

How to Use Positive Reinforcement Training

Positive reinforcement (i.e., giving the dog a reward in the form of praise, play, food, toys, etc. when it responds and offers an action or a behavior that you like) has been shown to be the most effective way to train a dog because rewarding good behavior will increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated. Similarly, the use of constructive discipline (marking bad behavior by using vocal sounds to interrupt the behavior and refocus the dog onto something more positive, 'time-outs' or simply ignoring the dog) ensures that the dog learns which behavior is linked to the negative consequences of the discipline and is therefore less likely to repeat the behavior.

Since most dogs are highly food-motivated, food treats work especially well for training. When your pet is learning a new behavior, reward him every time he does the behavior. Once your pet has **reliably** learned the behavior gradually reduce the number of times he receives a treat for doing the desired behavior. Caution! Don't decrease the rewards too quickly or your dog may regress. Even after you have weaned your pet off treats be sure to throw in a treat reward every now and then keep your dog interested and motivated. Since he won't be able to predict when the reward will be a treat instead of just praise he will stay motivated.

Correct timing is essential when using positive reinforcement. The reward must occur immediately—within seconds—or your pet may not associate it with the proper action. For example, if you have your dog sit but reward him after he's stood back up, he'll think he's being rewarded for standing up.

Dogs don't understand sentences so keep commands short and uncomplicated.

Consistency is key so it is important that everyone in the family should use the same commands; and reinforce the same behaviors. Otherwise, your dog may be confused. It might help to post a list of commands where everyone can become familiar with them.

Be careful that you don't inadvertently use positive reinforcement to reward unwanted behaviors. For example, dogs usually jump up on you to get attention. If you talk to the dog (even just to say "no" or "off") or you use your hands to push the dog off, you are giving him attention! The way to avoid accidentally reinforcing behaviors you don't want is to ignore the dog when he is doing it. So for example if the dog jumps up on you, turn your back and only give attention to the dog when he has all four feet on the floor again.

<http://positively.com/positive-reinforcement/why-positive-reinforcement/>

http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/dog_training_positive_reinforcement.html