

10 REASONS TO USE REWARD-BASED TRAINING

Positive reinforcement simply means following a behavior with something your dog likes to increase the chance they will do that behavior again. There are many misconceptions about positive reinforcement-based training methods: requires treats be carried at of the time, slower than a correction/punishment-based approach, only good for tricks, but it is a simple and effective way to quickly teach your dog what you like. **You DO NOT need to use pain, force, fear, or intimidation to teach or fix behavior.**

1. **Fun** - Dogs love to play! Just like we continue learning and getting better at activities we enjoy; dogs enjoy activities that challenge their body and mind. Think of training as a fun game. Teach them something new or build on something they already know. A good teacher makes the game challenging but achievable.
2. **Easy** - No need for complicated or scary equipment or methods that make you wonder why you even got a dog. Watch for the behavior you like (or set your dog up to make the right choice), and make sure they get paid with something they like and want.
3. **Safe** - Have you heard you have to wait to start training your puppy? Historically, that recommendation comes from trainers that use collars/equipment that apply significant pressure or shock. The chance of damage with these tools when used on a young, developing puppy are very high, so they would wait until they felt the dogs could handle it. In addition, toy breeds and breeds with short snouts can be at high risk of damage from these types of tools. Positive reinforcement training works at any age, with any breed or species of animal.
4. **Low Risk** - Even if you make a big mistake when using positive reinforcement, the risks of causing any lasting damage are very low. When using corrections/punishment-based training methods that rely on fear, pain, and intimidation, going just a little too far can cause fearful or aggressive behaviors. Long term, the dog becomes less likely to try new things when the result may be correction. It is not easy to know where that line is, and it is different for every dog. Once it is crossed repairing the damage to the dog's emotional wellbeing and the relationship with the handler is a long road. In some cases, it cannot be repaired.
5. **Confidence Building** - Dogs taught using only positive reinforcement are more willing to try new behaviors and experiment with new things. They learn that being curious and persistent to figure out what you would like is good, instead of getting it wrong being bad. Giving your dog the freedom to make choices to earn things they want boosts their confidence and optimism.
6. **Great Relationships** - Relationships are built on good communication. Positive reinforcement training is a wonderful way to build two-way communication. Each time you reinforce a behavior, they learn what you expect from them and how to get things they would like. They can learn how to use their behavior to communicate their needs and wants, which we reinforce by meeting them.
7. **Attention** - Your dog will have more motivation to engage with you, because they realize you are their ticket to all the good stuff! Use the things they love to reinforce the behaviors you like, it is a win-win.
8. **Proactive** - The focus when using positive reinforcement to teach, is on setting the dog up to do a behavior you like then giving them something they like instead of a reactive correction. When you teach the dog what you would like from them, they learn to offer appropriate behaviors. We know when they understand because the behavior is reliable. Unfortunately, our reactive responses to behavior often inadvertently reinforce the problem behavior. Any attention is good attention for many of the common behaviors we do not like.

9. **Lasting Results** - Behaviors trained using positive reinforcement are strong, and long lasting because the dog does them because it is fun and feels good, not because they are afraid of what might happen when they do not. Often, cues for behaviors they really enjoy doing can themselves become reinforcing!
10. **Science Based** - Positive reinforcement training methods are based in the science of learning theory, animal behavior, neuroscience, and biology. New research to help us understand how dogs think and learn is happening all of the time.

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