

Fundamentals of Training and Behavioral Modification

Dogs are opportunists, meaning they will do whatever works for them to gain access to resources or get the result they want. Primary resources include food, water, sex and territory, but can include anything that your dog likes or holds valuable. We refer to items or things your dog is particularly fond of as a “high value resource or asset”. Dogs are great discriminators, masters of nuance, but do not generalize well. (For example, your dog may like to get into your car, but other cars are scary and he refuses.) Because dogs do not generalize well, timing and consistency are essential to successful training or behavioral modification, as you will learn as training progresses.

Dogs are essentially amoral, meaning they do not experience emotional consequences or emotions of conscience born of morality (right and wrong) that we humans do. Dogs can't and don't harbor grudges or resentment, aren't capable of planning or taking revenge, they don't feel or understand guilt, and don't spend time plotting elaborate plans to steal your steak dinner or torture the cat. While it may appear at times that they do, what's really happening is far more basic in nature, as you will understand as training progresses. (A classic example is a dog that has an accident while the owner is away. When the owner returns home and yells at the dog for the accident, the dog cowers and 'looks guilty'. What's really happening is the dog is responding to the owner's anger. He doesn't know why his owner is angry, but tries to appease anyway, which the owner misinterprets as understanding and guilt or remorse.) Assigning human emotions and motivations to dogs is called *Anthropomorphizing*, and is incorrect.

Canid achieves training and behavioral modification using the principles of operant and classical conditioning. Operant conditioning means a behavioral response occurs based on an environmental stimulus; it's more static in nature. (Example: A dog hears thunder and becomes frightened, then hides in the bathtub.) Classical conditioning is dynamic, where we use or manipulate the principles of operant conditioning to our advantage to modify behavior by creating associations. (Example: Whenever the dog hears thunder, we give Dog a super special treat then engage in a favorite game, overriding the fear and modifying behavior by creating a positive association with thunder.) This is overly simplified, and you needn't become an expert in psychology or operant and classical behavioral theories to successfully train or modify behavior in your dog, but here are some good basic terms to understand:

- 🐾 Positive: Like in math, something is added, starts or begins (not necessarily bad or good)
- 🐾 Negative: Like in math, something is taken away, stops or ends (not necessarily bad or good)
- 🐾 Consequence: Something negative or positive that follows or results from a behavior
- 🐾 Reinforcement: Something positive or negative happens (a consequence occurs) that causes behavior to increase, happen again, continue or become automatic
- 🐾 Punishment: Something positive or negative happens (a consequence occurs) that causes behavior to decrease, stop, end or go extinct





- 🐾 Extinct/Extinction Burst: A behavior ‘dies out’/disappears due to lack of reinforcement. An Extinction Burst occurs when a behavior that is coming under control suddenly increases in intensity before ceasing or changing. A good example of this is when we put money in a soda machine, but get no soda. We bang the machine – no result. We bang harder, then kick, then find ourselves pummeling the soda machine. When there is no result, we give up – we learn this has no result and isn’t successful (isn’t reinforced by receiving our soda) and our attack strategy goes extinct.
- 🐾 Thorndike’s Law of Effect: Behavior that is reinforced is likely to be repeated; behavior that is not reinforced will *not* be repeated or continued and go extinct. (Remember how we said that dogs are opportunists?)

Remember, too, we talked about associations? The basis of everything we are going to do to train or modify behavior in your dog will be based on creating associations. Association is a very simple concept, it means that one thing or behavior always equals a predictable event or result. Notice I said *equals* – it’s all about the = (equals sign). Some examples: Sitting quietly by the door = getting to go outside to play vs. jumping and pawing at the door = access to outside is denied; lying down on the floor when we say “down” = a food reward vs. doing nothing = no reward; lying quietly on his rug during human dinnertime = a treat when dinner is over vs. begging or stealing during dinner = no treat and maybe a timeout in another area.

