

Training

Training your dog should begin early, no matter how old your new dog is. Socializing dogs is crucial to their development and will help you to have a well-rounded pet. Talking to, playing, and touching your dog can help them to become more socialized. Clicker training is a great form of positive reinforcement that can help teach your dog manners and even relieve stress.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement training is rewarding the behaviors you like and ignoring the behaviors you do not like. In this type of training, you do not punish your dog for their behavior, instead, you teach them appropriate ways to behave. This type of training is recommended because it develops the dog's self control and self confidence, and it establishes a trusting relationship between you and your dog.

Positive reinforcement motivates and encourage your dog, and should be fun for both of you! Rewards can come in the form of treats, praise, touch, or whatever else your new dog enjoys. Because the reward makes them more likely to repeat the behavior, positive reinforcement is one of your most powerful tools for shaping your dog's behavior.

Basic Guidelines

Timing: 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 them after they've stood back up, they'll think they're being rewarded for standing.

Keep it Short: Dog's don't understand sentences. In fact, dogs learn first from our body language, so work on luring your dog into doing the behavior first with a hand cue before asking them with a word. Once they have figured out the behavior, start adding the word in a calm voice. Keep commands short and uncomplicated, such as, "Sit," "Stay," "Down," "Off," etc.

Consistency is Key: Everyone in the family should use the same commands, otherwise, your dog may get confused. Consistency also means rewarding the desired behavior and never rewarding undesired behavior.

When to Use Positive Reinforcement

Be careful that you don't inadvertently use positive reinforcement to reward unwanted behaviors! For example, if you let your dog outside every time they bark at a noise in the neighborhood, you're giving them a reward (access to the yard) for behavior you want to discourage.