

# Dog and Puppy TRAINING TECHNIQUES



The Best Dog Training Methods  
for Dogs and Puppies

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## Introduction

There are more than 400 types of pure-bred dogs in the world. When you factor in crossbreeding, you realize there are a virtually countless number of dog types. While there aren't nearly that many training methods for your precocious pup or cuddly canine, there are several to choose from.

Should you use reward-based training or direct your dog's behavior with negative reinforcement techniques? There are science-based dog training methods and some use food as a reward and motivator. Others use small electrical charges to let your dog know he's making a mistake.

When you start doing your research, you run into multiple training techniques. This gets you to thinking about the choice you're going to make. You might ask yourself some of the following questions.

- Which method should you choose to train your dog?
- Is one better than another for your breed of dog?
- Are some techniques better suited for puppies than middle-aged or adult dogs?
- Can you harm your dog or make things worse by using the wrong type of training?
- How do you get started? What's the first thing you should do?

- Should you handle the training yourself or get a professional involved?

These are all good questions. We'll cover these and more in this guide to the most common dog training techniques. You will get a look at some methods that have been around seemingly forever. There are some training strategies that have been developed and refined much more recently.

We'll discuss the pros and cons of older, traditional dog training methods and newer techniques. You'll find that some might make more sense for you and your dog than others. If you try several different strategies you might find more success with one than the rest.

**Just remember, results aren't all that matters. The health and welfare of your dog should be the most important consideration.**

Training methods should leave your dog's emotions and mental state intact. After all, wouldn't you rather have a dog that loves and respects you rather than one that only does what you want out of fear?

One of the oldest dog training techniques involves negative reinforcement, dominance and punishment. Dogs are punished when they do something wrong. This makes them scared to make a decision. After all, if they choose the wrong behavior they know they're going to be punished. They're so scared of making the wrong decision that they don't do anything, and this can frustrate both the dog and you.

Considering dog training methods that use punishment and dominance, the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has a recommendation. They say

such programs "*... can be ineffective and possibly dangerous, especially in the hands of an unskilled nonprofessional.*"

You should also remember that expert advice can make your dog training efforts more successful. For the safety of you and your pet, discuss your training approach with a professional dog trainer before you get started. This can pay major dividends and shorten the amount of time it takes for your training to deliver the intended results.

Let's start reviewing the best training methods for dogs and puppies by taking a trip back in time to late 19th century Russia.

## Classical Conditioning and Pavlov's Dogs

Ivan Pavlov was a Russian physiologist. He was studying digestive processes in dogs when he noticed something. The dogs used in his studies began to drool when they were served meat. He had the same technician feed the dogs every meal.

The dogs began to associate this person with feeding time. Pavlov noted the dogs salivated when they started seeing that technician, even when he wasn't feeding them. He conducted a series of tests in 1897 that showed the dogs could be conditioned to salivate and expect food whenever he rang a bell.

He began by sounding a bell when his dogs were fed. Every meal was accompanied by the sound of that same bell. Eventually, the dogs would begin to salivate in expectation of eating when they heard the bell, even when no food was served.

**This is known as classical conditioning.**

It takes place when a conditioned stimulus (the bell in the example of Pavlov's dogs) is connected to an unconditioned stimulus (the taste of the dogs' meals). This triggers an unconditioned response (salivation, which helps the dogs digest their food).

When this process is repeated over and over, this leads to a conditioned response (the dogs salivated at the sound of the bell). In the case of Pavlov's dogs, the unconditioned stimulus of food was removed. The conditioned stimulus of the ringing bell was all that was needed to create the response of the dogs beginning to salivate in anticipation of a delicious meal.



You might have seen an example of classical conditioning if you've had a dog before.

Most dog owners feed their pet out of the same bowl every time. That pet begins to associate that bowl with eating. If the bowl usually makes a noise when you place it at the regular feeding spot, the dog can associate that sound with being fed. This means if your dog sees you washing his bowl his brain tells them that it's about to be feeding time, because he links the appearance of the bowl to meal-time.

He gets excited. He begins to anticipate eating. He starts salivating.

## **How Your Local Ice Cream Man Conditioned You As a Child**

Did you like to eat ice cream as a kid? Ice cream may still be one of your favorite treats as an adult. Many communities license ice cream vendors to sell their delicious treats out of a truck or van. They're allowed to drive through neighborhoods and sell their frozen snacks.

This practice has been going on for decades in some countries. Smart ice cream truck drivers always play a catchy tune when they're patrolling subdivisions and looking for customers. They'll play that same tune every day rather than different songs. This will almost always be a song that isn't currently popular or heard very many places if anywhere.