Behavior or Action X = Consequence X

Now that we know all that, we can talk further about timing and consistency. Reinforcement or punishment has to be immediate and clearly linked to the behavior. (NOTE: Canid will never use painful, cruel or inhumane punishment and strives solely to use positive reinforcement.) Immediate means within one to three seconds of the behavior occurring, but preferably immediately while the behavior is happening. Example: During toilet training, we want to praise/reward Dog *while and during* the time he’s actually going potty – not before, not after. That way, only the act of toileting is associated with the reinforcer (praise/reward), so going potty in the proper spot when told = praise/reward. Using the same example, we only want to correct Dog for a toileting mistake if we catch him in the act, by interrupting with a sharp ‘eh eh’ then moving him to an appropriate toilet area – if we find it later or wait beyond one to three seconds, it’s too late; Dog won’t make the link or association, he won’t *equate* it ... there’s that equals sign again. Once we have the timing down, it’s important to be consistent. We have to make sure everyone in the family agrees to the same rules, consequences and verbal obedience cues (also called commands) and follows them every time. If Dad plays rough and tumble wrestling games with Dog, Dog may not understand that he cannot play the same games with a three year old. If Mom and Dad don’t want Dog begging at the table, but sometimes the kids sneak him food, he’s not going to stop – remember, he’s an opportunist, and begging is being rewarded (reinforced) – *begging is working for him*. Again, this is simplified and will be discussed further during your instruction sessions.

So how do we correct problem behaviors or modify behavior? Through a process called Interrupt, Replace, Reward (IRR). It’s never enough to tell Dog what not to do, we need to tell Dog what he should do instead. Using our toileting example, if we catch Dog toileting on the rug, we interrupt by saying “Eh Eh!”, then replace by taking him to an appropriate spot, then reward while Dog toilets outdoors. If we catch Dog chewing our shoe, we interrupt with “Eh Eh!”, quietly take the shoe away, immediately give Dog an acceptable chew toy, then reward with praise when dog accepts and/or chews the acceptable item. NOTE: Never correct problem behaviors with physical violence, such as hitting, shock collars, yelling, kicking, etc. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that violence begets violence, and the use of force and physical corrections will certainly have subsequent consequences and can frequently result in a dangerous dog.

Management vs. Behavior Modification

Behavioral modification affects the dog’s frame of mind and the way he perceives a situation (through associations). Management is manipulating the dog’s physical environment to control behavior. Let’s use a dog who is scared of visitors as an example. When visitors arrive, Dog cries, hides and wets on the floor. If we use



classic conditioning techniques to create a positive association with visitors (visitors = good things), Dog welcomes visitors and we have modified behavior. If we put Dog in another room when visitors arrive so Dog doesn't have to confront them and won't be scared, we have managed the situation. Because each dog is different, each behavioral issue is different, and every situation unique, the training you and your dog receive may involve components of both, either temporarily or permanently in varying degrees.

So if you know all this now, why do you need Canid? Because what you've read here is a general overview to provide you with a fundamental knowledge on which we will build - together. As a trainer and behavioral consultant, it's my job to correctly identify problems and their source, then implement the best plan to modify behavior or teach you basic obedience training skills. We'll work on the nuances regarding timing and consistency and how to identify exactly what we want to modify or train. As our training progresses, we'll elaborate and expand on these principles in a way you can understand that will educate you and allow you to become a better trainer and improve your relationship with your dog in ways that will serve you throughout your dog's life. Canid will demonstrate the proper methods and techniques, coach and encourage you, and be there to troubleshoot common problems or mistakes and offer support. Let's get started!

Leadership

What is leadership? Leadership is the first element of successful training and behavioral modification. Leaders direct and control resources and activities. They keep the peace, maintain order and offer protection. They establish a culture and define social etiquette. Contrary to popular belief, a leader is not a dominating dictator, but rather a good and fair manager, ensuring their dog's needs are met. A dog's needs include wholesome food, clean water, proper shelter, medical care, and appropriate exercise, enrichment and attention. By properly providing these things, your dog will look to you as the leader. Dogs without clear leadership will take managerial duties into their own paws, often in ways disagreeable to you. Dogs that lack confidence as well as leadership may become fearful or turn to aggression to solve their problems.

Remember our equals sign (=)? Let's start to think of this as "Leadership through Equality". This does not mean we'll train your dog to be your equal, but rather that you will equal all good things for your dog. You will equal fair, reasonable access to all the good things he wants and needs as mentioned above, and he will then look to you as the leader. Establishing yourself as a leader and a leadership program will be covered in your training session.

Basic Obedience Cues

Canid training programs provide instruction in the following skills and cues (also known as commands):

- 🐾 Name Game (Attention): Dog looks quickly and happily to you when you say his or her name
- 🐾 Doggie, Where Are You? (Informal Recall): Dog casually comes to you/checks in
- 🐾 Sit: Dog sits
- 🐾 Down: Dog lies down
- 🐾 Off: Four on the floor - Get off whatever it is you're on and put all four paws on the ground
- 🐾 Leave It!: Leave whatever it is your looking at or about to get into alone, look to me for next direction. Because we want Dog to learn that "Leave It" means that item is off limits, never use this cue for Dog's food, possessions, or human/dog friends.



- 🐾 Wait: Informal cue, with Dog in any position, to wait at doorways, stairways, before exiting car, etc., until you proceed or say "Let's go". Over time, Dog will learn to automatically yield. Remember, this isn't about who's boss, but rather a safety item and to ensure orderly movement around the home.
- 🐾 Stay: Dog stays where she's at, usually from a sit or down position, until released
- 🐾 Come (Formal Recall): Dog promptly comes directly to you, presenting with a placed sit. Use, don't abuse !!!
- 🐾 Let's go: Informal instruction to proceed, follow or keep moving
- 🐾 Out, Give or Drop It: Dog must drop, spit out or let go of whatever is in her mouth
- 🐾 Eh, Eh!: Verbal correction to interrupt unwanted behavior; should be followed with an instruction telling Dog what you DO want her to do or praise for compliance
- 🐾 Settle : Dog lies down where you point and finds something quiet to do on her own (similar to 'place')
- 🐾 Place: Dog goes to and remains at a designated place, either sitting or lying down, until released; a place can be a rug, dog bed, her kennel, a room, etc. Similar and sometimes interchangeable with Settle.
- 🐾 Kennel Up: Dog goes in her kennel/crate (Go to bed, Go in your house)
- 🐾 Gotcha: Not a cue, but a safety word. Happily grab Dog's collar, saying "Gotcha!" Make this a pleasant experience that will not startle or frighten.
- 🐾 Release Word: Saying or phrase that tells your dog it's free to choose its own actions. For example: Go play, All done, Free, etc. Try to avoid phrases commonly used in your everyday household activities, such as 'okay'.
- 🐾 Watch me: Your dog looks at you with undivided attention and remains focused until released.
- 🐾 No: Just say no to No! Reserve this word for dire circumstances when you require immediate and total compliance. If the other cues are in place, there will be few occasions ever to say "no". Also, don't let our verbal interruption of "Eh! Eh!" replace endlessly saying "no".

Consistency and timing are critical for success. There are some good reasons to stay with the common cues, but if you decide to use something different, such as 'go lay down' instead of settle, just make sure everyone's using the same cue, every time. It is never enough to tell your dog what NOT to do, you must also tell her what you WANT her to do!

Canid trainers will explain and demonstrate all the proper methods, techniques and tools you'll need to train these behaviors, all in a fun, friendly learning atmosphere.



Before and After Effects of Training

- 🐾 Before: Dog approaches garbage, owner yells “No!”, Dog walks away and knows to wait until later when owner’s not around to go get the garbage*

🐾 After: Dog approaches garbage, owner says “Leave It!”, Dog understands that’s off limits
- 🐾 Before: Dog jumps on guest or furniture, owner yells “No!”, and a great wrestling game ensues to reinforce the habit*

🐾 After: Dog jumps on guest or furniture, owner says “Off”, Dog gets down and eventually gets the message that four on the floor gets him more and the behavior stops completely
- 🐾 Before: Dog begs for food at table, owner yells “No! Go lie down! Sit! Away!” Encouraged by this attention, Dog continues happily begging*

🐾 After: Before sitting down to dinner, Dog’s owner points and says “Settle” or “Place”, and Dog goes quietly to his place or settles, knowing this is in his best interest as it will earn him a reward
- 🐾 Before: Dog lunges or pulls towards dogs or people he meets on walks, owner yells “No!”, Dog becomes frustrated and learns not to enjoy walks and mistrusts other dogs or people, causing the behavior to increase*

🐾 After: Dog understands that polite walking habits will allow him to meet other dogs and people, and if Dog forgets and pulls, his owner says “Let’s go” or “Sit” or “Watch Me”, and Dog redirects attention to owner and waits for instruction