

3 Secrets To Better Dog Training

There are virtually as many approaches to training a dog as there are dogs to train! It seems as if every day new systems and techniques are announced or older methods are resurrected. Despite the diversity of methods, almost every successful dog training system is based on positive reinforcement techniques. Thankfully the once used techniques involving intimidation, humiliation and punishment have long been abandoned as ineffective. All of the recommended methods of dog training share three simple secrets.

Start Young

How many times have you heard the old saying "you can't teach an old dog new tricks"? We know what it means and also that it is not entirely true. Any dog, regardless of age, can learn new things; all animals, humans included, are much more receptive to learning new behaviors when young. The earlier you are able to start training your dog, the more effective the training will be.

Puppies will learn at a much faster rate and often do not have ingrained behaviors that must be un-learned. Thus, any training regimen is sure to be more successful when conducted with a puppy rather than an older dog.

If you weren't able to start training a particular dog when he or she was younger, don't fret. Training is still effective for older animals. However, the earlier you start training the better.

Gently Does It

Dogs are social animals with their social circle being that of the pack they belong to. A solitary dog in a family unit of just one will belong to a pack of two – the owner and the dog. The attachment, or bond, of the pack members is at the heart of successful dog training. A dog that trusts his or her owner wants to please his or her companion and is far more likely to remain attentive and compliant during the training process.

A failure to act gently undermines the quality of the dog/owner relationship.

Of course, aggressive behavior also runs contrary to the very foundations of most dog training techniques. Dog training is premised on the notion that positive reinforcement techniques best modify dog behavior. Reward for good behavior comes out top 99% of the time. The reward can be edible in the form of small training treats or something as simple as a cuddle or making a fuss of the dog. Consistency however, should be maintained during the training. If you usually reward your dog when it asks to be let out to go to the toilet and you fail to reward, this can harm the dog's association of "asking to be let out" is good because I get a reward for being good. Scolding by way of a raised voice can help tell your dog "it did something bad" but it should be kept to a minimum and never prolonged. However, never reward bad behavior; a gentle dog owner should be an ally for a trainee rather than a rival. Instead of a battle of the wills, training can become a cooperative exercise. Under those conditions, training tends to take less time and be far more effective.

Emphasize Prevention

Too often, training a dog devolves into a series of constant corrections for behaviors the owner finds unsuitable. The basic goal of prevention is to step in before a problem is created instead of simply responding to the problem. Instead of waiting for the dog to make a mistake to correct, the prevention-minded owner will keep close watch to see imminent difficulties and will intervene early to prevent them from arising in the first place.

By spending less time on correction you can emphasize positively reinforced training methods, keeping a program on track and accelerating its successes. It also decreases frustration throughout the training process making it more enjoyable for both the dog and the owner.

Although there is a multitude of training strategies from which one can choose, all of them can have their effectiveness increased by adhering to the aforementioned principles. By starting early, remaining gentle and emphasizing prevention, any reasonable method of dog training can yield better results.

About the Author

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