This is to ensure that ice cream man's customers identify that tune to his business and not anything else. Children (and adults as well) eventually associate the sound of that song to the wonderful experience of eating ice cream.

The ice cream is not present. They aren't eating it yet. They may not even be able to see the ice cream man.

However, they have been conditioned to hunger for their favorite ice cream flavors when they hear the song played. This is classical conditioning, and it works with humans much like it works with dogs and other animals.

You can find other examples of classical conditioning in your life if you just look around. It can be incredibly powerful, and when used the right way, it could create a desired response in your dog.

## **How to Use Classical Conditioning in Dog Training**

Some dogs get excited when they see their owners pick up their leash. That dog leash might be nothing more than a basic leather strap. Leather carries no importance to a dog. However, Fido knows that every time you grab his leash, he gets to enjoy a walk outside.

The first few times you leashed him and took him for a walk, no association was made. Over time, the repetition of grabbing his leash, connecting it to his collar, opening your door and taking Fido for a walk became familiar to your dog. Now all you have to do is grab his leash and he starts jumping up and down and possibly barking because he's so excited. He has associated the leash with an enjoyable activity, being taken for a walk.

Sometimes your dog is so excited he can hardly hold still. It's difficult for you to attach his leash to his collar. This doesn't have to be a problem. You can use the

power of the leash / taking a walk association to create the desired response in your dog.

Start grabbing the leash and then waiting. Let your dog go crazy. Let them jump up and down and yelp and bark and spin around in circles. Be patient. When he finally settles down slowly move towards him to attach the leash to his collar. If he begins to get excited again, stop and return to your waiting game.

**Only when he is calmed down and sitting still do you attach the leash to the collar.**

Start doing this every time you take him out for a walk. You can eventually reprogram Fido to calmly wait for you to attach your leash to his collar before walking him.

You can use this process to train your dog in a number of ways. All you need to do is pair a neutral stimulus or activity (in the example above, grabbing the leash) with the behavior you desire (your dog calmly sitting and waiting for you to attach his leash so you can take him for a walk).

Repetition is the key.

If you can perform the same activity at the same time every day that can speed up your path to success. Your dog becomes conditioned that a certain stimulus which leads to a desirable result for him happens approximately the same time each day.

This probably already happens if you own a dog now. He has become accustomed to your morning, midday and evening routines. You have been classically

conditioning your dog without even knowing it. Now you can consciously use this simple, safe and punishment-free training method to create a desired response.

## **Classical Conditioning to Reverse Behavior**

You can use this process to reverse behavior as well. The key is once again linking a desired behavior with a neutral stimulus, object or activity. Then you repeat the process until you have reversed bad behavior and replaced it with good behavior. Let's use an aggressive dog as an example.

The best way to get your dog comfortable around other people (including strangers) is to start when he is a puppy. Sometimes you don't have this opportunity. You may adopt or otherwise inherit a dog that is already an adolescent or an adult. Maybe that dog was raised in an environment where he didn't socialize with humans very much. Then when he did get around people other than his owner, he had some negative things happen.

You can't blame that animal for associating human contact with pain or fear or other negative emotions.

You want your animal to feel comfortable around other people. This makes the world a safer place for you, your dog and any people he interacts with. What you do is practice counter-conditioning.

**Anything that is learned through classical conditioning can be unlearned and reversed. You use the exact same process.**

Begin introducing your dog to strangers one person at a time. Make sure you're in a controlled setting and leash or crate your animal. You want your pet to

associate nice things with being around other people, so you might feed him a treat, give him praise, take him for a walk or play games with him.

You know the things your dog likes. Associate one of these things with your dog being around people and you can counter-condition aggressive, unfriendly behavior and make your pet more comfortable around people.

## The Most Popular Dog Training Method - Operant Conditioning

This dog training technique controls the environment. You make an environment comfortable and your dog wants to enjoy that experience again. The reward in this scenario is your dog being happy, comfortable and feeling safe. He's in a "feel-good" environment. Negative reinforcement is also used here. However, the punishment in this case is not physical (spanking his bottom or tugging on his leash). The negative payoff for incorrect behavior is a less than enjoyable environment.

Like so many dog training methods, you reinforce good behavior and punish bad behavior.

With operant conditioning there are 4 different types of learning. Two types of operant learning strengthen and reward behaviors. These are called reinforcements. Then you have two other types of learning that weaken behavior. These are referred to as punishments. The 4 quadrants of operant learning are:

1. Negative reinforcement
2. Positive reinforcement
3. Negative punishment
4. Positive punishment

Those terms need a little explanation. In this case, positive means adding and negative means subtracting. These words don't refer to the consequence of an action. The word positive in operant conditioning refers to the fact that a stimulus has been added to the equation. Using the word negative means a stimulus has been removed.

