



Paws and Possibilities™

Teaching you to train your dog, one paw at a time

Tips for Reinforcing a Behavior Correctly

When a dog receives positive reinforcement for a particular behavior, it will be more likely to repeat that behavior again in the future.

One of the most important things to keep in mind while training is that everything needs to happen in the right order. Look at the follow examples to see the important differences in the order of events.

Correct order:

- Dog does something you like ---> **Dog receives something he likes**

Example 1: Your friend stops by unexpectedly.

Your dog politely greets a guest, **you give him a treat**

Example 2: Your dog is outside in your fenced-in yard and you call him over.

Your dog comes when you call, **you pet him.**

Incorrect order and most common mistake people make in dog training:

- **Dog receives something he likes** ---> Dog does something you like

Example 1: Your dog is whining and barking.

You pet him, then he is quiet.

Do not pet a dog that is barking to get it to be quiet.

Short term, this appears to work because the dog stops the bad behavior, but long term you will see an increase in the barking!

Example 2: Your puppy is chewing the rug.

You give it her a squeaky toy, then she plays with her favorite toy.



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Do not "redirect" a puppy to play with a toy after it chews something inappropriate. Short term, this appears to work because the puppy stops the bad behavior, but long term you will see an increase in inappropriate chewing!

Do not give a dog something it likes in order to get it to be good. You will be reinforcing behaviors that you do not want. If you did no other training and only focused on not inadvertently reinforcing your dog for behaviors you do not want, you would see a difference in your dog's behavior. It's that important!

Understanding different types of reinforcement There are many obvious forms of reinforcement including:

- treats
- toys
- playing
- petting
- praise

There are some more subtle, and critical, forms of reinforcement including:

- **Eye contact** - a powerful form of communication in the dog world not to be underestimated. Just assume that when you look at your dog directly in his eyes, he likes it so you are reinforcing him.
- **Talking in a pleasant tone of voice** - saying things like "what are you doing?" or "you're driving me crazy!" sound pleasing to the dog
- **Touch** - can be pleasant or fun for a dog to be touched by an owner, even if the intention is not to pet the dog
- Avoid inadvertently reinforcing bad behavior by avoiding giving your dog things he likes when he is acting inappropriately.



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- Do not sustain eye contact, have a conversation with, or excessively touch your dog when they do the wrong thing
- Limit your response to just one of these (eye contact, talk, or touch) to correct the behavior ("eh-eh" sound; block using back or side of hand; etc.), but do not to give your dog all three.

Paws and Possibilities specializes in teaching you how to train your dog. Unique training plans are created to meet your specific needs. Complicated training ideas are explained to you in a way that makes sense, and results are measurable. Call 410-424-0858 for more information or visit www.pawsandpossibilities.com.