



## **Wounded Warrior Canines Program**

### **Dog Training Exercises and Classroom Curriculum**

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#### **Charging the Marker Word ("Yes!"):**

1. In order for your marker word (also called a “bridge”) to have a meaning to the dog, we need to “charge” it. This means that we need to tell the dog that this specific word means that something reinforcing is coming their way. Eventually the marker word will tell the dog the precise moment they did something correct that will earn them reinforcement. We initially train the dogs to make this association by consistently pairing the marker word (“Yes!”) with a piece of food.

Prepare in advance with your dog on leash and with some highly reinforcing treats that you know your dog will happily eat in the environment. Think small, and break the treats into tiny pieces, roughly the size of a pencil eraser.

2. Regardless of your dog’s behavior, say “Yes!” crisply and distinctly, and then treat immediately after. You can toss the treat on the ground and allow your dog to eat it or you can hand the dog the treat. It is very important that you mark (say “Yes!”) *first*, before you reach to deliver the treat to your dog. The marker should predict the arrival of the treat, but these two events should not happen simultaneously.
3. Repeat about 10-15 times.
4. Now, wait for the dog to look in another direction and then say your marker word (“Yes!”). If the dog looks up at you to get the treat, he/she is likely starting to learn the association.
5. Repeat these steps several times a day for several days. Keep your sessions short and positive - work on charging the marker word (“Yes!”) for only 30 seconds to 1 minute at a time.
6. You *can* start other training using your marker word immediately and you don’t have to wait for your dog to learn the association completely. However, if you do several sessions of associating the marker word (“Yes!”) with reinforcement, it will accelerate your dog’s ability to learn with marker training.



Marker training has been proven to result in better and quicker learning because it is very distinct and consistent - it is a wonderful and scientifically proven way to clearly bridge the communication gap between you and your dog!

## Using Food (and Other!) Rewards in Training:

### What do Rewards Have to do with it?

It is a poetic notion to think that dogs only live to please their masters, but the reality is that dogs will always "do what works" in a positive way for them!

When we ask our dogs to do something, the first thought racing through their heads is, "What's in it for me right now?" Behaviors that are rewarded are statistically more likely to be repeated, so when we regularly reward our dogs for a job well done, they'll want to keep "showing up for work" and you will get consistent, reliable behavior in return. Not all rewards or reinforcers are created equal, and understanding what your individual dog finds rewarding is an important step in the training process.

The reality of the matter is, you cannot train *any* animal without finding some way to motivate that animal. Using food, toys, praise, and "life rewards" (allowing a dog to sniff, go play with another dog, etc) means that you are motivating the dog by giving them access to something they find enjoyable. You are controlling your dog's access to the things he finds reinforcing to shape his behavior. This is an extremely effective way of training and modifying behavior (also referred to as "Operant Conditioning").

When a person is training a dog without the use of food or other "life rewards," they still must find a way to motivate the dog. Most often, the motivation to behave or perform certain behaviors will come from the desire to avoid an unpleasant or aversive consequence. Examples of consequences the dog may be choosing to avoid include verbal reprimands, a leash "pop" or "correction," an electric stimulation from an e-collar, etc. Training that includes these types of "aversive" *does* have the potential to modify an animal's behavior, but if you use this style of training to communicate with your dog, you face the very real possibility of potentially negative side effects and behavioral fall-out. You may see some immediate behavior-change, but the results are not likely to be long-lasting and she may have learned that training sessions and interactions with you are unpredictable and anxiety-provoking.

My goal is to show you how to effectively train your dog using humane, scientific-based, and dog-friendly methods that result in a positive, fun training experience for human and animal.

### Using Food in Training

Food can be a very valuable reinforcer (paycheck!) for dogs during training. It's one of a very short list of things that dogs are born already knowing is good. While most dogs easily learn to enjoy praise, petting and play – all of which also make good rewards -- food still holds a special place in their mind due to its primal nature.

After all, your dog has to eat anyway... why not use some of that food to your advantage to shape your dog's behavior in desirable ways?

Some people express concern about using food in training, worried they will create a dog who will only work if he knows there's food. This is a valid concern, as it can happen if food is used incorrectly. The key to effectiveness and long-lasting training results is to make sure that food is being used as a reward and not a bribe. There's a big difference!



### **Reward vs. Bribe**

If you ask the dog to do something, he does it, and you give him a treat, that treat is a reward. If you ask the dog to do something he knows how to do, a behavior that he has demonstrated repeatedly on request for a long period of time, and he doesn't do it, maybe you ask again. If he STILL doesn't do it, and when you then reach into your pocket and get a treat, and all of the sudden the dog springs into action to comply with your original request, THAT treat just became a bribe! You asked him to do it, he didn't, you got food, and he decided to get to work. Good training strives to avoid this!

### **Preventing Bribery**

The trick is to get the visual presence of the food out of the learning picture as soon as possible. For example, when lure-training (e.g. cookie on the dog's nose and over his head to achieve a sit), you want to get the cookie off his nose just as soon as you see him grasp the physical mechanics of the behavior. At that point, start using the same gesture minus the cookie, reward the dog with a treat from your pocket once his rear is on the floor. This helps teach the dog the important lesson that he must successfully do the work before you're willing to dole out the reward.

Another important tip for preventing accidental bribery is to make sure you have your dog's attention before asking him to do something. Often, people resort to bribery because the dog didn't respond the first time they asked – but when they asked, the dog wasn't even paying attention. Try to avoid talking to your dog's tail end! Before asking your dog to sit, lie down, or come when you call him, do your best to make sure he's looking at you. Teach him to respond quickly to his name, so that when he's distracted, using his name will prompt him to check in, at which point you can ask for the next behavior. You want him to respond to his name with the same enthusiasm that he responds to the words "Do you want a treat?"

### **Using Life Rewards in Addition to Food Treats**

Once your dog is reliably responding to your cues and hand-signals, begin to vary how he gets his rewards. Sometimes still reinforce him with a treat, but often times, use something else he's telling you he wants – like his leash put on to go for a walk, his favorite toy to be thrown, or an invitation to join you on the couch for snuggle time. By using these types of "life rewards," you're teaching your dog that keeping you happy by complying with your requests is the key to opening the door to everything good in his world – not just food treats! This also allows you to use food randomly – as a surprise – which is extremely exciting for dogs, and often motivates them to work even harder.

### **Tricks of the Trade Treat Tips**



- Use soft, easy-to-eat-quickly treats and make them small – about the size of a pea or an eraser on the end of a pencil. Small, soft treats can be eaten quickly, which aids in your timing as a trainer. Using small treats allows you to be generous without over-feeding your dog.
- Try different types of treats. Experiment to discover what really excites him.
- Remember that what's exciting in a low-distraction or familiar setting may fail in comparison to the exciting sights and smells in a more distracting environment. Save your "extra special" treats for training in distracting environments.
- As we mentioned before, your dog needs to eat a certain amount of food each day regardless, so why waste the opportunity to use some of that food to reward desirable behavior? Use all or some of your dog's normal daily portion of kibble for his training. To make it seem more interesting, put some in a baggie with a few chunks of cut up hot dog or another highly palatable treat. The kibble will take on the hot dog smell, making it even more reinforcing to your dog!
- Don't over-do it! The goal is to achieve a trained dog – not a trained, but very overweight companion! Consider cutting back a bit on what goes into your dog's food bowl and/or set aside a portion of his kibble each day and use that for training. Keep track of roughly how much your dog is eating in treats and adjust the remaining food you provide accordingly, within reason.

### Capturing Calmness and Desirable Behavior:

Too often we pay little attention to our dogs throughout the course of a day until they do something undesirable that catches our attention quickly. Here is a much better approach that will teach your dog to be calm and relaxed in a variety of situations, eventually including around the house in your dog's new adoptive home: when you see your dog doing absolutely NOTHING, that is the moment you want to reinforce him with attention and treats. For example: you notice your dog defaulting to laying quietly on the floor while you are having a conversation with another person - deliver a treat to that dog to reinforce calm behavior! Remember, behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated.

**Helpful Tip:** When reinforcing your dog for doing nothing, you need to get the treat to him before he thinks to look at you. This is because you want to "take a picture" of that calm behavior he is doing at that exact moment in time with the reinforcement, so that exact behavior will be repeated in the future. If your dog turns to look at you as

you feed him a treat, you will be "taking a picture" only of a dog that is excited about the food that he is about to eat. Feeding him a treat while he is looking for his treat will not actually reinforce the calm behavior you had hoped for, so wait until your dog is not thinking about the food again, before giving your dog the treat.

You can also use marker training to reinforce good behaviors that you would like to see repeated. If you "catch" your dog being good, say "Yes!" and deliver a treat. Get in the habit of having treats readily available throughout the day when you are with your dog. That way, if you see your dog doing something good that you would like her to repeat in the future, you can mark "Yes!" and never be too far from a piece of food reinforcement that you can deliver right after you mark her behavior.

Again remember, behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated!

**Here are a few examples:**



Your dog is quietly lying on her mat while you read a book. Quietly deliver her a treat!



You notice that your dog is watching a dog in the distance but is *not* pulling and is *not* barking. Say "Yes!" and deliver a treat!



You have been working with your younger dog to act calmly when greeting other dogs on leash. You see your dog approach another dog, give a quick sniff, then continue on her way. Say "Yes!" and deliver a treat! Ideally to both dogs! This will reinforce the excited dog's choice to respect the other dog's space, and will help the dogs continue to make positive associations with each other.

**What other scenarios can you think of where you might be able to "catch" and reward your dog for correct behavior?** The sky is really the limit!

## SMART x 50 Training:

The “Get SMART protocol” refers to:

See

Mark

And

Reward

Training

**The goal of this training is to** capitalize on the numerous desirable behaviors and animal performs over the course of an average day by:

1. Noticing them
2. Pointing them out to the animal (“mark” the behavior with “Yes!”)
3. Then give the animal a reward in order to increase the strength of those behaviors

Practically speaking, SMART x 50 is a simple way to get started on noticing the behaviors your dog already does that you’d like to see more of.

### **How to Do SMART x 50 Training:**

- Count out 50 small, healthy, high value treats each day
- Keep them with you in your pockets or a treat pouch so you remember to use them throughout the course of the day.
- When see your dog doing something polite, cute, or useful, mark the behavior (“Yes!”)
- Give your dog a treat
- Use up 50 treats per day (depending on how food motivated the dogs is, these “treats” can certainly be pieces of their normal dog food/ kibble)

The beauty of SMART x 50 is that you can do it anyway you want. Just do it! You can choose one or two particular behaviors over the course of a week and see for yourself that your dog ends up doing MORE of those specific behaviors or you can look more generally for various behaviors you like. For example, when working with clients with a brand new baby in the house, I tell the parents to even start with any behavior that is simply not annoying. If it’s 2:00 PM and your dog’s behavior is not annoying you, go see what he’s doing and mark and reward. This is the behavior you will want more of when you are busy with the baby!

If 50 treats doled out for desirable behavior throughout the day sounds overwhelming, you can still start somewhere - do SMART x 25 or SMART x 10!

Noticing and reinforcing the behaviors you want to see more of will never hurt typically gives better results than seem possible from such a simple approach. However, a young or energetic dog will also need help building a repertoire of specific behaviors to go with different contexts — what to do when a person is eating, what to do when the doorbell rings, what to do when the leash comes out, etc.

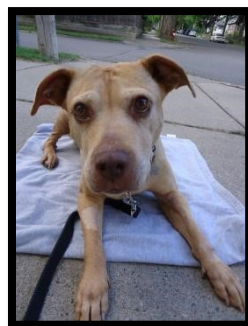
Some of this will come from training and some will come from how the dog's handler sets up his options. For example, it's perfectly fine to use a leash to prevent jumping up when the dog first meets a new person. This gives you the opportunity to see, mark and reward calmer and more attentive behavior at a bit more distance without allowing the dog to rehearse the undesirable jumping behavior.

SMART x 50 will always be helpful, but it needs to be in conjunction with meeting the dog's needs and setting him up for success. Give it a try!

### Relax On a Mat:

If you teach your dog nothing else during his life, teach him this exercise and you will reduce your dog's stress and attention-seeking behaviors by noticeable amounts. This simple exercise teaches your dog a behavior that will help him relax his body, rather than getting excited or demanding when you are not paying attention to him.

Teaching your dog to "Relax on a Mat," is different than cueing or commanding your dog to lie down. The goal of this exercise is to teach a "default behavior" — you want your dog to make the choice of relaxing on a mat, rather than you asking for the behavior. This will result in a dog who offers this calm behavior all on their own in a variety of situations. Relaxing on the mat will become an alternative to attention-seeking activities such as whining, jumping, barking, pawing, stealing items, dropping the ball in your lap repeatedly, and other annoying, reactive or anxious behaviors. Trained well, this skill will become so strong that your dog will choose relaxing over the unwanted behaviors. This new skill will become a default behavior—one your dog chooses all the time when he is not sure what he should do.



There are two exercises to work on to teach this behavior:

### **1.) Shaping a “Relax on a Mat” behavior:**

After you place your mat down, scatter about 10 treats on the surface. This will also ensure that your dog’s first impression of stepping onto the mat will be a strong one, and that it will have lasting impact as you continue this training (After you have completed a couple of sessions of this exercise, no longer put the treats on the mat at first; at that point, the treats only come after your dog has started calming himself or lying down.).

Stand or sit in a chair close to the mat with your dog on leash. When your dog approaches or sniffs the mat, mark the behavior (“Yes!”) and toss the treat on the mat. Then, mark (“Yes!”) and treat your dog several times just for being on the mat, scattering the treats on the mat. Next, mark (“Yes!”) and throw the treat off of the mat (This “resets” the dog to approach the mat again. This is ultimately a two-part behavior: the dog needs to get on the mat, and then stay on the mat.). Mark (“Yes!”) and treat when your dog gets back on the mat. Once again, mark (“Yes!”) and treat several times, and then mark (“Yes!”) and throw the treat off of the mat.

Now move the mat just a couple of inches away from you. Again, mark and treat when your dog gets on the mat, repeat several times, then mark and throw a treat. Move the mat again. Keep moving the mat a few inches at a time so your dog learns to look for it no matter where it is placed in the room.

Next, shape for relaxation on the mat by rewarding sits, then downs on the mat. Delay your mark/reward to build duration one second at a time. Once the dog is consistently offering to lay down on the mat, encourage relaxation by giving the dog a favorite chew toy or bone on the mat, or by doing gentle, relaxing massage and petting while your dog hangs out on his mat.

### **2.) Tethering the dog to teach “Relax on a Mat:”**

Tethering a dog to you can teach them to settle in and relax when their owner is also sitting down and relaxing.

With your dog on leash, lay the dog’s mat down next to you and then either sit on the leash, or anchor the leash to the floor with the balls of your feet, leaving just enough slack of the leash for your dog to lie down comfortably on the mat. You initially want to ignore your dog. You don’t have to remember any commands or hand signals, and you don’t have to tell your dog what to do. Sit back slightly, or turn to the side so you are not looming over your dog, making it is clear that you do not intend to interact with him. The goal is that your dog will figure out on their own that it is most comfortable to lie down. Even if your dog doesn’t know how to down on command, your dog will eventually find comfort in lying down. The equation for your dog should be, “When my human ignores me, I should calm down and relax because it pays off really well.” With most dogs, this usually happens in less than 5 minutes.

- Once your dog has decided to lie down and seems to be more relaxed, you can then start randomly reinforcing with food rewards. When you see calm behavior, scatter a few food pieces on the mat to reinforce your dog. Scatter them on the mat as opposed to handing them to your dog’s mouth to build value for the mat itself.
- In this early stage of training Relax on a Mat, you are looking for any less intense behaviors than when you first started. Examples of less intense behaviors might be sniffing around the area, (maybe for more treats!), remaining in a down position, relaxing his head, or rolling onto a hip. Reward each of these behaviors by dropping one piece of food at a time as close to your



dog's front feet as possible, but as close to or on the mat as you can get, depending on your dog's position.

- You might be wondering why you are giving treats when your dog is doing nothing more than sniffing the ground, or sitting. The best way to explain this would be for you to consider all the things your dog could be doing besides sniffing the ground or sitting, such as jumping up on you, barking at you, chewing his leash, etc. You are rewarding those spaces in time when your dog is actually doing an acceptable behavior when contrasted against the ones most people do not want! As you reward these calm moments, the behavior will become stronger and stronger because behavior that is reinforced will be repeated!
- Now that your dog is figuring out that being on the mat means there is a strong chance he will be reinforced, try to avoid dropping treats if your dog is staring at you. This is raising the bar a little, as you are now waiting for your dog to relax slightly more, rather than trying to "make" you give him treats by staring at you. By rewarding when he diverts his attention away, you will prevent your dog from feeling anxious about the food, especially dogs that are so focused on the food that nothing else matters. With that in mind, drop treats when your dog turns, sniffs the ground or looks away. When that happens, drop several treats in a row at his feet, in fast succession (about one every ½ second). This will teach him that looking away or sniffing around for the food is what earns the reward, not staring at you.
- It's important to keep your dog guessing as to when the next treat will happen, so he learns to relax even more, in hopes that you will drop the next reward. Just don't hold out too long in these early stages, since you wouldn't want your dog to worry or become anxious about why you haven't rewarded him in a while. If your dog keeps getting up between rewards, you will need to speed things up for him, and drop your treats faster until he understands that lying down and remaining there is the answer.
- Once your dog is very skilled at this behavior, you will only need to "pay off" every now and then, as the exercise becomes rewarding in itself.
- You are now on your way to teaching your dog how to calm himself down. Keep in mind, however, if at any time your dog gets up from the down position after this level of progress, turn your head away and stop dropping food. Let your dog process this and figure out that it was the lying down that was making you drop the treats. It only takes a couple of times for most dogs to have the light bulb go on and decide this is very easy to do and it pays off big!

#### **"Relax on a Mat" Problem Solving:**

**Dog does not lie down after 10 minutes:** If you have worked on Relax on a Mat for a full 10 minutes and your dog has not been able to lie down, it's time to stop and take a break. It doesn't matter where your dog is at this point in the training, you want your dog to be a little disappointed that you are going to end the exercise, not have him filled up on food and/or bored by the exercise. Stop training, and be patient. Your dog will eventually lie down if you work through the exercise as explained. If you come back and work on this within an hour or two, your dog will be a little full, and shouldn't be as excited about the food and may become bored enough to lay down. You can also train at times when your dog is sleepier.

**Dog seems frantic about the food:** See below for the “It’s Yer Choice” impulse control exercise. Practicing this exercise before working on mat training will greatly improve your dog’s ability to focus in the presence of food rewards.

**Dog whines or barks:** If your dog whines or barks, take a deep breath and turn your head to send a clear message that you are not going to interact with him. Try dropping your treats faster when your dog is not whining or barking to help him stay focused on the exercise, rather than demanding the food. You can always end the session if your dog seems to be overly anxious. Wait an hour or so and try again.

**Dog jumps up on you:** If your dog jumps on you during this exercise, try making the leash length shorter so the dog does not have enough slack of the leash to leave the ground. Turn slightly away (be sure that you don’t make eye contact or talk to your dog) and allow your dog to “selfcorrect” as he tries to jump. Be sure not to push your dog back down to the floor with your hands, as that can be exciting or arousing for many dogs and the intent is to work toward calmness, not escalate his excitement. It might be necessary to stand up a couple of times while still standing on the leash before your dog gets the message that you are not going to interact, although most dogs get the message pretty quickly. Drop several treats in a row just as you are sitting down again, to sustain your dog in the “four on the floor” position.

**Dog chews on leash:** If your dog chews on the leash, use a taste deterrent such as Bitter Apple to saturate the leash prior to working on the exercise. It can also be very helpful to provide young, busy dogs with a toy or bone to chew and help keep them occupied while they settle on their mat. You can speed up your treat delivery as well, which will keep his focus away from the leash. Remember that leash biting is usually a sign of stress, so helping your dog understand what you want by quick reward delivery should help him get into the game and leave the leash alone.

### **Loose Leash Walking: A Quick Look at the Difference Between Training and Management:**

Loose Leash Walking (LLW for short) means exactly that – walk calmly on a loose leash. There are a variety of methods for accomplishing LLW but the basic idea is the same. If the dog cooperates by keeping a loose leash, something that the dog wants will happen (reinforcement in the form of a food reward, the chance to proceed forwards, etc.) and if the dog does not keep the leash loose, something undesirable happens (moving the dog away from what it wants).

Now, if you are in the process of house training a puppy or new rescue dog, or if you simply need to get from point “a” to point “b” without wasting time or messing around, then I’d strongly encourage you to have a method for managing your dog while you work on training your dog consistent LLW in a variety of situations. Because realistically, when your puppy has to go potty you need to get your puppy outside – fast! This is not usually the best time for an in-depth training session.

However, even if you need to get your dog outside quickly, it IS still a good idea to expect him or her to maintain some slack in the leash and not yank you the whole way there. This is where it becomes important to “manage” your dog’s behavior with the appropriate training tools and equipment.

“Managing your dog” means to deal with the practical aspects of a situation when you cannot or will not address the underlying training issue. An obvious example is keeping your dog on leash before you have a reliable recall.

The leash will not teach your dog to come when called when he is off leash, but it will prevent your dog from running off while you work on it. There’s nothing wrong with good management while you work on your and your dog’s training skills!

One of the best management methods for not getting dragged around while you train LLW and better impulse control around distractions involves utilizing a front clip (no-pull) harness. While it is true that pressure collars such as prong or choke chains can sometimes accomplish the same short-term result (management), there are some notable concerns with the use of pressure collars, in particular for dogs that struggle with fear or aggression. To

avoid potentially negative side effects and behavioral fall-out, I’d recommend avoiding these collars and instead using a front clip/no-pull type of harness for management while you work on the training aspects of loose leash walking. For now – combine management (no-pull harness) with good training, and this will result in long term behavior change in your dog!



***Front-Clip Harness***

### **Giving Into Leash Pressure:**

The benefit of these exercises is that they teach a dog to easily "give in" to gentle leash pressure, thus making it much easier to use the leash to guide the dog and re-direct them if they are displaying undesirable behavior.

To teach your dog to follow leash pressure, put your dog's leash on and start to apply slight tension to the leash. When your dog releases the tension on the leash, mark ("Yes!") and feed a treat.

Once he's eaten the treat, again gently pull the leash so it is taut and sit or stand quietly. When he again moves to release the tension, mark ("Yes!") and treat. For this exercise, you don't care about eye contact. What you are teaching is that releasing the leash tension gets marked and treated.

Practice guiding your dog with a small amount of leash tension often, followed by a mark ("Yes!") and a treat if you dog follows the direction of the tension and releases it. This is to build a positive association with being guided by his leash. Once you have practiced this often and paired with a treat reward, it will mean that you can easily guide him with the leash when you need him to stop doing something. It will also result in a dog with better leash manners that does not pull and yank you around, but instead gives into gentle leash pressure.

In the instance where your dog is truly doing something undesirable, you do not necessarily follow immediately with a treat after calmly and non-emotionally guiding him away with the leash. However, it will benefit you and your dog the most, if you practice the leash tug, mark ("Yes!"), and treat, much more often than you actually need to guide/ re-direct him silently with the leash after undesirable behavior. Think: for every one time you use the leash to re-direct him away from an undesired behavior, you should have practiced reinforcing it with a treat, say 10 times more than that previously.

For dogs new to training, keeping the dog leashed and with you when they are not in their crate or running off leash in a fenced area for exercise makes communication between you and your dog seamless and helps set the dog up for success.

### Loose Leash and Impulse Control Around Distractions:

Teaching your dog the concept of impulse control and keeping the leash loose and slack when a person is holding onto it is the ***single most important skill*** that you can teach your dog for calm, relaxed behavior on walks and in distracting environments.



### Getting started with loose leash and impulse control work:

Find a mild to moderately distracting area for you and your dog to work. For a dog brand new to training around distractions, this might simply be a quiet area inside the training room or an outdoor area with very minimal distractions present nearby. However, once your dog has had some practice in these quieter environments, you need to start seeking out more distracting areas to practice.

The idea is to practice these skills in an area where you and your dog may encounter controlled distractions at a distance (i.e. new sights and smells in a different area of the compound, other people walking or passing by, other people with on-leash dogs passing by, etc).

You should NOT practice this exercise in the presence of other off-leash dogs that can easily access your dog. It would be incredibly unfair to your dog to expect him to be able to ignore another off-leash dog coming right up to him and trying to engage in play. However, after you have gotten the hang of this exercise, practicing your loose leash/impulse control work next to or on the outskirts of the fenced play yard can be a wonderful way to proof your dog's behavior around increasingly tempting distractions.

### **The best way to practice this exercise:**

Be very mindful of your dog's behavior *whenever* he is leashed and you are holding onto the leash (remember, you will have the most success if you use your front-clip harness *every* time you have your dog on leash). Expect your dog to keep the leash relatively slack (no tension or pulling forward) at all times, even when you are not on a formal walk. For example, make a point of reinforcing your dog with a marker (say "Yes!") followed by a food reward when he keeps the leash slack as you take him outside on leash to relieve himself. Use a "sneakaway" (see below for more information) *any* time he is pulling or lunging forward on the leash on your way to your destination.



The goal of this exercise is to start instilling good manners and a connection to you when your dog is in a distracting environment.

### **How to Practice:**

Once you have arrived at the location where you will be working with your dog, if your dog turns to look at you or check in with you, immediately click or mark ("Yes!") and reinforce (bonus points if you can reinforce by scattering several small treats). Once your dog finishes finding and eating each of these treats and looks up to you for more, you have another opportunity to mark ("Yes!") and reinforce them for being engaged with you in the environment!

The more often you can take your dog to an area on leash for a training session and mark/reward calm behavior the better! Keep in mind that you can click or mark ("Yes!") and reward when they notice a distraction in the distance but they don't pull towards it (keeping the leash loose/slack and staying in the "hula hoop radius" around you) OR for paying attention and checking in with you. *Both* are valuable behaviors and worth reinforcing in distracting environments.

We don't need to dog to completely ignore the distraction, just act calmly in its presence. We want to build up a very strong reinforcement history for calm behavior and engagement with you no matter the environment so that your dog will ultimately succeed when a distraction IS present.

### **What is a "Sneakaway?"**

Throughout the above process, you should be holding onto the end of your dog's 6' leash, attached to your dog's collar. This way, if she or he begins to pull, run towards, alert to, bark or display any undesirable behavior towards a distraction in the distance, you can hold onto the end of the leash and RUN quickly the opposite direction (a

"sneakaway"). This is taking away your dog's ability to be reinforced by continuing to bark at or fixate on the distraction and reinforces that they should be engaged and paying attention you when they are attached to a leash that you are holding onto.

Remember to turn and run right at the moment your dog starts to show signs that he or she is distracted. You want to turn and go quickly in the other direction the *moment* your dog starts to venture out of the "hula hoop radius" around you. The idea is to not wait until they are already pulling hard at the very end of the 6' leash!

Remember to not wrap the leash around your hands or to yank or pull at it. Hold onto just the handle/very end of your leash and keep in anchored to your hip as you run away. If your dog remains distracted, the leash/ front-clip

harness will tighten for a moment, then will go slack as your dog turns and starts to come towards you. If your dog is paying close attention to you despite the distraction, when you turn to run or "sneakaway," your dog will turn and follow you and the line will never get tight. Once your dog has caught up with you and is keeping the line slack and remaining near you, mark ("Yes!") and treat (again, bonus points if you can reinforce by scattering several small treats). When your dog is with you, see if you can encourage your dog to engage with you, perhaps asking for a simple cue like a sit, watch me, or nose touch (will introduce this in future classes), and then marking ("Yes!") and treating. You should also mark ("Yes!") and scatter food for your dog when they are casually looking at the distraction but not lunging, pulling, or barking. Once your dog finishes finding and eating each of these treats and looks up to you for more, you have another opportunity to mark ("Yes!") and reinforce for them being engaged with you in the distracting environment!



#### Up Your Criteria:

As your dog continues to show improvement and is very successful with the loose leash/ impulse work in your original practice locations, it is time to move to different and potentially more distracting scenarios. See if you can have success practicing with your dog while other leashed dogs are walking, training, or playing with their handlers nearby.

You may also recruit other people to assist you and act as the "distracter" for some of your training sessions. If this is the case, it is very important to be fair to your dog and not allow the person distracting your dog to call the dog's name or specifically ask them to come. Instead, it is better to have them act as a neutral distraction by

tossing toys and treats as distractions at a distance, or maybe even walking another well behaved dog on-leash past your dog.

With consistency and the proper technique, after a week of practicing loose leash work and engagement with you in new environments, you should notice a tremendous improvement in your dog's ability to act calmly in the presence of distracting stimuli, and also to be more engaged and attentive to you regardless of the environment! It is a great first step towards a more connected and mutually enjoyable relationship between you and your dog.

It is the most fundamental exercise to master as it will set the foundation for all other training around distractions.

### **Second Step for Loose Leash and Engagement Around Distractions:**

If you are having a hard time distracting your dog in the location that you are practicing loose leash work/ "Sneakaways," this is a good problem to have! This means that your dog is more engaged with you than he or she is worried or distracted by what is happening in the environment.

If you are at this stage, have fun and engage with your dog! Ask for some simple behaviors that your dog knows well (examples: watch me, sit, down, nose touch, shake, spin, etc) and mark (click or "Yes!") and treat when your dog is successful with these. If you have a toy motivated dog that is willing to let loose and play in the environment you are working in, bring out a toy and play with your dog for a bit! This is all to build value for engaging with YOU in a new and distracting environment.

### **How to Use "Sneakaways" and Reinforcement for No Pulling on Sidewalk Walks:**

After you have put in a week's worth of foundation work practicing engagement and "Sneakaways" with your dog in distracting environments with the entire leash grounded out (see the exercise described above for clarification), it is time to progress to practicing loose leash walking and engagement while on "regular" walks around the compound.

In order for your "Sneakaways" and engagement work to be effective on a sidewalk or similar path, there is a new, modified way for you to hold the leash when you begin this step of training. For this training exercise, it is preferable to use a 6' leash, though a 5' or 4' leash can work fine for a dog that does not pull much.

#### **First:**



Put your right thumb through the handle of the leash.

**Next:**



Grab a large, single loop of slack all in your right hand.

**Last:**



Anchor the part of the leash you are holding to your right hip. For this training exercise, while you are walking your dog will be on your left side while you hold a large loop of slack all in your right hand (extra leash goes across your thighs in front).

*(Please note, in the above picture the leash is attached to the dog's collar, but it is highly recommended to practice this exercise using a front-clip/ no-pull harness. We want to avoid jerking the dog's neck when you do a "Sneakaway." A front-clip/no-pull harness will give you much better control of your dog's body and will set your dog up for success with this exercise.)*

**How to Walk:**

If your dog **lags behind** or **tries to cross behind you**, simply keep the leash anchored to your right hip and continue walking forward with your thighs into the leash. The *moment* your dog starts walking to keep pace with you and the leash is not tight across your thighs, mark (say "Yes!") and reinforce with a piece of food.

If your dog starts to **pull forward** or put tension on the leash out to the side (either to get ahead or towards a distraction), immediately drop the "loop" of slack you were holding and turn quickly to your right/ behind the



dog. While you drop the slack and turn, your thumb will remain in the handle loop so you still have a solid grip on the leash.

If your dog continues to remain distracted and continues to pull forward, as you drop the slack and turn "Sneakaway"), the leash will tighten for an instant.

Then, as your dog returns to your side, gather the leash into the same loop you were holding earlier, anchor it again to your right hip, and continue walking forward as you were originally. You should also mark (say "Yes!") the moment your dog catches up to you and is focused on you following a "Sneakaway."



**Remember!**

You want to imagine that you have a "hula hoop" (slightly larger for large dogs) around your body. **If your dog is inside the "hula hoop radius" with you and not putting tension on the leash, you should be marking (saying "Yes!" and reinforcing with a piece of high value food) fairly frequently, especially when your dog is newer to loose-leash walking around distractions.** Keep your rate of reinforcement high now for consistent behavior in the long run!

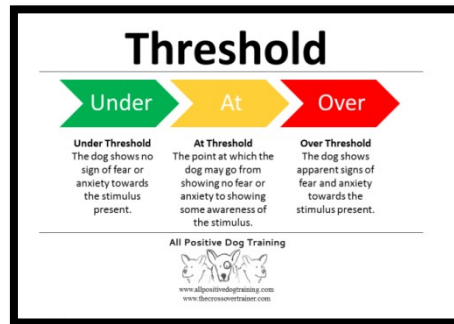
You should also be prepared to "Sneakaway" the moment your dog starts to put tension on the leash or pull forward or to the side towards a distraction, whether you are currently walking or standing still. Get in the habit of always holding your leash as described above so you are always ready to reinforce great manners around distractions.

With these exercises, you are training your dog a default behavior: "when you are attached to a leash that a person is holding onto, it is very beneficial to you to keep the leash loose and relaxed."

This is such an important foundation skill for good behavior and impulse control around distractions when out on walks and when out and about in public!

## Thresholds in Dog Behavior Modification:

How close is "too close" when working on your dog's reactions or reactivity to other people, dogs, or other distractions? The answer is just before that is your dog's THRESHOLD.



When your dog "tips over" in an emotional response to something in the environment, a situation, person or another animal, you have breached a threshold of tolerance. You are "too close" or have been in the situation "too long" or have stacked "too many" stressors or distractions into your training plan.

A dog who is "over threshold" may bark, lunge, growl, snap, or even bite. A dog who is over threshold loses his mind and can't think or respond to known cues. His emotions have hijacked his thinking brain. Before these extreme responses to stress are seen, dogs tell us they are feeling less comfortable or over-excited through displacement or "calming" signals such as looking away, looking off in the distance, sniffing, or yawning, whining, among others. By paying attention to the subtle signs of stress, anxiety, or excitement, we can be proactive and help our dog through tricky situations where he might otherwise struggle.



The pup in the above photo is able to relax while observing children on the playground. He feels safe. He is far enough away that it is unlikely that the children will direct their attention toward him or come too close. He is able to observe from a safe distance and have a positive learning experience with careful exposure to the sight, sound and smell of children. He will leave feeling calm and safe. A positive and pro-active socialization encounter.

Recognizing and respecting thresholds is also important for hyper-excitable and overly-friendly dogs. Any time emotions run high, the dog's ability to contain their excitement weakens. If your dog tips over into a barking, leaping, lunging, grabbing frenzy, you have crossed the dog's threshold - long before the dog actually lost it. A dog

is "under threshold" when he can split his attention between you and the person, animal or thing that causes an emotional response. He can still think!

### **Perfect Practice Makes Perfect Performance**

The goal is to recognize your dog's fear or arousal point and stay under it, so he can be successful. You want to ensure that the dog is rehearsing and becoming proficient at remaining calm in the face of a "trigger" rather than practicing losing his mind. We must never push him to react so we can correct him, but strive to reach a point of calmly noticing without reacting and practice being aware of the trigger while being calm. If you are the type of person who wants to "see if he can do it" and often feels tempted to test by setting him up at a level that could be unsuccessful, you will not build a firm foundation of confidence and safety. Instead, your dog is practicing being upset and acting out. Move closer when ready, and not before. Is your dog relaxed, or not?

As your dog relaxes, you will gradually move closer. If he begins to show concern or excitement, you will adjust your distance accordingly.

- A relaxed dog's face is soft, his jaw and ears are relaxed. His tail is relaxed and his weight is evenly distributed on all four feet.
- An aroused dog's weight is forward, his face and body muscles tense and his gaze focused on the target. He doesn't blink. His tail is high.
- A fearful dog's weight is poised for escape. He may be looking for an escape route. His ears are back and his tail low.

Do not move closer unless your dog is relaxed and remains so. Leave when he is still relaxed. Don't proceed forward if he is no longer relaxed. Stop well before the dog stiffens or starts to wind up.

### **Signs that you should stop or increase distance:**

- Dog's mouth closes, focuses attention on a concerning or exciting thing, ears prick - Licks lips, yawns
- Ears flip back, brow furrows
- Dog stops, paw lift, air scenting
- Looks away, turns away or starts sniffing the ground.
- Dog slows, moves in an arc. Follow his lead, praise for appropriate choices. Allow him time to acclimate and gather information. When he relaxes, you may allow him to venture closer.

If his signals tell you he is feeling any apprehension or excitement, help him stop or move away to regroup.

### **Slow is fast when it comes to helping a dog feel safe or maintain a level of self-control.**

Thresholds also come into play in basic skills training. Your dog will have an ability threshold for distance on a stay or numbers of steps on a loose leash walking. Once the behaviors are established and on cue, you will work to raise your dog's threshold for levels of difficulty and proximity of distractions and generalize to different places.

With a firm foundation and a rich reinforcement history, comes confidence, focus and reliability.



Not relaxed. Mouth closed, focused gaze.  
Time to stop, increase distance, or change something up!



**Relaxed.** No leash tension, dog is balanced on all four feet. Tail, face and ears are relaxed. Watching with calm interest.



**Not relaxed.** The differences are subtle. There is leash tension. Mouth has closed, there is stronger focus. This could be the first sign that arousal levels are rising. If your dog regularly surprises you with explosions, you could avoid them by paying close attention to the subtle signs that he is zeroing in on a scary thing or a distraction that will cause a reaction.

### "But My Dog Won't Eat When..."

If you've tried distracting your dog with treats when he sees another dog (or stranger, moving truck, etc.) and he completely ignores the treat and you, here's why:

## STRESS!

When an animal (including humans) reaches a certain level of stress, an important change takes place in the brain, which starts the processes necessary for fight (aggression) or flight (avoidance), including the activation of the sympathetic nervous system. When that happens, pupils dilate, respiration increases, heart rate increases, and digestion shuts down.

Why? Because if you're being chased by a bear, your body doesn't need food in that moment, it needs to be fast and agile. Food can come later, but if you don't survive, the nutrients you get from food won't help you.

When a threat passes, the sympathetic nervous system is disengaged, and we return to a normal state of "rest and digest." Hopefully, where you are right now.

What does this have to do with your dog passing another dog on leash?

Because whether or not your dog's reactivity is rooted in anxiety, fear, frustration, or excitement, the same process is taking place. It doesn't matter that her dog poses no real threat to your dog. What matters is that your dog's stress level has reached the point that digestion has shut down.

One other important thing happens at this point. Your dog is now focused on only the things necessary for survival (remember, this is about the dog's perception, not ours). Sort of like trying to focus on a crossword puzzle while a bee is buzzing around your face. So, trying to do any training at this moment is pointless.

Unfortunately, this is the point that most people attempt to "distract the dog" with food. But, as you now understand, it's too late.

This is why trainers talk so much about staying "under threshold." The threshold is the point at which the dog tips over into that fight or flight mode.

Where that threshold is depends on your dog, but changes depending on the proximity and intensity of the trigger, as well as duration of exposure.

For example, think of a bee with a stinger. If the bee is busy on a nearby dandelion, it might not bother you while you're gardening, but a bee buzzing around your face might be more concerning. If that bee is only there for a second before flying off, you might not move, but if the bee persists for 30 seconds or more, you might get up to avoid it. Multiply that to 100 bees buzzing around your face, and you're probably switching into serious fight/flight mode. See how slight changes can make a big difference in your stress levels?

While every dog is different, they all have a point where they can focus and learn and take treats, and a point they can't. If we want to maximize learning and behavior change, we keep them under threshold, gradually increasing the proximity, intensity, and duration they can tolerate.

**Behavior modification for reactivity using positive reinforcement is not about distracting a dog with food. It is about using food to change associations to the things that trigger reactivity and to reinforce previously taught behaviors.** To do this, we need to work at a distance, level of intensity, and duration that keeps the dog below threshold.

It's not that positive training doesn't work. Your dog just needs you to make a few changes so that it can work for them.

### **“Look At That” Exercise to Minimize Reactivity:**

One of the most common dog training issues is on-leash reactivity. Our gut instinct is to tell our dog to knock it off, give a leash “correction,” or to try to console them and make them feel safe by petting them and speaking in high pitched voices. Unfortunately for a lot of dogs our attempts at canine communication are often misinterpreted and we see an increase in snarling, lunging and barking at approaching triggers like animals, people or moving objects. If we scold or physically correct our dogs for acting like a lunatic when triggers approach, we run the risk of creating an even more negative situation for our already stressed or anxious friends.

Although it goes against our human nature, the "Look at That" (LAT) game helps to diffuse these situations and quickly results in increased confidence and focus on the dogs' handler rather than any incoming triggers.



#### **PURPOSE FOR THIS CUE:**

- Teaching the “Look at That” (LAT) cue gives the dog a chance to look at something she or he finds stimulating (or frightening!), but then to immediately reorient to the handler.
- Many times people teach their dogs to look at them in the presence of another dog or scary person, but the message the dog gets is “look at the owner and not the other dog.” This message can frustrate the dog who feels powerless and anxious about not being permitted to look at the dog (or person, or...). This cue permits the dog to look at the approaching scary object. It teaches them to look at the scary object, then look back to the handler and get rewarded.
- This cue also helps to condition the dog that looking at other dogs/people means good things happen.
- To make the act of looking at another dog/person into a game that the dog can play with the owner (hey mom, did you see that other dog/person?) rather than a game the dog plays with the other dog/person.
- Many times really friendly dogs get frustrated when they are on leash and see another dog or person and lunge to try to gain contact with the dog/person.
- Also, sometimes dogs on leash get anxious when they see another dog or scary person and bark/lunge in order to gain space between them and the other dog/scary person, i.e. if I bark at that dog, maybe they'll leave.

## **TEACHING THE CUE:**

### **First:**

You need to teach your dog the cue to look at things first before you can teach him/her to look at another dog/stimulating object.

Start by picking an item from your house – it does not matter what that item is. Hold it behind your back, pull it out, then click/treat when the dog looks at the item. Put the item back behind your back once the dog has looked at it. Do this with the same item until your dog seems to understand. Once you are confident that your dog will look at the item immediately after you present it, tell your dog to “look at that” or some other similar cue and click/treat when your dog looks at the item. Then, switch items so your dog starts to generalize (whatever is new in the environment!).

### **Next:**

From a distance you can start having your dog look at another dog or person. Make sure you are at enough of a distance that your dog does not lose it and stays calm. You will see a dog/person, point to that dog/person and then say “look at the dog/person” and as soon as your dog looks, click and treat.

### **Ultimately:**

Once your dog truly understands that “look at that” means to glance at the object/person/dog, you can start clicking/treating once the dog reorients to you. When your dog is voluntarily looking at the distraction and then looking back at you, it's then that you want to start clicking/treating not when the dog looks at the dog/person, but after the dog re-orient to you.

## **MORE TIPS:**

- The key is to keep your dog below threshold (i.e. quiet and calm) while teaching them to look at a stimulus they do not normally like and rewarding them for looking at it. If your dog is too intense with the triggers being used, start with a neutral target like a piece of paper or other item your dog has no association with and again click as soon as they look at it.
- If your dog does not turn quickly to reorient to you following the click, it is likely because they are over threshold. You should increase the distance between you and the trigger and try again.
- Begin playing LAT with a different neutral distraction for about 30 seconds, as often as you can each day. Gradually progress to more challenging distractions such as favorite toys, a dog on leash at a distance, squirrels and approaching people. Once your dog has mastered the game with various distractions, you can progress to using dogs they like and then strange dogs.
- Remember, the key here is to keep your dog calm during this game. If they begin to growl, bark or lunge, they have gone over threshold and you need to start again with more distance between you and the object.

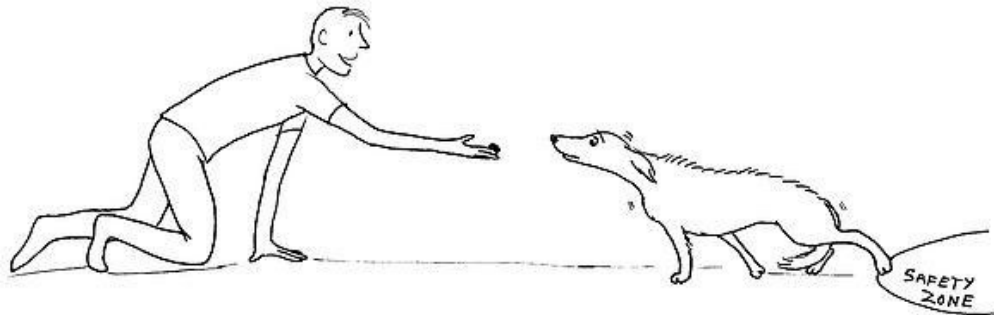
## Changing Your Scared Dog's Behavior Around Strangers:

**"Just give him food so he'll like you."**

***It sounds good in theory, but it often backfires. Why?***

It happens every day. The fearful, aggressive, or reactive dog is staying as far away from the stranger as the environment or his leash will allow, sometimes growling or even barking. Everything about the puppy's body language says, "stay away!" So the person, in an attempt to make friends, offers a treat. The pup stretches forward, rear legs extended behind him. He snatches the treat and rushes back to his safe place.

One would think that soon strangers would be associated with good things and the pup would look forward to visitors and all would be well, wouldn't you? Sometimes it works. But this scenario often makes things worse. It could even increase aggressive behavior. What? That can't be!



### **Let's look at what really happens when reactive dogs are baited in with food.**

In the above scenario, the pup is not interested in a social interaction with the stranger. He is conflicted, wanting to stay safe but magnetized by the food in the stranger's hand. He is drawn into the danger zone. His heart is racing, adrenaline is pumping and it is all he can do to muster the courage to grab the offering. The instant he has the food he rushes back to safety. Relief is the biggest reinforcer - he got away. He survived. Each time he is baited in, he is way over threshold. He is practicing terror and relief, not relaxation and friendliness.

### **How does baiting the dog in for treats sometimes evolve into aggression?**

The food is good, but the stranger is still scary. Approaching the stranger is still scary. But the dog can get the food and survive. If other strangers repeatedly offer food, the dog will be more and more likely to rush in too close to all strangers in hopes that they have food, too. The dog still feels defensive, but approaches with more confidence that he can get the food and get away. Now he's stuck in a pattern of getting too close. He looks friendly but he's still afraid. People mistake proximity for "I'd like to be petted" and reach for him. He panics and snaps. People withdraw, shocked. He learns that threatening to bite works. He adds aggression to his toolbox. When threats (air snaps) don't work, he will bite.



**Note:** Often when owners hear their dogs growl or see bared teeth, they respond by punishing the scary reaction to make it stop. This is the worst thing you can do, as now the dog is afraid to communicate and is stuck. He appears "fine" and bites "without warning."

**This is what we don't want to see:**

- Arousal - weight forward, face and body muscles tense and gaze focused on the target. Low blink rate. Tail high.
- Fear - weight shifted back, poised for escape. He may be looking for an escape route. His ears are back or shifting and his tail low.
- Every time you shift position, stand up, leave and come back, it all starts over again. You are still scary. *If his ears flip back, if he looks for an escape route, if he retreats or vocalizes, stop and revise your plan!*

**Treat - and then RETREAT.**

**Say the dog's name and toss the dog a treat.**

Dog learns strangers make good things happen.

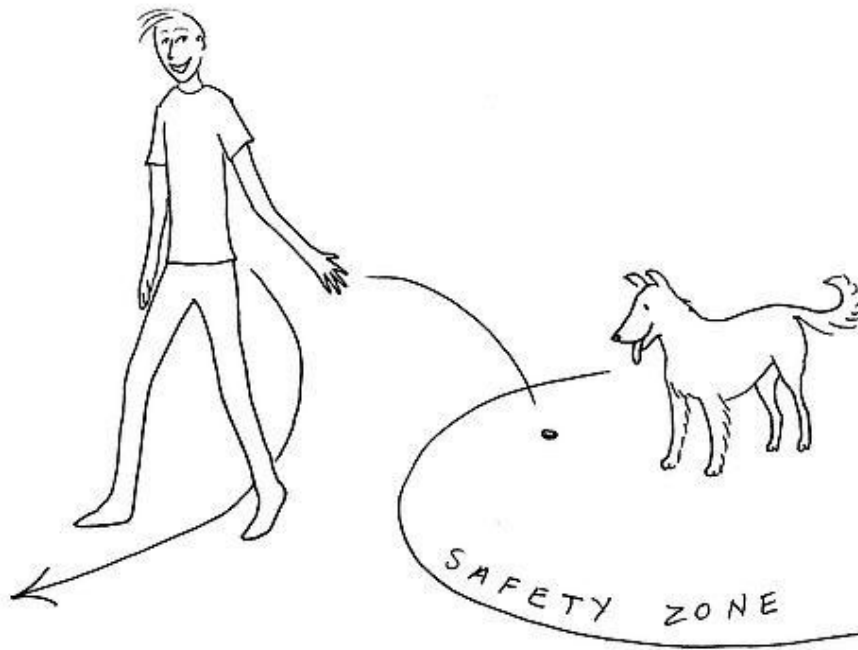
**And then, while the dog eats the treat, MOVE AWAY.**

You are not only giving him a treat, you are also rewarding him with distance.

- Approach on a gentle curve, passing casually by the dog, not walking directly toward him.
- Be aware of his comfort zone - don't go closer than he feels safe
- Don't make eye contact. Look from the corner of your eye, blink and keep your eyes soft and squinty.
- Say his name softly and toss food well into his comfort zone. The goal is not to bait him closer but allow him to collect it inside his safe zone.
- Don't hang around; leave as soon as he collects the food. Glide in, glide out.
- He may start to follow you. If you notice he is getting closer than he should, **toss the treat behind him to increase distance.**

**Signal your intent. No surprises!**

Any time you need to move and it might alarm the dog, let him know. Say his name, "I'm getting up now" - "I'm coming in the room" then toss treats away so he moves away from where you are going so he feels safe and doesn't get stuck.



**Signs that you should stop or increase distance:**

- Dog is pacing or appears anxious (panting, lip licking, yawning, approaching and retreating).
- Dog continues to vocalize after several initial repetitions (whining, growling, barking or noisy yawns)

If the dog is bothered by feet moving, slow down or stop and remain sideways to the dog, not facing him. Stay further away and move in a more gentle arc or you may stand still, remain sideways to the dog. Toss the food and as the dog reaches to eat it, take one step away. When he raises his head, say his name and toss another treat. You may toss the food behind him to help him turn away while you leave.

**Signs that your dog is over threshold (you missed the above signals and are in too deep):**

- Dog is strongly focused - toward the trigger, or away in attempt to flee.
- Continued vocalizations after several initial repetitions - growl, bark, whine □ Stress panting
- Quickening of gait, body tension, neck erect, chest out, tail stiff like a flag pole or scorpion tail.
- Lowering of body, crouched or slinking posture.
- Darting eyes, clamped or tucked tail.
- Bristling of fur or whiskers.
- You move away and he chases you, barking.

**Slow is fast when it comes to helping a dog feel safe. Don't rush!**

Never corner or trap a dog. The dog should have the option of initiating contact or not. He should always have an escape route and the choice to increase distance should always be honored.

As the dog becomes comfortable and approaches in a wagging, hopeful way, rather than a fearful, cautious manner, you can sit on the floor and allow him to sniff you. Lean back or away, not toward him. Sit with your shoulder to the dog, not facing him. Keep social pressure off - ignore him, don't engage him.



Remember, just because he is curious enough and comfortable enough to investigate your shoes, this doesn't mean he wants you to pet him. Give him all the time he needs to build trust.

When he is begging you to engage him, scratch him briefly under the chin and see what he does next. Does he leave (that was too much) or does he ask for more? Follow his lead.

### "Whiplash Turn" to Improve Response to Name/Recall:

Teaching your dog to respond to his name and turn promptly away from a distraction is the first step to teaching a very reliable recall away from distractions.

"Whiplash Turn" is a clever way of saying the end goal is to get your dog turning his head towards you so fast when you call his name that you think he's going to get whiplash.

There are endless applications for a "Whiplash Turn." It is the foundation for a brilliant recall. It allows you to get your dog's attention when he's distracted. It can even serve to interrupt the beginnings of a reactive response, assuming your dog hasn't gone over threshold.



### **How to Teach It:**

Whiplash turns are easy to teach. All you do is toss a treat to one side, letting the dog chase after it and eat it.  
**(Side note:** It's wise to give the dog a verbal cue signifying that the treat is his- something like "get it!" works great. Giving permission will help him later on when you want him to leave it.)

Just as he finishes eating, call his name. The timing here is important, because you can essentially stack the deck in your favor- your dog was likely to look back at you at that moment, anyway. When he does, mark ("Yes!") and toss the reward treat in the other direction.

Tossing the treat isn't required to play the game, but it is recommended in the early stages because it helps set up the exercise again. An alternative would be to have a second person help you by holding treats or another distraction, you let your dog "go sniff," and then call away from that distraction (the distracter should NOT feed the dog, just use the food as a distraction). If you use this technique, it is important that the value of the food you are holding is equal to or greater than the value of the food in the distracter's hand.

Once your dog is doing great whiplash turns with relatively low distractions, you can increase the difficulty. Have your helper present holding some tempting, tasty treats in a closed fist. Your dog will naturally run over to sniff the

helper's fist. Again, try to stack the deck in your favor by allowing your dog a moment or two to sniff, long enough for them to realize that the helper isn't just going to give up the goods, but not so long that they have already

turned back to you. The goal is to call your dog's name right at that sweet spot so that you can get a response.

Remember to mark (say "Yes!") the *moment* your dog turns his head away from the distraction and towards you. Immediately after marking move quickly backwards while praising and deliver the treat close to your body as your dog catches up to you.

With practice, your "Whiplash Turn" will into a more formal recall to use in a variety of situations!

## Coming When Called:

People often inadvertently teach their dogs to NOT come when called. For example, many people wait until they really need the dog before they call him. That usually means that in the dog's view of things, the "fun" is over. If the dog obediently comes to the owner, his leash is promptly attached and he's on his way home. This is not a good outcome from the dog's perspective so on each successive outing, the dog delays coming when called because by delaying, he is prolonging his off leash fun. When the owner repeatedly calls the dog and he does not come, then the dog is learning that he doesn't have to come - or at least he doesn't need to come until he is called umpteen billion times. The dog has now learned that ignoring the owner is infinitely more rewarding than obeying the owner. This is definitely a lose-lose situation. If the dog comes, he is punished for coming because his off leash fun is curtailed. If the dog doesn't come, he is learning not to come and he is being self-rewarded for ignoring the owner.

Another outcome of the above situation is that the now frustrated owner feels he needs to punish his dog for not coming when called. Because the owner does not know how to punish the dog while it is running away, the owner punishes the dog when he eventually returns. The next time the dog will take even longer to come back because not only does it end the fun but it also now means outright punishment from the owner if he does comply.

Instead, be proactive and set up situations that lend themselves to you practicing a recall that you can reinforce, then let the dog resume what he was doing previously. We are utilizing the "Premack Principle" to reinforce the dog for coming and checking in with you when you call her away from something she was previously doing. See the graphic below, but this means that instead of trying to get the dog to ignore whatever excites and distracts them), we can actually use that distraction as a reward. When you call your dog to you or away from a distraction, if she complies, click or mark it, then reinforce with a piece of food (or several) - bonus if you can scatter the food on the floor or toss the food for her to chase. After she has eaten the food, give a release cue and let her go back to the cat if she wants. It seems a little counter-intuitive, but by doing so you are reinforcing that checking in with you is a great thing and doesn't mean "loss of freedom" for the dog. It also means that the distraction will become less and less exciting to her - after all, you are giving her **permission** to go chase and play!



### To practice:

- Start around low-level distractions to build up a strong reinforcement history of responding to the cue "come." Call your dog to come and RUN away from him, praising the whole way. Crouch down to your dog's level and keep your hands close to your body and do not reach out to your dog as he approaches. Verbally praise and dole out several treats by scattering them near you. Allow your dog to eat the treats as reinforcement, then release your dog ("okay!") and allow him to resume what he was doing previously (playing, sniffing, etc).
- When practicing in a new or distracting environment, it is important to keep a leash or long line dragging on your dog – this will allow you to control the environment and ensure you can get your dog to you each time you call. As your dog's behavior improves and his recall becomes more and more reliable, you can gradually shorten the length of your practice line until you are left with just a collar or harness with your dog "off-leash."

- Think of your recall cue like a savings account. Each time you call your dog to you and reinforce him heavily when he is successful, you make a "deposit" and make the cue stronger. Similarly, if you call your dog to come and he does not respond, or if you call your dog to come but then do something the dog perceives as unpleasant when he arrives, you make a "withdrawal," therefore making the cue less strong. Your goal is to keep the "come" cue "account" as strong and reinforcing as possible. This will mean your dog will happily come to you when it really matters!

### Teaching a Default "Leave-it" Behavior/ The "It's Yer Choice" game:

The "It's Yer Choice" game is also sometimes referred to as "Doggie Zen" or a "default leave-it."

In a nutshell, this game/training exercise rewards a dog for ignoring/ looking away from something interesting. As a basic example, the dog looks at you instead of the treat, and then the dog is rewarded with a treat. It starts as a simple game but can quickly evolve into more and more complex distraction exercises.



This game teaches your dog impulse control, which is a very important life skill that can translate into your dog:

- *Leaving food alone*
- *Leaving ignoring food, pills, or other dangerous items you accidentally drop*
- *Not bothering children or other people who are eating*
- *Not impulsively pulling, jumping, lunging, etc when they see something (or someone!) they want access to* □ *And much more!*

#### **Here are the first steps to teaching "It's Yer Choice:"**

- Gather some high value treats, a clicker, and your dog. Put your dog on a leash to keep her near you, if necessary.
- Hold out a treat in a closed fist for your dog. Your dog will likely nose at, paw at, or lick your hand to get at the treat.
- Be patient! As soon as your dog stops licking or sniffing your hand (even for a second), click and open your hand to present the reward.
- Repeat Steps 2 and 3 until your dog is no longer attempting to touch you. When this happens, begin

waiting for the dog to look at you before you click and treat.

- Move your fist to a different place. Then try holding the treat out to one side, then the other. This will help your dog understand that looking at you, not looking for the treat, is what earns a reward.

After your dog has mastered the basic steps of this exercise, you can progress to more advanced versions of the game to continue to build your dog's impulse control.

Try opening your hand with the treat in it. If your dog makes a motion to move towards the treat, do not say anything, but close your hand to prevent the dog from taking the food. Once the dog backs away from your fist, open it again.

You may have to repeat a few times, but your goal is to mark (click or "yes!") the *moment* your dog actively chooses to not go for the treat in your open palm.

After marking, pick up the treat with your other hand and give it to your dog. It is counter-intuitive, but your dog is learning that his actions control the outcome, which over time will result in very impressive impulse control.

As you continue training, you can progress to more advanced versions of the game to continue to build your dog's impulse control around distractions.

### Teaching a Reliable “Drop” Cue:

Teaching your dog to drop items from her mouth is a useful and necessary skill, especially for city dogs. There are so many hazardous things on the street, it is easy for your dog to pick up something that is bad for her.

You may have tried to teach your dog a cue that means she should drop items, but you might find that your dog is reluctant to respond when the item is very high value. If this is the case it is possible that your dog thinks “drop it” means you are going to take something away from her. It is important when training this cue to allow your dog to have a toy or treat that is safe for her to keep, because in the beginning you absolutely do not want to take the item away!

Teach your dog that “drop it” does not mean you are going to take the item away. You want to think of your “drop it” practice as deposits in the bank; overtime you can trade your dog, or give your dog a reward for letting something go from her mouth, this is a deposit in her bank. This way if you find yourself without anything to trade and your dog grabs a chicken bone on the street, you have enough deposits to make this withdrawal!

You should not believe that simply because you gave your dog an item this means you should just be able to take it away at any time; this is not true for any of your human relationships, and you probably like your dog better than a lot of humans! “Drop it” as a cue for your dog should only mean she has to release what is in her mouth.



To properly train this cue, without poisoning it, you must practice with a toy or item your dog can safely continue to chew on. To begin, get several tasty treats and allow your dog to begin to chew on a treat or toy.

- 1.) Walk near your dog and drop a treat near her toy as you pass, you don't have to say anything. Repeat several times, until your dog looks up at you eagerly as you approach, or even follows you.
- 2.) Approach your dog and reach for the toy, but instead of taking it, leave a treat behind. Repeat this several times until your dog is excited for you to approach.
- 3.) Say "drop it" to your dog, just once, then approach, trade her for a treat, and walk away, leaving her with the toy! This is key; DO NOT TAKE THE TOY AWAY!
- 4.) Repeat step 3 until your dog will respond to the "drop it" cue before you present the treat, but still reward her at the end! Remember these rewards are your bank deposits, so keep on saving up!
- 5.) Each day, or each new practice session, start from step 1, even if it takes you less time to progress.

### Default "Out" or "Release" Behavior with a Toy:

This quick, easily taught 3 step method works best for dogs with a very strong drive for tugging and no desire to let go. If your dog won't stop tugging even when you wave a very high value treat in front of him, this method is for you.





**Step 1:** Immobilize the toy. Your dog loves the action tugging creates. If you no longer provide resistance to your dog's tugging, this lessens her enjoyment and will usually provoke a response—like releasing the toy. I like to trap the tug toy with both hands against my thigh.

**Step 2:** Give your cue. Say it immediately after you have stopped tugging with your dog. Examples of cues you could use: "out," "release," "drop it." With this exercise, I start using the verbal cue with the very first repetition I attempt with a new dog.

**Step 3:** Mark ("Yes!") and restart the game. As soon as your dog lets go of the tug toy, IMMEDIATELY mark and restart the game by giving your cue to take the toy (mine is "get it") and moving the toy AWAY from your dog. Moving the toy away from your dog is critical as this will instantly stimulate her prey drive and make for a very satisfying reward—another game of tugging. Your dog will learn that the quickest way to a great game of tug is a fast release of the toy when cued by the handler.

### **Troubleshooting:**

**Q:** My dog took a while to let go of the toy.

**A:** That's okay. Some dogs may take several seconds to let go of the toy; just wait for them to let go, and IMMEDIATELY mark and give your "get it" cue and move the toy away from them.

**Q:** I can't immobilize the toy because my dog is too big and stronger than me.

**A:** You can try using a leash to prevent the dog from pulling away from you, but you must find a way to immobilize the toy or this method will not work. You might try using a toy with less "give" if you are having a hard time immobilizing.

### **"Target" / Nose Touch:**

#### **What does "target" mean?**

A "target" is anything that the dog must focus on and perform some action towards. We usually introduce the idea of a target when we reward a dog for touching our palm or closed fist. The most common form of targeting for dogs is a nose-touch.



#### **What is targeting used for?**

There are many specialized uses for targeting. Once you teach your dog to target, you are opening up the lines of communication between the members of two different species - you and your dog! This technique will speed your training because you will be using it as a prompt to lead your dog in the right direction.

Dogs who understand the concept of targeting can easily be taught to pay attention to you around distractions, go to a bed or mat at a distance, come reliably when called, and much more.

Maybe sometimes you just want to get your dog to move to a particular place - up on the couch next to you, on to the floor, maybe just scooting over a few inches to make room for someone else. Targeting will help!

You can use targeting to start a lot of fun "tricks", too. You can teach a dog to spin a circle or push doors closed by following a target with a nose, and you can teach a paw wave or pushing a lever with a paw touch on a target.

Additionally, many dogs enjoy just finding and touching the target when it's presented as a challenging game. Mental stimulation is your best friend if you have a high energy pup - it is often much more tiring than just physical exercise alone! Many dogs enjoy jumping up to touch a high target or competing in a speed game to see how quickly they can get their nose or paw to the target you surprise them with!



### **How to teach your dog to "target:"**

- The beginning of target training takes advantage of the dog's natural curiosity. Most dogs will sniff or even touch your open, out-stretched palm if you hold it out to them - especially if you've just been handling food treats.
- Simply mark ("Yes!") and reward your dog for each touch. It helps if you hold it close to their nose, maybe just below their nose level. If you want to, you can eventually transfer the nose-touch to some inanimate object - like a target stick, a Post-It note, or margarine lid.
- Repeat this a few times. See if your dog gets more confident in her touches. Make sure you mark and reward this easy first step quite a few times before making it any harder.
- Once your dog seems very confident nose touching your palm or other object presented close to their nose, hold the target out a little bit further - just enough for the dog to really stretch out her neck to touch it. Continue to mark ("Yes!") and reward those touches, repeating a few times.
- Now start varying the position of the target relative to the dog, and relative to you, and you relative to the dog. For example, hold it out slightly to one side, then the other. Hold it an inch or two above or below the original level. Hold the target out while you stand, sit, or kneel. Ask your dog to target while you face the dog or have the dog at your side.

- You should mark ("Yes!") right as your dog's nose touches the target - make it clear that it's touching the target that is causing the mark and reward!
- Are you willing to bet that your dog will touch the target at any one time? Then (and only then!) add a cue, like "Touch" or "Target!" You can add the cue just before you think the dog will do it, to form the association between the cue and the action.

### Teaching the "Sit" Cue:

Using a marker word ("Yes!") to teach your dog to sit on cue is usually the easiest obedience training exercise to start with. You can either capture the behavior when he offers it or use a lure (treat in your hand) to guide your dog into the sit position. It all depends on how much he likes to sit on his own. Once he sits reliably you can add the verbal cue "Sit" and change the exercise to increase your dog's reliability.

#### **Directions for capturing:**

The quickest way to marker train a dog to sit is to have him do it on his own. Grab your treats, head to the designated training area, show the dog the treats in your hand, and wait. Your dog will sit at some point, just be patient and watchful. The instant his hind quarters touch the ground, mark "Yes!" and treat. Then back away from him a few steps which should bring him toward you. The moment he sits again, mark "Yes!") and treat.

When your dog offers to sit correctly 90-95% of the time, one repetition after another, it's time to add the verbal cue. On the next repetition say "Sit" just as he's about to touch down. Following a few more repetitions like this, only click and treat when your dog sits after you've asked him to.

#### **Directions for luring:**

If your dog is not the self-motivated type, you can teach him to sit by luring him into position. Because of their bone structure, dogs can't look up without sitting down in the process so you can use that to your advantage. Hold a treat just in front of your dog's nose. When he focuses on it, bring the treat slowly up and back over his head. The moment his bottom touches the ground, mark "Yes!" and give him the treat. If your dog backs up rather than sits, do the exercise in a corner so he has nowhere to go.

Lure him into position a couple of times for a click and treat, then try it without holding the treat. When he readily sits several times in a row following your hand without a treat present, add the cue as described above.

You may

need to return to the lure if your dog stops offering to sit or his responses aren't consistent. Work through this by *silently* repositioning the dog with the lure. It is not helpful to continue to repeat the cue!

## Stay in Place Until Released:

Often times dog owners will easily teach their dogs what the words "Sit" and "Down" mean, but they forget to also teach the dog a "release" that tells them when it is okay to move from that position.

As we begin to teach your dog to stay in place when asked ("Sit-Stay" or "Down-Stay"), we will introduce a "chintouch release." This means that when you want your "Stay" cue to be over, you will gently touch/stroke underneath your dog's chin while saying the word "okay" and taking a step to guide your dog out of the position. This touch/word combination makes it very black and white to the dog when they are being released - the word "okay" by itself will often come up in conversation, and this can be confusing to the dog.

The release is just as important as the cue itself - it means that when trained properly, your dog will remain sitting (or laying down or in a standing position) until you wish for him to get up. If you do not train using a formal release, your cue will often "evaporate" into nothing and your dog will simply decide to get up whenever it suits him.

To begin training your dog to stay in position when asked, follow these steps:

### Sit-Stay:

Cue your dog to sit by saying "Sit" one time and lifting your hand up in front of your dog's nose as if you had a treat.



If your dog does not immediately offer a sit behavior, lure it once with a treat. Once your dog follows the lure into a sitting position, mark (say "Yes!"), feed in position, then immediately release with your chin-touch release, take a step or two, and then ask for the sit again with the verbal "Sit" and hand signal with no treat in your hand.

When your dog has success and his bottom hits the floor, immediately mark ("Yes!") and feed him in position. You should feed several times while your dog is in the sitting position, and you can verbally praise your dog.

However, if he gets up before you give your chin-touch release, quickly and silently guide him back into the correct sitting position either with just your hand or with a treat in your hand. When he is back in the seated position, again mark (click or "Yes!") and feed.

Do not be tempted to repeat the "Sit" cue! Saying it more times will not improve your dog's understanding, but showing him what you want through your actions and reinforcements will! After all, you most likely would prefer that your dog listen to your cues the first time you say them, rather than waiting for you to repeat something five or six times!

### Adding Distractions to the Sit-Stay:

When teaching your dog to sit and stay in place for longer periods of time, it will work to your advantage to train with different tempting distractions while you are just a step or two away from your dog before adding distance to your "stay" cue.

This may seem counter-initiative, as many times dog owners teach their dogs to "stay" by walking slowly away and seeing how far they can get without their dog getting up. The problem with this strategy is as follows: your dog may sit very patiently and quietly as you walk a very far distance away when there are minimal distractions present, but once there is a tempting distraction nearby and you are far away, you miss the chance to control the situation and to teach your dog that staying still and ignoring the distractions pays off for him.

Instead, what you should do is start to introduce new distractions to your dog while practicing the "sit-stay" while she is on leash and you are standing just a few steps away. This will allow you to either reinforce immediately if she chooses to stay in position when the distraction is introduced, OR quickly step in to re-position your dog if she decides to get up.

If you are 10' away and she gets up to investigate a ball thrown next to her, you miss the opportunity for immediate feedback!

Instead, stay close, and work on "proofing" your dog with all types of distractions. Will she sit when you toss a toy next to her? Will she sit when you toss a treat on the floor? Will she sit while you pet her? Will she sit while a stranger approaches? Pets her? As another dog walks past...?

You get the idea... practice with many distractions and make sure to mark (click or "Yes!") and reinforce heavily when your dog resists the temptation of a distraction and instead remains seated. If she gets up when presented with the distraction, guide her back into position *without repeating your "sit-stay" cue*, and then try to present the distraction again at a slightly less exciting level. If she is successful at staying, mark (click or "Yes!") and feed! Then chin-touch release and take a step to end the "stay."



*Stay close to your dog when introducing new distractions so you can either reinforce quickly or re-position your dog immediately if they get up.*

**Another great way to practice a "sit-stay" with distractions is to combine the "sit-stay" cue with the "It's Yer Choice" impulse control exercise introduced above:**

- Cue "Sit" and "Stay."
- Present an open hand with a treat in it a few inches in front of your dog. If your dog makes a motion to move towards the treat, do not say anything, but close your hand to prevent the dog from taking the food. Once the dog backs away from your fist and back into a sitting position, open it again.
- You may have to repeat a few times, but your goal is to mark (click or "yes!") the *moment* your dog remains seated and actively chooses to not go for the treat in your open palm.
- After marking, pick up the treat with your other hand and give it to your dog. It is counter-intuitive, but your dog is learning that his actions control the outcome, which over time will result in very impressive impulse control.

Remember... if you can practice your "stays" with you close by and presenting many different distractions at first, then eventually adding distance to your "stay" will be so easy it is not even "training!"

### Keep your dog engaged following each "chin touch release":

Make sure you aren't accidentally teaching your dog to tune you out completely after you use a "chin touch release" to release her from a "sit stay" or "down stay."

This "two-cookie" method (a treat for the "sit" or "down," and then another treat for re-orienting to you following the release) will teach your dog to remain focused on you in between cues.

After all, you want your release to be permission to stand up/ change position, not yank on the leash or try to dash across the room. Use this method for much better focus!

### Continuing to Proof "Sit-Stay" and "Down-Stay":

#### Remember the following each time you ask your dog to "sit" or "down" and "stay:"

- The "chin touch release" is just as important as the "sit-stay" or "down-stay" cue. Make sure that when you want your "Stay" cue to be over, you gently touch/stroke underneath your dog's chin while saying the word "okay" and taking a step to guide your dog out of the position. You want there to be a very clear "start" and "finish" to the behavior, especially as you begin to add in distractions.
- Before asking your dog to "sit" or "down," first make sure he is engaged and paying attention to you. If he is looking in the distance or otherwise distracted, it is much more beneficial to do a "Sneakaway" and feed close to your body for engagement before giving your dog any further cues. This is setting a basic foundation for impulse control and attention around distractions. It doesn't pay to ask a dog to "sit" or "down" when he is already straining at the end of the leash - you need to get his attention first!

- Cue your dog to sit by saying "Sit" one time and lifting your hand up in front of your dog's nose. Cue your dog to "Down" by having him follow your hand down to the ground (start from a sitting position if he's having trouble doing it from a standing position).



- If your dog does not immediately offer the behavior (sit or down) as you cue it with a word and hand signal, lure it once or twice with a treat in your hand. Once your dog follows the lure into the correct position, mark (click or "Yes!"), feed in position, then release with your chin-touch release, take a step or two, and then ask for the behavior again with the verbal cue and hand signal with no treat in your hand.
- You can feed several times while your dog is in the correct position, and you can verbally praise your dog.
- Remember, if he gets up before you give your chin-touch release, quickly and silently guide him back into the correct sitting position either with just your hand or with a treat in your hand. When he is back in the seated position, again mark (click or "Yes!") and feed. Do not be tempted to repeat the "Sit" or "Down" cue! Saying it more times will not improve your dog's understanding, but showing him what you want through your actions and reinforcements will!
- Continue to work on "proofing" your dog with all types of distractions. Will she stay sitting when you toss a toy next to her? Will she stay sitting when you scatter several treats on the floor? Will she stay laying down while you bend to tie your shoe...? Etc, etc!
- If she gets up when presented with the distraction, guide her back into position *without repeating your "sit-stay" cue*, and then try to present the distraction again at a slightly less exciting level. If she is successful at staying, mark (click or "Yes!") and feed! Then chin-touch release and take a step to end the "stay."



### Automatic Sits as a Default Behavior:

When dogs offer a “sit” behavior without an explicit cue or command, it's called an “automatic sit,” or a “default behavior.” Default behaviors such as automatic sits teach the dog to constantly check in and give their handler focus and to offer desirable behaviors, even in difficult or distracting situations. It aids all other training, and it is the first step towards consistent good behavior and impulse control.



#### **Incorporate Automatic Sits into your dog's normal daily routine:**

- Walk briskly and then abruptly stop. Hold out your hand in front of the dog's nose in case he doesn't immediately stop. Then, wait for a Sit.
- As soon as the dog sits, immediately mark (“Yes!” or click) and reward with a food or toy reward, then and take another few brisk steps.
- Abruptly stop again and wait for a Sit. Repeat this many times and move briskly forward, backwards, and side-to-side. Practice Automatic Sits before giving the dog any toy, food, play, attention, and walks, and make an effort to also practice in different environments and locations. Over time, you can use food or toys rewards only sporadically.

By teaching this as an automatic, offered behavior, you'll notice a marked increase in the dog's ability to focus and learn in difficult situations.



### Proofing Cues:

Test your dog's understanding of basic cues like sit and down by varying your body position and the "picture" the dog sees when you give the cue. Work on successfully getting your dog to sit on cue under a variety of challenges. Try cueing "sit" while you are sitting in a chair, with your hands behind your back, with your back to your dog, while sitting on the floor, etc.

Work through all of the "known" behaviors. Can your dog "go to mat" without the handler walking in that direction? Can they stay there with only one cue? Can they walk on a loose leash when the handler walks slowly, normally, or at a modest jog? Can they recall when the person is out of sight? Lying on the floor? When looking at a book?

If you find a situation where your dog is not successfully responding to the cue with the new variable you have added, change your approach and use baby steps to get your dog in the correct position while you continue the new action/distraction. For example, if your dog does not sit when you cue the behavior with your back turned to him, will he have success if you turn your shoulders slightly before cueing? Then start there and work your way up to a full turn away!

### Practicing Well-Known Cues With Rewards Off Your Body:

When your dog is showing a lot of progress at responding to your cues in different locations, even with distractions in the environment, let's talk about that treat that you're clutching in your hand.

Often when training a new behavior, you are holding a treat in your hand. That is intentional so it is quite obvious to your dog why it was in her best interest to cooperate!



But now we need to change that practice of having highly visible treats (or toy reward) in your hand. If you're not convinced that we need to do that, ask yourself these questions:

Do you really want to carry a treat (or toy) in your hand forever?

What's your plan if you don't happen to have a treat (or toy)?

What if your dog does the math and decides that what the world has to offer is better than what you are holding?

Good training REQUIRES that we get that treat out of your hand, even if you find yourself clinging to it like a life preserver. We want to turn your dog into an optimistic gambler, and that's not possible when you're waving a paycheck right in front of your dog's nose.

**Round 1: Pocket Those Treats!**

For this training exercise, set yourself and your dog up to work in a familiar training location. We always make things easier when we change a variable in the training, and this time, that variable is the treats in your hand.

Instead of keeping the treats in your hand as you train, show them to your dog, then place those treats in your pocket. Request a behavior.

Success? Take the treats out of your pocket and give them to your dog as usual.

Failure? Pull the cookies out of your pocket and show them to your dog. Of course, we are simply showing - not giving. "This is the cookie you won't be getting."

**Round 2: Treats Across the Room**

You're going to repeat all of the lessons again, but this time, place the treat somewhere else in the room instead of your pocket (for example, on a table where they are visible but inaccessible to the dog).

Now, request a behavior. If your dog fails, go and show your dog what she missed out on and start over. If your dog succeeds, go with your dog to the location of the reinforcer, and give her some! She worked hard; she earned it!

Most dogs will work through both of these steps (treats in pocket and treats across the room) in just a few days. Now it's time to truly introduce the idea of gambling.

**Round 3: No Visible Rewards!**

Next time you train, place the treats (or toy reward) somewhere in the room/ training location BEFORE you get your dog. Do not show your dog the treats or toy before you begin the training session. This time, when you ask for a behavior, your dog is truly gambling. She doesn't know what - if anything! - you have to offer.

Success? Go and get the treat and give it to your dog. Heck, give her several - that was hard work! Don't forget to add in some heartfelt and enthusiastic praise as you give her each of those treats!

Failure? Go and get the treats and show them to your dog. But instead of simply repeating the lesson, take the dog out of the room and start over. This is important or you'll set yourself up for a lifetime of "show me the money" before your dog will do any work.

In fact, you will remove your dog from the room after each repetition - whether it was a success or a failure - so you can move the location of the treats or toy reward. Bring your dog in the room and start another repetition. If your dog decides to ignore you and walk around the room looking for your stash, no problem. Show her the treats that you are not going to give her, take her out of the room, and start over again.

Some dogs will get stuck at this stage for a few days. No worries - they'll get it! Other dogs will not make a mistake from step one. Wonderful!

**Grooming and Handling Desensitization:**

Dogs sometimes have to tolerate not-so-pleasant procedures during grooming or veterinary care. With some planning and training, you can prepare your dog to know what to expect, and to cooperate with necessary procedures.

Our goal is to use a step-by-step method to increase your dog's comfort with being handled, having his paws touched, standing still for brushing, tolerating nail clipping, etc.

Trainers in zoos and aquariums use this same step-by-step process to teach a rhinoceros to walk onto a weigh scale and present its shoulder for an injection, or to teach a dolphin to offer a flipper for a blood draw.

### **Establish a marker to mean "Yes! You win!"**

Just like with the other training we are doing, use a marker word ("Yes!") to tell the dog, "Yes! That's right! You will get a treat!" when establishing good grooming and handling habits. The marker allows you to be very precise in giving the dog information, but a bit flexible when it comes to giving treats. Once you have marked, you do not need to give treats at the exact moment you are holding the dog's paw with one hand and a brush with the other. The dog learns that every time you mark during the grooming and handling process, the treat comes within one to three seconds.

### **Handling and grooming practice:**

Handle your dog every day, trying to touch every part of its body. This step is particularly important for puppies. Handle every toe, look at its teeth, feel its ears, tummy, etc. When he allows you to touch an area without pulling away or trying to mouth you, click or mark ("Yes!") and treat. When your dog is good at this massage and touching session, you are ready to move on to doing other things like brushing teeth, combing fur, trimming nails, etc.

Once a day, touch your dog with an "odd" object (a shoe, a spoon, an umbrella, an ice cube, etc). Click or mark ("Yes!") and treat immediately! This will help desensitize him to future surprises such as grooming tools, stethoscopes, rubbing alcohol, bandages, etc.

### **Work in short sessions:**

Work in 5 minute sessions, or count out 20 treats and when they are gone take a play break. Each session should get you closer and closer to your goal. Remember to click or mark ("Yes!") and treat when the dog cooperates, and soon you will notice the dog actively trying to cooperate.

Working on grooming and handling is usually easier with a tired dog. Schedule your training sessions for times when the dog is already relaxed, possibly after a vigorous play or training session.



### **Watch for body language signals:**

Pay close attention to your dog's body language. Go back to an easier step if he pulls away, tries to leave, or if you see him yawning, licking his lips, or looking at you with the white of his eye showing a half moon shape. These behaviors all indicate anxiety—you have moved too fast.

### **Start early!**

Don't wait until dog pet needs medical treatment to train for these kinds of procedures. Use an empty dropper bottle and condition your dog to the various steps leading up to the actual administration of drops. Similarly, teach your dog to accept the handling that is required for general medical exams and grooming. Run through the steps

quickly every so often. When it comes time for actual grooming or a veterinary exam, use extra delicious treats and a mark/treat for each step of the process. This routine will comfort your dog the foundation you have laid will make the whole process easier.

### **The importance:**

By providing immediate, clear, and positive consequences to our dogs during these practice handling and grooming sessions, we will train them to *expect* that grooming and veterinary procedures will be heavily reinforcing and as pain-free as possible. It will help replace their natural reluctance to being poked and prodded with a willingness and enthusiasm for being handled. It will allow you in the future to be able to perform a range of grooming and medical behaviors with minimal stress. Ultimately, this type of training is an investment in your dog's long-term health and well-being!

### **Teaching a Chin Rest:**

While chin rests are a fun trick to teach your dog, you can use this behavior for so many different things. If your dog is fearful of human contact, **teaching your dog to rest her chin in your hand teaches her body handling and close human contact is a good thing.**



### **When to Use Chin Rests:**

Anytime **you need to examine, brush, bathe, trim or medicate your dog's head or neck area**, chin rests will make it much easier for both you and your dog. Also, an awesome side effect is it builds confidence while teaching dogs that body handling is fun and very rewarding.

With a large dog, you can also use a solid chin rest behavior for helping keep dogs still while visiting with people - the dog can learn to perform the chin rest on a person's lap. An extremely useful behavior for any dog going on to be paired with a veteran as an emotional support dog!

### **Visiting the Veterinarian**

Annual dog exams always consist of two things: ear and eye exams. These exams are a struggle for most dogs. When you think about it, it's kind of weird having someone look into your eyes with a funny gadget and stick a hard plastic cone down your ear canal.

**Teach your dog to calmly rest his head in your head, so the veterinarian can get a good look into your dog's eyes and ears.** No more wrestling and forcing your dog to the ground. You'll be shocked how easy it is to teach too.

### Applying Medication

Some time in your dog's life, he'll likely need **medication applied to his eyes and ears. Here's where chin rests will make putting medication on his face much easier.** It's also a great way to clean your dog's ears.

### Grooming

The large majority of dogs need to be brushed, but it seems most will duck their heads down as a brush moves toward their face. **Instead of chasing your dog around the house with a brush, train your dog to rest his chin in your hand.** Once he learns chin rests, slowly introduce a brush. Don't touch him with it yet. Instead say "yes" and treat him when he sees the brush. Only then do you slowly move the brush closer, touch his head and brush once. If your dog backs away, you've gone too far too soon, so take a step back.

By teaching your dog to calmly rest his chin in a stranger's hands, **your groomer will most definitely find it useful.** The dog groomer can quickly trim around your dogs' eyes, muzzle and ears without holding his head still.

### Building Confidence

**Teaching your dog human hands and close body contact is fun and rewarding is empowering for dogs,** especially fearful ones. If your dog ducks or moves away anytime you reach or move toward him, I highly recommend teaching chin rests.

#### How to Teach Your Dog Chin Rests:

You'll need **lots of high value treats** cut into pea-sized bites. Another important factor: **don't stare into your dog's eyes or face** while teaching this behavior. It's extremely freaky looking to dogs and humans alike. Rest your gaze on your open hand instead.

#### Step 1: Just Reach

Before reaching and grabbing your dog's chin, we need to **teach him to stand still while you reach for his**

**face** (don't touch his face yet). Most dogs back away and, if you watch really closely, so do people. ○

Reach toward your dog, leaving three feet in between your hand and dog. As you're reaching, mark the behavior by saying "yes" and then give your dog a treat.

- If your dog backs away, increase the distance between your hand and dog. Or make your hand movement smaller (less swinging, slower movement).
- Practice four to five more times and end the session.

#### Step 2: Touch Under Chin

As with anything, there are a couple of ways to **teach your dog to allow touching of his face**. You can shape and capture behavior or lure—it's up to you, your skill level and dog's personality.

- Slowly place your palm under your dog's face and feed him five or six tiny treats one after the other. ○  
Once five or six treats are given, remove your hand.
- Now, try again. You'll probably notice your dog standing very still, as your hand moves toward his chin (a good thing!). Lure and feed five or six treats again.
- Practice three to four more times and end training session.

If your dog steps back while you feed or approach him, go back to step one and practice some more.

### **Step 3: Rest Chin**

Now, we'll teach your dog to *lower* his chin in your hand.

- Place your hand about ½ inch under your dog's chin (you're not touching it) and use a treat to lure his muzzle into your hand.
- Once you feel his muzzle drop into your open hand, say "yes" and give him a treat. ○ Practice a few times and end training session.

### **Step 4: Rest Longer**

Now that your dog has learned to drop his chin into your open hand, we'll teach him to hold it there longer and relax.

- Hold your open hand out and click (or say "yes") once your dog holds his chin in place for a second. ○  
Now, click (or say "yes") when you notice any type of relaxation. ○ You can certainly teach your dog to look at you too during chin rests. This is excellent for eyes exams. Say "yes" when he looks at you.
- Practice a few more times and end training session. ○ Slowly increase duration of chin rests by adding an additional second during each training session.

On average, a 10-second chin rest is sufficient. If your dog needs his head groomed, then one minute is plenty. After a quick break, hold your hand out for another chin rest and groom for another minute.

### **Step 5: Pass It On**

Start to incorporate other people into your dog's chin rest training. Bring your dog into the room—on leash is easier, so your dog doesn't jump on them. Practice all five steps with the second person and you'll notice the training session moves much faster since your dog already knows the behavior.

### **Wait at the Door:**

It is very helpful to teach a cue that means "do not move forward" (past a barrier, doorway, threshold, boundary, etc.) and to differentiate it from a separate cue that means "stay frozen in that position until released."

After all, there are going to be times to you would like to stop your dog's forward movement, but do not necessarily need him to stay frozen in one place; he can do what he pleases *behind* the boundary/ threshold, he just should not cross it.

Examples may include waiting at the door, not walking off a curb into the street, staying behind a property line, staying out of a certain room, etc.

For our purposes, we will be teaching your dog that "Stay" means "stay frozen in that position until released" and "Wait" means "do not move forward."



### **Teaching "Wait at the Door:"**

- Bring your dog up to the door and then open the door only about the dog's shoulder width.
- Cue "Wait" one time, then start fanning the door back and forth with a fairly rapid motion. Do not close the door completely. Continue to open it just to your dog's shoulder width, then continue fanning it back and forth.
- The large majority of dogs will be deterred by the movement of the door and will take a step backwards. When this happens, mark ("Yes!") and feed. Bonus points if you toss the treat inside and away from the door.
- If your dog is particularly impulsive at doors and is very determined to get to the other side of the door, the movement of the door alone may not be enough to deter him. Continue to move the door rapidly back and forth at his shoulder width - quickly but not slamming the door. If he continues to try to barge through the doorway, he may receive a "tap" or two from the door. The *moment* he backs up even just a bit from the door, mark ("Yes!") and feed. Bonus points if you toss the treat inside and away from the door. With a few repetitions he will no longer be dashing through the door.
- You can also practice blocking your dog with your body, sneaking through the door yourself, and then fanning the door and asking him to wait with you on the other side of the threshold. When he is not making any forward movement, mark (click or "Yes!") and toss a treat inside and away from the door.
- You can practice this technique at household doors, outdoor doors, car doors, and even crate doors.
- Also come up with a cue to let your dog know when it is okay for him to run through the door ahead of you (e.g. "out you go!"). There is no rule that he needs to wait at every single door, and sometimes it is more convenient to send your dog ahead of you, say if you have an armful of groceries. However, it is still prudent to practice the "Wait" cue often so you can use it when you need it!

## **Preventing Mouthing, Nipping, and Play-Biting in Adult Dogs:**

Most people don't enjoy dogs who bite, chew and mouth their hands, limbs or clothing during play and interaction. The jaws of an adult dog can cause significantly more pain than puppy teeth, and adult dogs can inadvertently cause injury while mouthing. Mouthing is often more difficult to suppress in adult dogs because adults aren't as sensitive to our reactions as puppies are, and they're usually more difficult to control physically because of their size.

Adult dogs who mouth people probably never learned not to do so during puppyhood. It's likely that their human parents didn't teach them how to be gentle or to chew toys instead.

### **Is It Playful Mouthing or Aggressive Behavior?**

Most mouthing is normal dog behavior. But some dogs bite out of fear or frustration, and this type of biting can indicate problems with aggression. It's sometimes difficult to tell the difference between normal play mouthing and mouthing that precedes aggressive behavior. In most cases, a playful dog will have a relaxed body and face. His muzzle might look wrinkled, but you won't see a lot of tension in his facial muscles. Playful mouthing is usually less painful than more serious, aggressive biting. Most of the time, an aggressive dog's body will look stiff. He may wrinkle his muzzle and pull back his lips to expose his teeth. Serious, aggressive bites are usually quicker and more painful than those delivered during play.

### **How to Minimize Your Dog's Mouthing and Nipping**

Dogs spend a great deal of time playing, chewing and investigating objects. They also enjoy playing with people, of course. Puppies chew on our fingers and toes, and they investigate the world with their mouths and teeth. This kind of behavior may seem cute when your dog is seven weeks old, but it's not so endearing when he's two or three years old—and much bigger!

It's important to help your dog learn to curb his mouthy behavior. There are various ways to teach this lesson, some better than others. The ultimate goal is to train your dog to stop mouthing and biting people altogether. However, the first and most important objective is to teach him that people have very sensitive skin, so he must be very gentle when using his mouth during play.

### **Bite Inhibition: Teach Your Dog to Be Gentle**

Bite inhibition refers to a dog's ability to control the force of his mouthing. A puppy or dog who hasn't learned bite inhibition with people doesn't recognize the sensitivity of human skin, so he bites too hard, even in play. Some behaviorists and trainers believe that a dog who has learned to use his mouth gently when interacting with people will be less likely to bite hard and break skin if he ever bites someone in a situation apart from play—like when he's afraid or in pain.

Young dogs usually learn bite inhibition during play with other dogs. If you watch a group of dogs playing, you'll see plenty of chasing, pouncing and wrestling. Dogs also bite each other all over. Every now and then, a dog will bite his playmate too hard. The victim of the painful bite yelps and usually stops playing. The offender is often taken aback by the yelp and also stops playing for a moment. However, pretty soon both playmates are back in the game. Through this kind of interaction, dogs learn to control the intensity of their bites so that no one gets hurt



and the play can continue without interruption. If dogs can learn from each other how to be gentle, they can learn the same lesson from people.

When you play with your dog, let him mouth on your hands. Continue play until he bites especially hard. When he does, immediately give a high-pitched yelp, as if you're hurt, and let your hand go limp. This should startle your dog and cause him to stop mouthing you, at least momentarily. (If yelping seems to have no effect, you can say "Ah!" or "Eh!" in a stern voice instead.) Praise your dog for stopping or for licking you. Then resume play. If your dog bites you hard again, yelp again. Repeat these steps no more than three times within a 15-minute period.

If you find that yelping alone doesn't work, you can switch to a time-out procedure. Time-outs are often effective for curbing mouthy behavior in adolescent and adult dogs. When your dog delivers a hard bite, yelp loudly. Then, when he startles and turns to look at you or looks around, remove your hand. Either ignore him for 10 to 20 seconds or, if he starts mouthing on you again, get up and move away for 10 to 20 seconds. If necessary, leave the room. After the short time-out, return to your dog and encourage him to play with you again. It's important to teach him that gentle play continues, but painful play stops. Play with your dog until he bites hard again. When he does, repeat the sequence above. When your dog isn't delivering really hard bites anymore, you can tighten up your rules a little. Require your dog to be even gentler. Yelp and stop play in response to moderately hard bites. Persist with this process of yelping and then ignoring your dog or giving him a time-out for his hardest bites. As those disappear, do the same for his next-hardest bites, and so on, until your dog can play with your hands very gently, controlling the force of his mouthing so that you feel little or no pressure at all.

### **What to Do Next: Teach Your Dog That Teeth Don't Belong on Human Skin**

After you teach your dog to be gentle with his mouth, you can move on to the next step: teaching him to avoid mouthing people altogether. Try the following tips:

- Substitute a toy or chew bone when your dog tries to gnaw on fingers or toes.
- Dogs often mouth on people's hands when stroked, patted and scratched. If your dog gets all riled up when you pet him, distract him by feeding him small treats from your other hand. This will help your dog get used to being touched without mouthing.
- Encourage noncontact forms of play, such as fetch and tug, rather than wrestling and rough play with your hands. Teaching your dog to play tug with rules prepares him for dealing with arousal and frustration. To keep tug safe and fun for you and your dog, you'll need to follow strict rules (see above section on teaching a default "release"). Once your dog can play tug safely, keep tug toys in your pocket or in a place where you can easily access them. If he starts to mouth you, you can immediately redirect him to the tug toy. Ideally, he'll start to anticipate and look for a toy when he feels like mouthing.
- Continue to teach your dog impulse control with specific exercises such as sit-stay, wait, and leave it, and "It's Yer Choice" games.
- Provide plenty of interesting and new toys and things to chew so that your dog will play with them instead of gnawing on you or your clothing.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for your dog to play with other friendly, healthy, vaccinated dogs. He can expend a lot of his energy playing with them and have less need to play roughly with you.
- Use a time-out procedure, just like the one described above, but change the rules a little. Instead of giving your dog time-outs for hard biting, start to give him time-outs every time you feel his teeth touch your skin.
- The instant you feel your dog's teeth touch you, give a high-pitched yelp. Then immediately walk away from him. Ignore him for 30 to 60 seconds. If your dog follows you or continues to bite and nip at you, leave the

room for 30 to 60 seconds. (Be sure that the room is “dog-proofed” before you leave your dog alone in it. Don’t leave him in an area with things he might destroy or things that might hurt him.) After the brief time-out, return to the room and calmly resume whatever you were doing with your dog.

- Alternatively, you can keep a leash attached to your dog when you’re around to supervise him. Let the leash drag on the floor. Instead of leaving the room when your dog mouths you, you can immediately take hold of his leash and calmly lead him to a quiet area. When you get there, tether him to a heavy piece of furniture or put him behind a baby gate to confine him. Then leave the area or turn your back to your dog for the brief time-out. When the time-out is over, untie him or release him, and resume whatever you were doing.
- If a time-out isn’t viable or effective, consider using a taste deterrent. Spray the deterrent on areas of your body and clothing that your dog likes to mouth before you start interacting with him. If he mouths you or your clothing, stop moving and wait for him to react to the bad taste of the deterrent. Praise him lavishly when he lets go of you. Apply the deterrent to your body and clothes for at least two weeks. After two weeks of being punished by the bitter taste every time he mouths you, your dog will likely learn to inhibit his mouthy behavior.
- If your dog shows no reaction when you yelp, does not stop mouthing when you use time-out and isn’t deterred by bad tastes, another possibility is to make it unpleasant for him when he mouths. The following techniques should only be used as a last resort—only if nothing else has worked. Carry a small water spray bottle in your pocket so that it’s always handy. The instant your dog starts to mouth you, yell “Ouch!” and squirt a short burst of the water spray directly at your dog. Your action should be swift and smooth. This tactic won’t work if it deteriorates into a wrestling match between you and your dog—and it definitely won’t work if your dog becomes aggressive or afraid of you. This technique should only be used with overexuberant dogs, never fearful or aggressive dogs. You should only need to use the spray a few times. If you’re uncomfortable using punishment and can’t implement it quickly and without struggling with your dog, it’s best to use the other procedures recommended here or seek professional help.
- Another option is to make it mildly uncomfortable for your dog each time the mouthing behavior begins. You can do this by grabbing firmly behind your dog's collar and waiting for him to "settle" before letting go. You want to grab firmly behind the collar where you have control of your dog's head movement and where he is unable to get his teeth on your hand. The goal is to gently but firmly hold the collar until the dog relaxes and stops attempting to mouth at you. This technique should only be used with over-exuberant dogs, never fearful or aggressive dogs. If you’re uncomfortable using punishment and can’t implement it quickly and without struggling with your dog, it’s best to use the other procedures recommended here or seek professional help. **General Precautions**
- Avoid waving your fingers or toes in your dog’s face or slapping the sides of his face to entice him to play. Doing these things can actually encourage your dog to bite your hands and feet.
- Do not discourage your dog from playing with you in general. Play builds a strong bond between a dog and his human family. You want to teach your dog to play gently rather than not at all.
- Avoid jerking your hands or feet away from your dog when he mouths. Jerky movements might seem like a game to your dog and encourage him to jump forward and grab at you. It’s much more effective to let your hands or feet go limp so that they aren’t much fun to play with.
- Slapping or hitting dogs for playful mouthing can cause them to bite harder. They usually react by playing more aggressively. Physical punishment can also make your dog afraid of you—and it can even cause real aggression. Avoid scruff shaking, whacking your dog on the nose, and all other punishments that might hurt or scare him.

### What to Do if Your Dog Jumps Up On You - During Play, Training, or Any Other Interaction:

- Ignore the dog! Do not touch, talk to, or look at the dog. Jumping up is typically an attention-seeking behavior, so by doing any of the above you are actually reinforcing the behavior.



- For a very exuberant dog that continues to jump even when ignored, use your body to walk "into" the dog abruptly to interrupt the jumping. Dogs are very perceptive to space. If your dog rudely invades your space, return the favor. Do not yell at or scold your dog - let your actions do the talking!
- If the dog is dragging a light-weight leash (and they should be, if they are in training!), you can also step on the leash with the balls of your feet to keep your dog "grounded" - stand so the dog only has enough slack to stand comfortably. The leash will tighten and your dog will "self-correct" if he tries to continue to jump up.
- Reinforce the dog for making good choices by scattering several high value treats on the floor when they are exhibiting calm behavior and not jumping on you.

### Preventing Jumping Up in a Household Situation:

***A good prevention plan is the best way to instill good manners from the get-go!***



While you train your dog to show good manners with four feet on the floor, keep a handy assortment of management options at your disposal. For example, when you enter your house after an absence, keep a jar of

small, soft and easy to eat dog treats, kibble, or small bits of high value food just outside your front door. As you enter, take a handful and scatter them on the floor so that your dog is torn between greeting you and scarfing up the cookies.

This technique also helps to take the edge off and encourage calm behavior as you walk in. While your dog spends time finding and eating the scattered treats, talk quietly so that he or she adapts to your being home, then greet him or her warmly but without becoming hysterical yourself.

If your dog is crated when you are away, then you can repeat the above scenario as you open the crate door.

### **Preventing jumping up with guests:**

The above method also works quite well when you have guests. Throw down the high value treats before you open the door, let your guest in, and ask your human friend to hold off on greeting your dog until he has finished the treats and is more calm and reasonable. It will also help to ask your guests to keep the greetings fairly low key to help the dog remain successful. Ideally you want your dog to learn that people coming and going in the house is no big deal and nothing to get worked up over. It can be helpful to communicate your wishes to your guests prior to them entering your home. You could even try a sign on the door that says something like: "Dog in Training! Please ignore our dog for the first 5 minutes you are in our home... we are working on instilling good manners and calm greetings!"

### **What if my dog is already very obnoxious at the door?**

If your dog already has a history of barking excessively at guests or jumping on them to get attention, you will need to come up with a plan that involves both consistent management and training while your dog is learning a new way to behave in these situations.

For a dog who gets quite worked up at the door, it is recommended to use good management to allow guests to enter your home without having to deal with over the top behavior right at the threshold of the door. Options include crating your dog or confining him or her behind a secure baby gate as guests first enter the house.

If your dog is over-the-top excitable when a person is entering your home and is initially uninterested in eating high value treats scattered on the floor, this means that your dog is "OVER threshold." When a dog is this worked up and excited, they are *not* in a state of mind where they will learn and retain information. "Over threshold" simply means that the dog is no longer able to make good (rational) decisions about their behavior. And since training assumes a rational participant who is maximizing good things and minimizing bad things, training will often fail on dogs that are over threshold.

The goal is for you to work on gradually changing their behavior through training when they are "UNDER threshold." The more training you do, the easier and easier it will get to keep your dog in a calmer state of mind where learning is possible - eventually even in these very exciting situations!

There are many options for good management if you have a dog who is currently over excited when guests are first arriving at the door. Use these first, then when your dog has calmed down some you can work on the active training described above. Here are some of your options for management when guests first arrive at the door:

- Crating your dog when guests first arrive. Sometimes it can be helpful to cover the crate with a blanket to minimize visual stimulation. Feel free to give your dog a tasty stuffed Kong or other food toy to keep them content and occupied while crated.

- Using a baby gate or other barrier to keep your dog from rushing to the door immediately when guests first arrive. You can follow the same protocol of scattering treats for the dog while he or she is behind the gate as guests enter. Also feel free to give your dog a tasty stuffed Kong or other food toy to keep them content and occupied while they are confined behind the gate.
- Using a short tie-out or tether of the traffic pattern as guests enter (tie the leash down low and only give your dog a foot or so of slack - think short to help keep them in one place!). You can follow the same protocol of scattering treats for the dog while he or she is on the tie-out as guests enter. Also feel free to give your dog a tasty stuffed Kong or other food toy to keep them content and occupied while on the tieout.

### **Work on training polite manners after initial management:**

If you have used good management (crating, tethering, or a baby gate) during the initial excitement of people entering the house, after 10-20 minutes have passed, your dog's excitement level will likely have decreased. At this point, your dog is much more likely to be in a state of mind where they can learn - now is your chance to actively train for good manners when meeting new people!

Ideally the dog should be on leash for the initial low-key greeting. You (the person training the dog) can even stand on the leash to have two free hands available. The person greeting the dog should be low-key - they can talk to the dog but should not be over-excited. They can also gently pet the dog if the dog is seeking out that interaction. If the dog is keeping all four feet grounded you (the person training the dog) can calmly reinforce the dog for this correct behavior by scattering a few high value treats on the floor.



By scattering several treats, you are engaging your dog's nose and taking the focus off of how excited they are to be greeting the new person. While searching for and eating the scattered treats, the dog will begin to adjust to the presence of the person which will allow them to in turn practice being calm near a new person. Additionally, the dog's focus on the food will re-direct their energy towards the floor rather than upwards.



However, the instant the dog starts to put his or her paws up on the person or begins to jump up, the greeter should promptly stand up, turn around, and/or walk away. The idea is that the dog does not receive attention (reinforcement!) for jumping up - in fact, if they jump then they lose the opportunity to interact with the person all together! Having the dog on leash will prevent them from following the greeter and/or continuing to jump after the greeter has turned away to ignore them.

Continue to reinforce the dog for making good choices by scattering several high value treats on the floor when they are exhibiting calm behavior and not jumping on your guest!

### **Ensuring cooperation and consistency:**

#### ***Training people is harder than training dogs!***

If the problem is a person who likes dogs just fine but who cannot reliably follow directions, and who insists on meeting your dog, then your best option might be stand on it and continue to drop treats on the floor. It's hard for even the most enthusiastic neighbor to undo your training if your puppy is on leash while you drop food on the floor. That approach keeps you on good terms with your friends and prevents your puppy from practicing behaviors that you won't want to see again.

If your guest is not likely to help you with your training, possibly due to dislike, fear of dogs, or a fragile body, then simply put your dog away (crate, gated in different room, etc) during their visit. People have rights too, and depending on the visitor this is sometimes the option that sets everyone (dog and people!) up for success. Feel free to give your dog a tasty stuffed Kong or other food toy to keep them content and occupied until your guest departs.

### **Classical Conditioning That Takes Place During ALL Training and Interactions:**

*(This section was written by Lisa Mullinax, ACDBC, owner of 4Paws University in Sacramento, CA)*

Raise your hand if you walk into a post office and are flooded with warm, happy feelings. No? It's just me? When I was growing up, my grandmother was the Postmaster for her town's post office and I spent many vacations watching her sort the mail and sell stamps and money orders while catching up on town gossip.

Those feelings are not only evoked by "her" post office, but any post office. My childhood experiences formed a positive association to the sights, sounds, and smells of post offices, even those I have never visited. This is classical conditioning: Pavlov ringing a bell, then feeding the dog until the dog would salivate at the sound of the bell.

And here's how it could come back to bite you.

Dogs are always forming associations. Regardless of whether you think you are using classical conditioning techniques or operant conditioning techniques, associations are being formed.

Animal trainer Bob Bailey is frequently quoted saying, "Pavlov is always on your shoulder." Regardless of what you think you are teaching, classical conditioning is always happening. The dog is always learning. Safe. Unsafe. Pleasant. Unpleasant.