This is done to let the dog know whether a preceding behavior was acceptable or unacceptable. For instance, a negative reinforcement tells the dog that the behavior is positive. You help your dog avoid a stimulus or experience that is negative. By doing this you reinforce that his behavior was proper. This type of negative reinforcement is sometimes referred to as escape-avoidance learning.

With positive reinforcement, good behavior is strengthened. You are reinforcing his behavior by adding a stimulus. You reward him in a way that produces positive feelings. Both negative and positive reinforcements are behavior strengthening processes.

Positive punishment means adding a negative stimulus. You introduce something into your dog's environment that he doesn't like. This could be making him go into his crate, with the crate being the tool for delivering the positive punishment. Negative punishment in the operant conditioning equation means taking something from your dog. A negative punishment is not physical. You might remove a privilege like play-time with another dog.

With both reinforcement and punishment in operant conditioning, you teach your dog that all behaviors have a consequence. When his behavior is desirable, you reinforce that behavior by either adding or subtracting positive or negative stimuli. When his behavior is improper, punishment takes place by adding or subtracting negative or positive stimuli.

## Positive Reinforcement vs Alpha Dog Training Methods

Many of the current negative reinforcement dog training methods were developed during World War II. The dog was seen as the adversary of the trainer. Since dogs could possibly find themselves in extreme battle conditions, they were trained just like their human counterparts. Physical training was grueling. Then their current attitudes and ideas were broken down. Finally, new ways of thinking were "installed" in the dog's brains.

Much of this training was based on negative reinforcement.

Dogs were punished when they did something wrong. The trainers of these military dogs were taught by psychologists that fear is an incredibly strong motivator. This is true in humans as well as animals. A lot of studies have shown that people will move away from fear more quickly than they will move towards a reward. Dogs are similar.

Even so, the ends don't always justify the means. Traditional "Alpha Dog" domination schools of training have been questioned. The idea is that a trainer establishes himself as the dominant member in a dog pack of two, the dog being trained and the trainer. This thought revolves around the belief that a wolf pack has a dominant member and that all other members of the pack fall in line in a specific order of rank and dominance.

Since dogs are the domesticated cousins of wolves it was assumed they act in the same way.

Dog trainers who believe in positive reinforcement training point to research which has exposed the Alpha Dog theory as false. Positive reinforcement training is used in most modern methods. It is not entirely based in positive rewards for



good actions only. The difference is that the negative reinforcement comes from removing positive environments and experiences.

## **"Cookie Pushers" or "Choke Folks"?**

Get two dog trainers with opposing methods together and you're likely to see a fight start. At the very least you'll get a heated argument. Those who believe in dominance training call positive reinforcement believers "cookie pushers". They say that slinging a treat every time you get a dog to do something right creates a food-addicted animal. The dog expects a treat if he simply wals past a human without biting it.

Those who prefer more positive, gentler reinforcements for training puppies and dogs call dominance-based techniques cruel and inhumane. They say the trainers who use those methods are "choke folks", because of their preference for pulling on a choke chain to influence a dog's behavior.

Let's take a look at each school of thought in deeper detail.

## **Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative**

All positive, all the time ... that's the idea behind predominantly positive reinforcement as a dog training method. It's practiced by Victoria Stillwell, from the Animal Planet TV show "It's Me or the Dog". Dawn Sylvia-Stasiewicz earned a slice of fame when she used this method to train Bo, President Obama's dog.

The training ideology is simple. If a dog is rewarded for good behavior, he'll remember it. Punishment is always needed, but it doesn't have to appear as a physical force or dominant reprimand.

Positivity training advocates believe there are too many negative and bad experiences and emotions created by an Alpha Dog, dominance-oriented type of training. They believe this training takes the spirit out of an animal and makes it nothing more than a slave with little freedom of will. Positive training frequently uses hand signals and treats, clickers and verbal cues, and even toys or games to help modify behavior in a positive way.

Positive reinforcement means giving rewards and negative punishment means taking away those rewards. You can basically train a dog with just about anything that dog enjoys doing. This could be playtime with another animal, cuddling on the couch with its owner or any other experience the dog finds enjoyable.

## **Alpha Dog Dominance Training Techniques**

The trainer becomes the lead dog in an imaginary pack. The dog being trained is forced to take a submissive or secondary role. Tools used in this type of training are choke chains and electronic collars (also called e-collars). The trainer's praise is still used as positive reinforcement. So are treats, but in small doses.

Dominance techniques include pinning the dog to the ground (called an Alpha Roll) and a technique called "flooding".

Flooding means subjecting the dog to something it dislikes. This is done in large doses. The dog's environment is flooded with a stimulus it has proven to despise. If a dog hates loud noises, the approach might be to use several loud noises being played for several seconds to try to alter behavior. The dog may be restrained by a leash and forced to endure a flood of something it previously ran from or attacked.

Dogs are taught to enter a doorway or room after the trainer. They are not the Alpha or lead dog. They learn through constant negative reinforcement and dominance training to take a submissive role that gives them the most enjoyable life.

Not everyone is training what they hope to become a cuddly, friendly house pet. Dominance training makes a lot of sense if you're raising a couple of dogs whose main job is providing security. As part of a security force it makes sense that they should understand their handlers are their dominant masters.

Some breeds are perfectly suited for security, police and military roles, such as German shepherds. Alpha training might work well for them. These same dogs make excellent, loyal and protective family pets. Positivity training aficionados will tell you that the training creates the dog, and this is proved by the lovable, cuddly, affectionate pit bull or German shepherd, usually thought of as more aggressive breeds.

Alpha dog believers in dominance training understand positive praise is important. They point out that some positivity proponents go overboard in this regard. They may say things like "Good dog" or "Good boy" when a dog has done little to nothing to earn that praise. The dog believes that just existing is positive behavior, so it doesn't always act correctly.

## Science-Based Dog Training Techniques

We often turn to science to tell us whether something makes sense or not. Most people try to lose weight at some point in their lives. They see a friend have some success and they ask that person how they lost the weight and kept it off. They were told about a particular diet plan. They tried it themselves and maybe it worked, maybe it didn't. If they met with failure, perhaps they tried to go the scientifically proven route the next time.

They look for scientific research and studies that something does or does not deliver a specific set of results. They want to know that tests or experiments were conducted in a scientific way. This gives them a greater sense of belief in a process than if they just see some paid endorsement on television.

We look for science-based proof that some process will create the results we're looking for all the time. As it turns out, there are a lot of dog and puppy trainers who use science-based, evidence-backed techniques. The idea is that since these techniques are based on the science of how dogs are made and not on human opinion, they have a better chance of succeeding.

**This is because all dogs are scientifically created the same way. Though there are more than 400 pure breeds of dogs and thousands of cross-breeds, they are all the same basic animal inside. So applying a scientific approach to behavior modification should work with any dog, at any age, and any breed.**

No matter how many breeds and crossbreeds exist, all dogs are scientifically classified in the *Canis familiaris* species. This is true from the tiny Chihuahua to the Great Dane, and the German Shepherd to the English terrier. Approach dog training from a scientific standpoint and you get quicker, longer lasting results

because you appeal to mother nature ... or so say the proponents of this training technique.

Science-based training means more than just a single technique or practice. It incorporates everything that is scientifically known about dogs. This has to do with psychology and physiology, why dogs behave the way they do, what motivators and reinforcers affect a dog's opinion, and so much more.

Science-based training can be used for negative and positive reinforcement strategies. A science-based trainer will understand both positive and negative methods, dominance theory, traditional training techniques, modern methods and what aspects of each have been proven scientifically.

For instance, the idea of a single male being in control of an entire wolf pack has been disproven. This idea has been discredited by researchers of wolves. These were the same researchers and scientists that introduced the Alpha Dog theory based on their study of wolf packs!

The truth is that wild wolves (the predecessors of our domesticated dogs) don't become the leaders of a pack by merely making all other wolves submissive. It is a long maturing process. Then they have to mate and produce offspring. These are more like human parental roles than a structured dominant and submissive hierarchy.

There is a lot of nurturing and teaching. Negative teaching occurs, but it's not usually violent and overly physical or aggressive. A Wolf pup's parents teach by doing and offer a pup to learn on his own by trying things independently, after being taught the right behaviors and actions for certain situations.

This has been proven by science. This and other research indicates that dog training methods which rely on dominance and submission aren't that successful. They can create behavioral disorders and dogs which are aggressive to humans. This is where science parts with the traditional techniques for dog training.

**Science-based training looks for what can be proven scientifically as opposed to simply doing things as we have done them in the past and assuming they're for the best.**

Most science-based training methods use operant conditioning techniques. However, because this is a science-based approach, techniques and methods are changing all the time. The key to science-based training is understanding. This means that everything regarding a particular behavior is studied. