



## **How Dogs Learn**

Congratulations on your decision to train your dog. Proper training creates happy, well-mannered dogs and fosters effective communication. During your lessons, we will teach you how to teach your dog. Obedience equals communication. After each lesson, you will be equipped with the tools you need to communicate more effectively with your dog. The exercises are geared to be practical in everyday life. Trained dogs can be allowed more freedom and interaction with you and others. Our goal is to help you develop a stronger bond with your dog that's built on respect and trust.

### **The Big Three:**

Timing, Consistency, and Motivation. Armed with these three principles, you can train your dog to do just about anything. If you are ever having difficulty in training, or it seems your dog is confused, ask yourself if you have fully observed the BIG three.

### **Timing:**

A dog has a period of 1.3 seconds in which to associate a cause with an effect. This means that the old adage, "you've got to catch them in the act" is absolutely true. To punish a dog for going potty on your rug five seconds after the fact is meaningless to a dog. A dog believes he is being punished or praised for whatever

he is doing at the moment. Dogs live in the present. The importance of timing has a great implication in training. This means you need to watch closely enough to see mistakes or successes exactly when they occur and communicate with feedback instantly. Waiting longer than 1.3 seconds may create confusion in your dog due to time lag in communication.

### **Consistency:**

There is no gray area for dogs. Your training must be very clear. A rule is a rule. For example, if you do not want your dog to jump on you, you must consistently reinforce that principle 100% of the time! If you come one day in a really good mood, and let Rover jump all over you, scratch his head, and tell him he's a good boy, then you have just taught him that he gets majorly reinforced for jumping on you. If the next day, you're in a terrible mood, and you get angry with him for jumping up, you have just thoroughly confused Rover and now he doesn't know whether he's coming or going on the issue of jumping up. Should he jump up, or should he not? You must be clear, and black and white in your training. You must be 100% consistent. This will result in a dog that feels safe and trusting within very well-defined rules.

### **Motivation:**

In simple terms, think of motivation this way: positive makes a behavior continue and negative makes it stop. You communicate to your dog while training (and all other times as well) with praise and rewards when they are doing well. As a result, the behaviors you reward will start to occur more often. You communicate with feedback when they make mistakes, or breaking your clearly defined rules. If you communicate to your dog that you don't like something, or say, "NO!", always immediately follow up by telling him what it is you DO want him to do. Redirect, redirect, redirect! Praise (rewards) must be motivational to the dog. You want your communication to be meaningful. That means your praise or rewards must be good enough that Rover is inspired to strive for it in the future. For example, if a dog doesn't like to be touched and your reward for doing something correctly is petting, that is not necessarily positive for that dog. Make sure to use reinforcements that your dog responds to. Ideally, catching Rover doing correct behaviors is the most effective way to train him.

## **Applying the Big Three:**

As you train, think of these factors. If Rover is not responding to training, or acts confused, ask yourself whether you are being clear with your dog. Does your training fall into harmony with the Big Three?

Is your timing correct? Is your training motivational? Are you being 100% consistent? If your answer is not yes to all of these questions, you cannot expect miracles from your dog.

Make a goal to practice short, frequent intervals of training every day.