

About The Cover

Cover Photo By Philippe Roca

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

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It's A Brave New World!

Your new puppy will arrive soon, and you are anxiously waiting with a desire to start training as soon as possible. There are many resources available to help and, hopefully, this article will as well.

Let's start with the critical periods in your puppy's development.

Neonatal Period (birth-12 days)

Puppy cannot regulate body functions and relies on the mother and/or the breeder for elimination and temperature regulation.

Transition Period (13-20 days)

Ears and eyes open. Hearing and eyesight are very poor. Puppy moves about more and begins to control bodily functions.

Awareness Period (21-28 days)

Puppy is moving around in their environment well. Eyesight and hearing function well.

Canine Socialization Period (21-49 days)

Puppy learns to interact with littermates and his mother. Puppy interacts more with outside stimuli.

Human Socialization period (7-12 weeks)

Puppy learns by association. Permanent human bonding begins. Puppy goes to new home and begins housebreaking. Puppy now has the ability to learn simple behaviors such as recall, sit, down.

Fear Impact Period (8-11 weeks)

What puppy learns in this period is permanent. Avoid frightening experiences as they can have a negative effect. Experiences must be positive to minimize adverse conditioning.

Seniority Classification Period (13-16 weeks)

At this age puppy begins testing independence. Puppy is teething and may show biting behavior. Praise for correct behavior is very important.

Flight Instinct Period (4 to 8 months)

Teething continues at this time. Puppy shows strong independence. During this period it is critical to shape positive behavior while minimizing negative behavior.

Second Fear Period (6-14 months)

Fear of different situations manifest in this period. New situations should be handled with patience while avoiding reinforcing negative behavior. Focus should be on building confidence.

Let's now explore how we can positively handle these periods and start puppy on a road to success.



'Socialization'

The idea behind socialization is helping puppy to become acclimated to all types of situations, sounds and smells in a positive manner. The key word is positive. According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, improper socialization can impact behavior for that dog's entire life.

The world is brand new to your puppy and can be strange and unusual. Our job is to help them explore and create positive associations.

Avoid doing too much too fast. Start by introducing puppy to a few people at a time versus taking them to a huge party. Start with positive training puppy classes. These help accustom puppy to other dogs and people.

Introduce puppy to many different people, places and other dogs. Introduce them to many different surfaces such as pavement, plastic, slippery floors, even a ladder or wire crate laid flat. Much research shows that in the first four months of life, exposing the puppy to any and all they may encounter in life will pay off greatly in a well-adjusted adult dog. Again, these must be positive experiences. Inadvertently, if a negative experience occurs such as the puppy being frightened by another dog or person, turn the situation around by tossing some high value treats away from the adverse event and try to distract the pup. Do your best to turn

this into a somewhat positive situation. Do not coddle the pup nor force the situation. Act normally and walk away while redirecting the pup into a more normal/positive behavior i.e. "sit and watch."

Independence Training

Responsible breeders of sporting dogs will counsel their puppy buyers on the importance of independence training. Sporting dogs may have a tendency towards separation anxiety, and this can be avoided right from the time you bring puppy home. Set aside time during the day when puppy is required to be alone for an hour or so. A crate should be set up in a room where no human shall reside during the time frame set aside for the independence training. A radio may be played softly along with a Kong toy filled with peanut butter or easy cheese. Puppy should be steered towards the crate with a soft command of "kennel" while tossing a high value treat inside the crate. Close the door to the crate and leave for a period of 15 to 30 minutes. Puppy learns to cope on their own and realizes you will return. Upon return do not praise puppy, open door very quietly and take puppy outside to eliminate. It is important to note that if puppy is barking, waiting until they are quiet reinforces the behavior



that quiet=door opens. Time spent alone in the crate, kennel or vehicle can gradually be increased.

Operant Conditioning

Dog training happens through operant conditioning. This is the way a dog learns or is conditioned from the way the dog behaves or operates in its environment. The change in the behavior will occur more or less depending on positive and negative results. When you take puppy out into the field and feed him treats for sitting you are using operant conditioning. Reward based training has been shown to be an effective way to change behavior and emotion in dogs.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement occurs when a motivating item such as a treat or verbal praise is presented after your pup exhibits a desired behavior. Using positive reinforcement will mean the desired behavior will most likely happen again.

Negative Reinforcement

Taking something unpleasant away from the dog the instant they perform the desired behavior. Negative reinforcers can be used to shape behavior. The ear pinch is an example of negative reinforcement. The trainer stops pinching the ear when the dog grabs a hold of an object. I am not advocating for the use of pain. We do not need to use pain and discomfort to achieve a high level of training. Another example of negative reinforcement can be pushing on a dog's body to get it to move over, when the dog moves the forceful push is stopped.

Extinction Options

This method is used when you want your puppy to stop doing something i.e. jumping on people or begging at the table. The only way to stop these undesirable behaviors is to totally ignore (extinction) the puppy until he understands the behavior will get no reward. You must be consistent.

Shaping Behaviors

Shaping behavior is a training technique that builds on 'capturing.' Capturing is a training technique in which you wait for pup to show a behavior (sit and look up) and immediately reward when it happens. The use of rewards makes the behavior (sit and look up) happen more often, which enables you to add a word or command i.e. "watch" or "pay attention." I like to use a clicker to mark the behavior I am capturing. The clicker has a sound the puppy doesn't usually hear in everyday life, it is quick and consistent.

Positive vs. Negative Reinforcement

Science has proven that to effectively change behavior there has to be some type of motivation. Punishment will inhibit the developing bond between you and your puppy and can cause avoidance, depression and behavior problems. In using positive methods along with rewards you are strengthening the bond and developing a confident, happy, well-adjusted dog. Reward based training is not only scientifically sound, it will create a deeper bond between you and your puppy. 🐾

A group of knowledgeable judges and trainers has been assembled and are available to answer your questions about training and testing. The topic will vary each month based on the questions we receive from our VHD readers. Please send your questions to vhd@navhda.org with "On the Right Track" in the subject line.



Judy Zeigler is a licensed veterinary technician with a long time interest in canine behavior. She is an active member of The Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians and is a Fear Free Certified Professional. Judy has been a gun dog and obedience trainer since 1985. She also teaches with the NYS Arson Dog Program and is an AKC hunt test judge. Judy and her husband Andy are avid waterfowlers and upland bird hunters. Judy has been a NAVHDA member since 1995. Judy has bred German shorthaired pointers under the kennel name Crystal Kennels since 1998. The kennel has bred dogs tested through all levels of NAVHDA including three VC dogs, 23 AKC Master Hunters, 22 Breed Champions, two Master Agility Champions along with a Narcotic Detection dog, three Tracking Certified dogs, an Arson Detection dog and a young dog currently working in Search and Rescue.