So, if you say "Sit" and press on your dog's hindquarters, releasing the pressure only once his rear is on the ground, your dog might learn to sit on cue (an example of negative reinforcement - you release the pressure to reinforce the correct behavior). However, if your dog sits only to prevent you from pushing on him, do you think "Sit" carries a pleasant or unpleasant association? I once worked with a dog that ran away from the owners when they said "Sit." Not the behavior they were going for.

This is why aversives have such a high risk of fallout. We might think we're teaching or even "correcting" a behavior, but we can't guarantee what associations the dog is forming.

I knew a dog that attended a rattlesnake avoidance clinic. The snake was in a metal cage and the trainer administered an electric shock any time the dog approached the cage. On their next walk, the dog began exhibiting a fear of metal drainage grates. Although the trainer claimed he was creating an aversion to snakes, while the dog associated the shock to the metal grid pattern of the cage.

Now, imagine Brutus is reactive to other dogs he encounters on walks. Brutus and his owner are enjoying a pleasant walk when they see another dog walker. Brutus starts to stiffen and growl, and the owner begins to "correct" him (insert jerks on the leash, jerks on a prong collar, spraying with condensed air, spraying with citronella, administering an jolt with an electronic collar, etc.) until he stops. Prior to the appearance of the other dog, Brutus was not subjected to any of those things. It was only when the other dog appeared that they started to happen. What, then, is the association being formed?

Even when we are committed to using non-aversive or "force-free" methods, we still have to be careful. The use of treats is no guarantee that the dog is forming positive associations.

Pavlov didn't just do one experiment with dogs and call it good. He recreated his experiment with different variations. For example, ringing the bell while the dog was eating. Ringing the bell after the dog ate. The only way the association of bell = food was formed was when the bell rang and food followed.

Videos of dogs being fed during an unpleasant experience (such as a vet exam or during nail trims) are often shown as an example of counter-conditioning. The dog is wrangled into position, the nail clipping begins, and then the dog is given a spoonful of peanut butter. At best, the dog is distracted. But the chances that he will form the association that nail trim = peanut butter is slim.

If you present the peanut butter before you start the nail trim, there's even a chance that the dog will form an unpleasant association to the smell of peanut butter.

In order for counter-conditioning to occur, the order matters. The neutral or scary thing needs to be presented **first** and at a level that does not provoke a fearful response in the dog, **then** the peanut butter (or boiled chicken liver, etc.) is presented.

So, just because you're using food during something the dog finds unpleasant does not mean you are counterconditioning.

There are times that something in the environment can derail our training. You might pull out your dog's leash to go for a walk when suddenly a car backfires, sending your dog into a panic. From that point on, picking up the leash might send your dog fleeing down the hall. Leash = loud noise.

Following the steps above, you would remedy this by presenting the leash - maybe just setting it on the floor - then feeding the dog. Rinse and repeat. How many times? As many times as it take for your dog to show signs of happy anticipation when the leash appears.

## **CONCLUSION:**

When presented with a new technique or piece of equipment, don't just buy into the idea that it "works." Lots of things look like they work in the moment. But, ask yourself what association the dog is forming. What does the technique or equipment predict? Good things? Bad things?

If the association is unpleasant or scary, it will come back to bite you. Maybe not immediately. Sometimes it takes months or even years for that association to build up to the point that it develops into a problem behavior.

But, once it does, it can take just as long to change it back. And, sometimes, we can only change an association from negative to neutral, forever losing the chance to create a positive association.

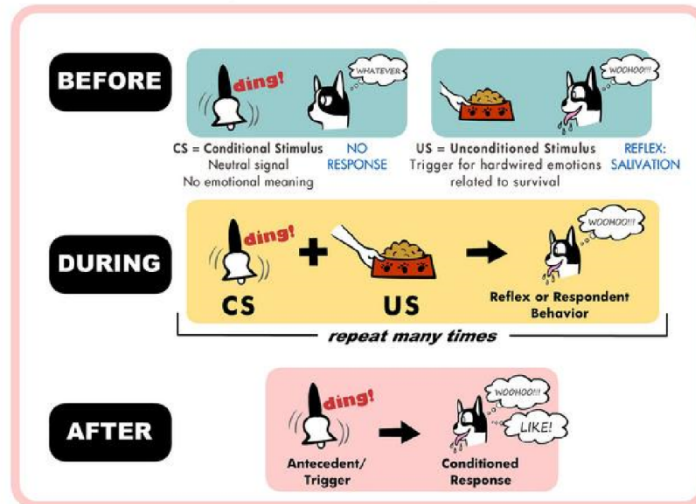
Counter-conditioning seems simple and is often presented as such. Too many well-meaning people in forums promoting non-aversive methods tell dog owners, "You just need to desensitize and counter-condition that." Just two things, how hard can it be?

In reality, we're talking about changing an unconscious emotion. There's nothing simple about it. It takes a lot of time and repetition to change an emotion. How many repetitions followed by a stack of cash would it take for you to stop flinching when a bee lands on your arm? Longer if you've actually been stung before. Maybe never if a bee sting is life-threatening.

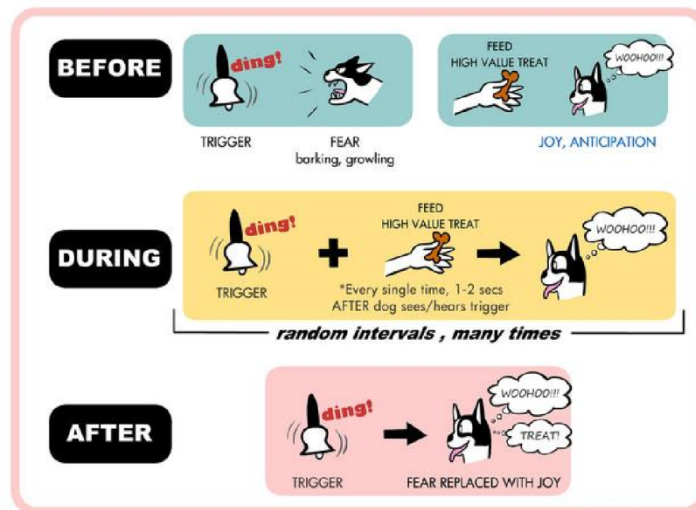
It is far easier to take the steps to make sure our dogs' experiences with people and other dogs are pleasant and safe!



## CLASSICAL (PAVLOVIAN) CONDITIONING



## CLASSICAL COUNTER CONDITIONING



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### "Treat" Training and Other Misconceptions About Positive Reinforcement:

*(This section was written by Lisa Mullinax, ACDBC, owner of 4Paws University in Sacramento, CA)*

Even though our dogs are reliant on us to provide them with food every day, dog owners (and countless dog trainers) still have trouble grasping the idea of getting the food out of the dog bowl and into the dog's training routine.

Food is universally motivating for all animals - we can't survive without it. Food is readily available and portable, and makes it possible to train in a variety of situations and environments.

So what is your reason for not using food in training?

**I DON'T WANT TO BRIBE MY DOG**

I don't want you to bribe your dog, either. In fact, it drives me nuts to see people bribe dogs in the guise of training. However, there is a big difference between bribing and reinforcing with food.

Bribery is the act of presenting the food to the dog in order to get the dog to perform a desired behavior.

Reinforcing is the act of presenting something a dog finds valuable (food, toy, praise, etc.) **after** the dog has performed the behavior.

Below are some examples of the difference between bribes and rewards in dog training.

**HEEL: BRIBED BEHAVIOR**

Owner holds treat in front of dog while walking to keep dog in position

**HEEL: REINFORCED BEHAVIOR**

Owner presents treat after dog walks in heel position for varying distances

**ATTENTION: BRIBED BEHAVIOR**

Owner presents treat then holds treat next to eyes to encourage eye contact

**ATTENTION: REINFORCED BEHAVIOR**

Owner presents the treat after the dog has made eye contact

**RECALL: BRIBED BEHAVIOR**

Owner extends treat filled hand before calling dog

**RECALL: REINFORCED BEHAVIOR**

Owner presents treat after the dog has come when called

In the case of bribed dogs, owners generally don't reward the dog for good behavior except for when they have a treat in their hand. The dog learns that it is only rewarding to respond to their owner when they can clearly see the owner is holding food.

The rewarded dog, on the other hand, learns that good things are delivered after he performs a behavior, and so is likely to perform that behavior without the owner having to present food first, making it very easy to integrate other types of non-food rewards into the dog's training program.

***I WANT TO TRAIN MY DOG TO RESPECT ME, NOT JUST WORK FOR A COOKIE***

Who do you respect more: the boss who insists you work overtime without pay or the boss who recognizes your hard work and gives you an extra bonus in your pay at the end of the week? Who are you going to make the extra effort for? Who do you consider a good leader?

Dogs that are punished into "submission" don't work out of respect, any more than the person who gives their wallet to a mugger at gunpoint holds the criminal in high esteem. Force and intimidation may get a response, but it has nothing to do with respect, nor does it ensure a reliable response in the absence of a threat.

### ***TREAT TRAINED DOGS GET FAT***

Whether the food comes out of a bowl or from a hand doesn't matter - if the dog's owner is not carefully regulating the dog's food intake and providing sufficient exercise, the dog can become overweight. Overfeeding causes obesity, not training treats.

Further, because there is no rule that says dogs have to eat out of a bowl, owners can use the dog's entire meal as rewards during training, adding no additional calories to the dog's diet.

### ***I'LL HAVE TO KEEP FOOD ON ME ALL THE TIME***

The same could be said of choke chains, prong collars and shock collars. If the training isn't done correctly from the beginning, the dog's level of obedience will be dependent on whatever tools were used. It is not food, itself, that causes dependence, but the knowledge and skill of the trainer.

Since a reward follows the dog performing the desired command, the dog doesn't have to see the reward before complying. This means other rewards can be introduced to the training process once the dog has learned the behavior is rewarding.

### ***TREAT TRAINING DOESN'T WORK ON DOMINANT DOGS***

Someone forgot to tell Flirt that "treat training" doesn't work on Dobermans!

Back when we didn't have the understanding of dog behavior that we have today, people used the word "dominant" to describe...well, pretty much everything from the breed to the behavior. Below are the three most common uses.

Dominant = Aggressive

When a dog is in a situation where it is stressed, the digestive system shuts down and the dog will refuse food. This is what trainers call over threshold. This does not mean that reward-based methods are not effective, but that they are being applied incorrectly. This often happens when owners or inept trainers expose the dog to a problem situation, wait for it to react and then attempt to train.

Knowledgeable trainers understand the importance of keeping a dog under-threshold, exposing the dog to the situation that triggers the problem behavior at point which the dog does not react with fear or aggression and is able to learn new behaviors.

Dominant = Stubborn

Some breeds were previously considered too dominant or stubborn to train. These breeds include most terriers, hounds and northern breeds, such as Huskies and Malamutes. These highly intelligent dogs just didn't respond well to forceful training methods. With the introduction of reward-based training methods, these dogs are now competing in obedience, agility and other competitions. Whether the reward is food or play, these dogs are learning that working with their owner that gets them the good things in life.

Dominant = Breed

Thanks to media misrepresentation and public ignorance, some breeds of dogs are assumed to be more aggressive than others. This has led to the belief that certain breeds are more "dominant" than others and require more aversive training methods and equipment.

In reality, positive dog trainers LOVE working with Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, Dobermans and other so-called dominant breeds because they are so easy to train with positive methods! Pit Bulls learn the same way Poodles do. In fact, anyone who has ever trained a Toy Poodle will tell you that training a small dog is often MUCH more difficult!

In each of these cases, this myth is perpetuated by those who have either never used food rewards or are unskilled at the use of food rewards.

### ***MY DOG ISN'T "FOOD MOTIVATED"***

Your dog must eat to survive and is, therefore, naturally motivated by food. Dogs are scavengers by nature and so every bit of food they can find is valuable.

However, when I meet a dog that refuses even the best of treats, it is usually because of one of the following reasons:

### **STRESS OR ANXIETY**

The most common reason a dog might not be food-motivated is stress. When a dog reaches a certain level of stress due to either anxiety or aggression, they stop accepting food. This is the brain's way of making sure that all available energy is being used for essential functions in times of crisis. Digestion is not an essential function when being chased by a bear, so the brain shuts that part down.

If a dog is normally motivated by treats at home but refuses them outside of the house, then he may be too stressed for training in that environment.

Stress isn't always related to fear. Another form of stress is over-arousal. This is seen in dogs that get so excited to see other dogs or people, they aren't interested in anything else in the environment, including food. A little training for self-control and attention around distractions usually solves the problem.

### **LOW VALUE TREATS**

If you are offering your dog another piece of the same dry dog food that's been sitting in their bowl all day, that probably isn't going to be more exciting than the five dogs sitting across from them in class. Play with that dog or get a piece of something I can have anytime I want? Um, I think I'll choose the dog!

The type of treat does matter. If your dog turns their nose up at a dry, crunchy biscuit, try a soft, smelly jerky treat or even a small bit of turkey hot dog. For dogs that are extra particular, I often find a jar of chicken baby food wins over the pickiest of pooches.

### **SATIATION**

When a dog has access to a full bowl of food 24/7, food isn't always that interesting. The food is always available and so the dog decides when they want to eat. For these dogs, limiting each feeding session to no more than 20 minutes not only encourages your dog to clean their bowl (which will help you spot health problems later on), but also puts you in ultimate charge of that resource.

### **ILLNESS**

A common sign of illness is a dog that suddenly refuses food at home. Any dog that exhibits an abrupt change in appetite should visit their vet to rule out medical issues. One dog that appeared "picky" about food turned out to have multiple teeth that needed to be extracted!

While there are dogs who are less motivated by food than other types of rewards, they are incredibly rare.

### ***LIFE REWARDS: Food, Access & Attention***

Finding alternate motivators for your dog is one of the keys to getting your dog to work for rewards other than food. Whatever your dog likes, it probably falls under the categories of Food, Access or Attention.

Food seems obvious, but we often give away stuffed Kongs, bones, bully sticks and other food items.

Access is anywhere your dog wants to go. Through a doorway, into the dog park, toward a favorite person or bush on the corner.

Attention includes praising, petting or playing with your dog.

The more you give away, the fewer options you have for rewarding your dog for good behavior.

### **PETTING AS A REWARD**

Rewards are defined by the individual dog, not the human.

To a dog that doesn't enjoy being pet, the intended reward actually has the opposite effect. Does the dog in the photo here look like he would be eager to repeat whatever caused the human to do this?

### **TEST: DOES YOUR DOG ENJOY PETTING?**

Call your dog to you. When he reaches you, praise and pet him as if he did the most brilliant thing you've ever seen. Stop after a few seconds, and remove your hands and wait to see what your dog does.

Does he move closer for more attention? Does he walk away and shake his body as if shaking off water?

Dogs that enjoy petting don't make it a secret. They lean into you, nudge your hand and use other ways to communicate they want more. If your dog is only tolerating your attention or actively avoiding it, they don't find this attempt at affection very pleasurable...let alone rewarding!

Some dogs love fetch, some love to tug, others just want to be pet and praised. Knowing what your dog prefers will make training more fun and creates a stronger bond between you and your dog!

**CONCLUSION:**

The ideal training program is one that uses a wide variety of rewards, from food and play to access and attention, including praise. By adjusting the type of reward to each individual dog and the training environment, your dog learns that you are the gateway to all things good and that working for you is the best way to get what they want.

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**Remember, training is fun but it also takes consistency and patience!**

***Until we speak... happy training!***