again, we do not add any verbal or physical cue to the situation we simply have our marker (click or the word 'yes') ready and as soon as the dog performs the behavior we want to encourage we mark it and then reinforce it with food.

In this way the dog learns that certain behaviors result in good things! The more a dog is reinforced for a behavior the more likely the dog is to repeat that behavior.

### Shaping

Shaping is an errorless way to train your dog to do something, some consider it the pinnacle of a training techniques as it relies on a clear communication between you and your dog. There are times when we will use shaping as with the metronome game later in this text, so it's worth explaining the concept.

The idea is to mark and reinforce successive approximations of the correct behavior until you have the complete behavior.

For example with the Metronome Game we will begin by placing a piece of food on the floor in front of one foot, when the dog eats the food and raises his head we will mark and reinforce that behavior, for a while, by placing another piece of food in front of your other foot. Then once the dog is pretty good at instantly raising his head we will raise the criteria and only mark and reinforce when he not only raises his head but lift his chin, then we raise the criteria again to get

him to look at us maybe not yet in the eyes but closer, we continue to raise the criteria until the dog is instantly going from eating a piece of food placed on the floor to looking directly into our eyes and waiting for the next marker to occur.

Done correctly this is a very powerful way to create a behavior as the dog has ‘discovered’ what behavior works all on his own, behaviors developed with shaping game tend to be more durable and transferable than with other techniques.

## Loopy Training Games

Loopy Training is a term I use to refer to a type of training technique I use a lot when I’m trying to do a lot of repetition in a short period of time. Since my goal is to reinforce the right behavior as much as possible, when I train I typically try to set my dog up for success and then repeat that exercise many times in a short period of time. Since I’m trying to get lots of repetitions in I want to create a situation that reinforces the dog AND sets them up to perform the behavior again. Where and how I deliver the treat is the key to Loopy Training!

For instance, if I’m teaching a new puppy to sit, I will start by luring the sit (see description above) click for the sit, but instead of just handing the puppy a treat, I toss it a few inches away from the puppy so he has to go get it. He’s going to get up, get the treat and in all likelihood (remember I have the food) turn back to me to see what to do next! I have just set my puppy up to do another repetition of sit. So I lure or signal a sit, the puppy sits, and yep, you guessed it, I’m going to toss the treat again. I don’t toss it very far in the beginning because I don’t want the puppy to get distracted, just far enough that he has to get up to get it.

By tossing the treat, we signal the end of the exercise AND set the dog up for the next repetition, and guess what? It’s FUN!

You can use Loopy Training for many different behaviors including sit, down, come, wait, watch, touch, go to mat and even loose leash walking, basically anything you want to do more than one repetition of while keeping the exercise fresh and fun!

*Figure 4: Loopy Training*

<https://youtu.be/1TmWhyTIIBQ>

## Setting You and Your Dog up for Success

Unlike humans, dogs do not learn from failure. We've already talked about the fact that they also really don't get the concept of 'no', so it is our job to make our dogs successful throughout their learning journey with us. This means setting up the training so they can't fail! The more the dog succeeds, the more you can reinforce the right responses, the faster your dog will learn. Learning is nothing more than practicing the right responses and being reinforced for it. The more the dog gets reinforced for the right responses the more likely those responses will repeat the next time. I like to visualize a large balance scale and as I'm training my dog, each correct response gets a small weight added on one side of the scale, each failed response means I have to take 5 of the small weights off! My goal is to load down that one side of the scale with so many correct responses that when I do finally stop (or at least slow the treats down) giving my dog a reinforcer every time I get a correct response it will take a lifetime to unload that scale! Here are some guidelines to setting your dog up for success:

- Think about what you want your dog TO do instead of what you want your dog NOT to do.
  - Eg. Sit instead of jumping, come instead of running away.
- Teach each of those behaviors to fluency before you try to use them in 'real life'.
  - Teach in non-distracting areas first, then increase the distractions gradually.
  - We wouldn't ask a kindergartener to write a master's thesis, don't ask your puppy for advanced behaviors (like walking on a leash for 30 minutes without pulling) before they are learned.
- Set your dog up for success each time you train
  - Start in non-distracting areas and make it easy for your dog to figure out what you are trying to get them to do.
  - If the dog makes a mistake, make it easier the next time you ask for the behavior.
- Use a LOT of management while you are training
  - Crates, Gates and Tethers help to manage your dog's location and access to things that get them in trouble.
  - Long lines help to minimize pulling and practice recalls, front pull harnesses can help when you are out walking
  - Luring, stick a hunk of food in your dog's nose to get from point A to point B, it's ok, really, especially with the very young puppies!
  - Step on that leash EACH AND EVERY time someone greets your puppy, close enough to the puppies collar that if he attempts to jump he can't, that will prevent the puppy from jumping on the person!

- Leave leashes on in the house to prevent the puppy from chasing kids, getting into things, nipping and jumping, as well as make it easier for you to quickly get the puppy outside for potty time!
- Use positive reinforcers whenever the puppy does something you like
  - Is the puppy lying at your feet quietly? – FEED THEM!
  - Is the puppy looking into your eyes? – FEED THEM!
  - Is the puppy sitting nicely while being petted, even if he doesn't have a choice because you have your foot on the leash? - FEED THEM!
  - Is the puppy quietly waiting as you prepare their dinner? – FEED THEM!
  - Is the puppy playing nicely with the older dog you have? – FEED THEM!
  - Did the puppy come to you when you said it's name? – FEED THEM!
  - Did the puppy turn away from the neighbor and look to you? – FEED THEM!
  - Is the puppy walking next to you nicely? – FEED THEM
  - NOTICE THE GOOD STUFF!

Here are some guidelines to setting yourself up for success:

- Using a marker/clicker is a skill, practice without the dog first.
  - Begin by tossing a ball in the air, click when the ball hits the ground
  - Have someone watch you or video tape yourself to make sure your timing is correct
  - Even if you use a verbal marker like 'yes' do the practice above
- Practice all the homework skills with your dog
  - They can't do their homework by themselves
- Set your dog up for success
  - If they make a mistake try again but make the task easier!
- Do not be afraid to manage the dog
  - Put them in the crate when you need to take a shower
  - Put a **front clip** harness on them when you want to take a walk and NOT THINK about whether they are pulling or not
  - If you are going to have a bunch of people over, put the dog in a crate in a quiet room with a high value long lasting chew, if they aren't up to meeting all those people or you aren't up for managing the dog the whole time.
  - If the dog is out in your fenced in back yard or dragging a long line in an open field and you want them to come to you, GO GET THEM instead of repeating the Come cue over and over again!
- Finally, have some fun with your new dog!

- Many of the exercises in the book are games, make them fun.
- Be silly with your new puppy, get on the ground and roll around.
- Play tug (read that section first), it's ok – REALLY!
- Run around and let the puppy chase you!
- Watch your new dog explore and revel in their excitement of each new thing they discover!
- Don't worry if you make a mistake, even professional trainers mess up, it's part of learning!
- RELAX, with a little effort most puppies become well-mannered adult dogs.



## Pre-Obedience Skills, Socialization and the ABC's

There are several skills you can work on with your puppy that will help them throughout their life, these are not hard for the puppy to learn nor do they take an enormous effort by you. That said, they can have a life altering effect on your puppy if you do these things when they are very young (4-14 weeks). The main thing to remember when teaching these skills is that the learning process should not be forced or unpleasant! The whole idea is to make positive associations with these skills or situations so that later in life your puppy will see these as familiar and pleasant.

### Husbandry Skills Preparation

This refers to all the things you are going to HAVE to do to your dog, like brushing them, giving them a bath, cleaning their ears, trimming their toenails, brushing their teeth and taking them to the vet. As soon as you get your puppy you should begin handling them and making pleasant associations with that handling. Usually, this means pairing the handling with tiny, yummy pieces of food. Brush lightly, give a treat, pick up a paw gently, give a treat, handle the dog's ears, give a treat.

Find a time when your puppy is pleasantly tired but not exhausted, perhaps mid-morning after they've eaten, eliminated and played for a bit (or whatever time works best for your puppy), begin by sitting on the ground and inviting your new puppy to come over to you. Pet them slowly and calmly with a flat hand from the collar to their tail until they settle. Give them a bit of treat, and progress to touching their feet, ears, tail and flank. Remember that every puppy is going to react differently to being touched, some don't mind it at all, some act as if you've just poked them with a sharp stick! Take your cues from your puppy, but after each short, gentle stroke or touch provide a yummy tidbit of treat. Once the puppy is comfortable with your hand touching all those areas, you can begin using a soft bristled brush and with each stroke feed! You are NOT trying to groom your puppy, you are just getting them used to being brushed, don't go long on this one unless the dog loves it! Be sure to lift the ear flap and handle your puppies ears, handle their feet and gradually get them used to being able to hold their paw and each of their toes, and don't forget the tail area, you don't have to get invasive but do touch the base of their tail and gradually get to the point you can grasp the tail gently and manipulate it back and forth as a vet would do to take the dog's temperature. Again, each time your touch an area you are working with, provide the puppy with a yummy tidbit.

Go visit your Vet's office (during non-busy times) in between appointments for vaccinations. Encourage your puppy to climb on the vets scale (use a food lure), give them lots of yummy treats for just hanging out in the vet's waiting room and getting pets from the staff. This puts a

positive association on going to the vet, and the more of these ‘fun visits’ you do, the more the dog will learn to love going to the VET instead of fearing it!

### Collar Grab and Response to Collar Pressure

This is a great behavior to teach since many people reflexively grab dog’s collars to drag them where they want them to be. I know many dogs that have developed a keen ability to avoid the collar grab and play a great game of ‘catch me if you can’.

In this exercise we are going to teach your puppy to not only accept a collar grab, but to LOVE it!

- First start by reaching toward the dogs collar over their head, stop immediately if the dog starts to flinch or back away, feed the dog. Do it again, but this time stop just short of where the dogs tries to get away, feed the dog. Continue this until the dog is comfortable with you getting a bit closer.
- Do the same exercise but start getting a bit closer to the dog’s collar. Always feed each time you reach and remember to work gradually so the dog doesn’t feel the need to duck away or move away from you. Gradually increase how close you get to the collar until you get to the point where you can touch (but not grab) the collar.
- Continue the same procedure until you can grab the collar lightly with no response from your dog but a happy expectation for a yummy treat!
- Now, grab your dog’s collar and put that yummy treat right in front of his nose, then lead him forward applying gentle steady pressure on his collar as he moves. Go one or two steps then release the collar and feed the treat. Make sure the puppy is moving to follow the treat and NOT being dragged by the collar. You must use the treat like when you were a kid playing with two magnets, if you move the leading magnet too fast you will lose it’s connection with the trailing magnet, but if you move too slowly the magnet will attach (i.e. the dog eats the treat!). Continue this exercise until the puppy, upon feeling your hand gently guiding the collar, voluntarily moves forward under the pressure.

### Socialization and Exposure to Different Environments

Recently, I was talking to a prospective new puppy owner about what to expect and what she was going to have to think about before her new puppy came home. I think I said something to the effect of, “..and of course you’ll need to get the puppy out to get socialized.” , and the look on her face indicated immediately that she thought I was either daft or speaking another language. I paused and she said, “What exactly do you mean about socializing my puppy?” I realized in that instant that many of us are so wrapped up in repeating the mantra, “You must socialize your puppy.”, we’ve almost lost sight of what it means.

First, let me give a brief explanation of why socialization is so important. Puppies go through a critical developmental period from about 4 weeks to about 12-14 weeks where they are most amenable to experiencing new things. This period is called the Primary and Secondary Socialization period. This period is tied to the development of social patterns and provides a foundation for many adult behaviors.

(1) In short a dog that is not exposed to a variety of stimuli during this critical period is at risk of developing behavior problems later on.

So it's really, really important to carefully expose your 8-14 week old puppy to lots of stimuli. This doesn't just mean taking the puppy to a puppy class once a week, **and definitely does NOT mean going to the dog park with a bunch of adult dogs**, it means taking the dog for rides in the car, walks on all different substrates, into the city, out in the country, meeting people of all shapes and sizes, eating and drinking out of different types of bowls, seeing landscaping trucks, construction vehicles, farm animals and generally experiencing lots of novel stimuli and every possible place you might expect your dog to go when they are grown.

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has a position statement on early socialization that is well worth reading. <https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Puppy-Socialization-Position-Statement-FINAL.pdf>. They have concluded that getting your dog exposed to a wide variety of novel stimuli **in safe and appropriate settings** (ie NOT dog parks) far outweighs any risks associated with exposure to disease prior to your dog's last vaccination. In other words, DON'T WAIT until your puppy has all of it's shots to take them out and expose them to lots of new and novel stimuli, just keep them away from areas where dog diseases are likely to linger, like dog parks.

If your new puppy is going to be expected to be your first mate on your boat, make sure you let him walk around on it BEFORE you take them both out for a sail. If your new pup is going to be the team mascot, don't wait until they are older to introduce him to the team. While you need to get your puppy out to see as much as possible it also doesn't mean that you should OVER expose your dog. Keep your trips short and enjoyable! **Bring lots of treats** with your, so that as your puppy is getting used to new things he can be getting lots of yummy treats, this will provide a positive association with all those new things.

We don't want to force the puppy to be around things that are scary, or spend more time 'socializing' than they can handle. There are also concerns about letting your partially vaccinated puppy play in areas or with dogs that may not be vaccinated against common dog diseases. For this reason, among others, **dog parks are NOT a good place to take young puppies**.

So begin socializing early, but do so with care. Puppy play dates with puppies of similar age and play styles, and that are current on their vaccinations too, in an area that is safe and secure, is a great way to get them used to other dogs but it is not the ONLY thing you should be doing! Most of puppy socialization is getting used to the environment they are going to be living in for the next 8-18 years!

Probably the best checklist for socialization that I've seen is the one Dr. Sophia Yin has on her web site - [Socialization Checklist](#), there is also a checklist on my web site in the Client Access area – print it off!

Socialization also does not begin at 8 weeks or end at 14 weeks. Breeders can do a lot to help a dog develop resilience in their adulthood by developing a program of early handling, brief interludes of separation from the pack, taking the puppies on rides in the car, introducing them to crates, providing novel items for them to interact with, and more. (2) There is a great program for breeders to encourage exposing very young puppies to new and novel experiences early, it is called Puppy Culture, ask your breeder if they know about this program.

If you got your dog from a shelter you may be wondering, “What about my dog, I didn’t even get him until he was 12 weeks old!”.

As your dog gets older his tendency to be more fearful increases but this should not deter you from getting your dog out to experience as much as possible. It should, however increase your vigilance to ensure the experiences your dog is getting are positive. Dogs younger than 8-9 months of age should avoid dog parks or other areas with lots of older dogs. Make sure you have an ample supply of yummy treats on hand every time you leave home to help your dog associate new things with good treats. Never, ever force your dog to approach something it fears, no matter how silly it may seem. Instead, let your dog choose the distance they want to keep and help them associate that very scary (garbage can, vending machine, snowman, etc.) with something good by rewarding them with lots of yummy treats for trying (even if it’s just looking at it). If they can't eat, it's a good indicator that they are already scared and it's time to guide them away and get them to a place where they can relax a bit.

Puppy socialization should begin early (at 3-4 weeks) and continue through your dog’s 2nd birthday, please make sure the socialization is safe and enjoyable for your dog.

For a more in depth view of Puppy Socialization please take a look at my two Canine Confidential episodes on the topic Episode one - The Importance of Socialization.

Episode two - Socializing in the 'real' world

1. Steven R. Lindsay, Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training ( Iowa State University Press, 2001), Vol 1, 47
2. Steven R. Lindsay, Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training ( Iowa State University Press, 2001), Vol 1, 58-61

## Understanding the ABC’s of Behavior

The ABC’s refer to the events that lead up to, include and follow your dog’s behavior. The combination of these three things is fundamental to how we train our dogs.

Behavior doesn’t just happen, and it only happens for a reason. Dogs and puppies do what they do to affect or in response to their environment, in other words to they do things to make other things happen or because something happens to them.

It is important to understand how the ABC’s work, not only so you understand how to change your dogs behavior but also so you can understand why your dog may be doing some of the things that he does.

## Antecedents

The A part of this trilogy is what happens just before a behavior occurs. When we are training, our goal is to create a ‘Cue’ which can be a word or physical signal that the dog learns if followed by a behavior will result in a desirable outcome. However, when we are not training there are many environmental antecedents that trigger behaviors in dogs as well, like scents in the grass will often trigger sniffing, a running squirrel (or child) will often trigger chasing or a loud sound

may trigger shaking if the dog is frightened by it. So Antecedent are any environmental (created by us or otherwise) event or stimuli that precedes a behavior.

## Behavior

Behavior is the thing your dog does. Sniffing, barking, jumping, peeing, sitting, doing nothing (yes doing nothing is a behavior), being quiet, running and many more.

## Consequences Matter!

For each behavior a dog does there is a consequence, and if the consequence is desirable (to the dog) he/she is more likely to do the behavior again. In short, 'DOGS DO WHAT WORKS', yes the grammar is terrible but the meaning is clear!

**The combination of these three events will determine if your dog repeats a behavior or not. The more a dog is reinforced for a behavior, the stronger that behavior will get.**

Here are some real world examples of how these work together to result in behaviors, both desirable and undesirable:

- You walk into the kitchen every morning and your puppy jumps on you to get your attention, you yell at the dog and/or push them away. The dog learns jumping on you is a great game that results in your playing with them. IE You may think your yelling and pushing is a bad thing, but your puppy thinks it's play.
- While sitting on the couch trying to cuddle with your puppy he puppy bites your arms, ankles and hands to engage you in play, just like she would another puppy. You (or the kids) squeal and run away, or push the puppy away, or do both then chase her in order to put her away in the crate. The dog learns biting works to get you engaged! Even though the end result is the puppy is put in the crate, the chase game and play fighting that happened just AFTER the puppies biting behavior was really fun! – THAT WAS THE REINFORCER!
- Every time your puppy eliminates outside you feed them, right after they come inside. The puppy learns coming inside is a good thing because they get fed, so the next time you are outside your dog spends the whole time trying to get back inside!
- Every time you take your puppy to bathroom outside, you bring them outside, play with them a bit, wait for them to eliminate, maybe play a bit more then wait, and wait until they go, as soon as they do, you scoop them up and bring them back in the house. The dog learns that peeing outside means outdoor playtime is over, and strives to hold their bowels and bladder as long as possible, even to the point of holding it until after you come inside, where he then relaxes enough to fully empty his bladder on the floor!
- Every time you take your puppy outside to the bathroom, you quietly follow them for 5-10 minutes until they eliminate, you immediately feed them and have a party of a job well done, THEN you play with your puppy for 5-10 minutes and enjoy watching him

explore his environment before you take him inside. Pretty soon the pup figures out to pee/poop first and party later and you are well on the way to house trained dog.

Understanding the relationship between your actions and/or reactions to your dog's behavior and how that is going to affect that behavior in the future not only allows you to train much more efficiently it gives the skill to figure out how to change behavior's that your dog/puppy may develop.

Take each one of those examples and think about how changing your response to the puppies behavior might change the outcome.

- You come in to the kitchen, reach down and greet your puppy with a quick pat, then ask them to do something simple, like sit, followed of course with a treat. Puppy learns when you come in if they sit they get a treat and attention!
- While sitting on the couch cuddling, puppy gets mouthy, you calmly stand up and walk away. Puppy learns putting its mouth on you makes you go away, not the reaction he was looking for.
- You take your puppy out on a regular basis, reinforce potty behavior as soon as it happens and then let puppy play. Puppy learns outdoors is for business first, play later.

Every behavior your dog offers has an antecedent (something that happens before it) and a consequence (something that happens after it) both can affect whether that behavior continues or changes. Understanding this relationship gives you a better chance to change your puppy's behavior for the outcomes you would prefer.

## The Proper Paws Program

This training manual is organized in the same structure we use for our classes. It is my hope that you will use the manual to help guide you through the process of teaching your new puppy to be fluent in all the behaviors presented.

In Level 1 Obedience we teach the first 8 skills, most people usually get to step 2 or 3. The goal is to have your puppy be able to respond to verbal and/or physical cues 80% of the time in NON-DISTRACTING environments. Level 1 skills: Watch, Touch, Sit, Down, Wait, Come, Loose Leash Walking and Be on the Mat, as well as problem solving typical puppy issues like jumping and nipping, teaching tug/out, place and other useful tricks.

In Level 2 Obedience we teach the next 5 new skills and solidify the Level 1 Obedience skills. All skills are practiced with gradually increasing difficulty (steps 3-5). This class is often repeated as different dog/handler teams are going to progress at different rates, and building fluency in all the behaviors takes time and practice. Level 2 skills: Go to Mat, With Me (walking close on a leash), Leave it, Font/Finish, Stay, Long Distance Down.

In Level 3 Obedience we practice all of the skills we teach in Level 1 and Level 2 with increasing levels of distraction or difficulty.

Level 4 Obedience - The Canine Good Citizen class. prepares you to take the AKC Canine Good Citizen test using all the skills you've developed over time with your puppy. This 10 part test is a great way to demonstrate your dog's abilities and know you have achieved a level of expertise many people never get to.

Wag it Games/Tricks class is designed to give you and your dog a break from the sometimes tedious work of serious obedience. That said, many dog/handler teams benefit from the team building experience of challenging their dog to do more than just sit, down, stay and come! It builds confidence and attention skills as the class is less structured and more task oriented than other classes. This is another class that is often repeated and at the end of 6 weeks you have the opportunity to test for the AKC Tricks Dog Novice Title, people that repeat have the opportunity to test for Intermediate and then Advanced Titles.

Rally Obedience – This class teaches basic Rally Obedience skills for fun or for use in AKC Rally Obedience competitions.

Therapy Dog Class is for those who wish to volunteer with their dog with one of the many Therapy Dog certifying organizations. It is designed to help you identify which organization you wish to work with, give you an understanding of what the testing is like and practice test scenarios to prepare you and your dog for testing. Therapy testing is NOT part of this class and must be done through one of the therapy certifying organizations.

Adventure class is for dog/handler teams who wish to attain reliable off leash recalls and long distance skills. It is the pinnacle of our program as it is held in the conservation lands and the dogs are off leash.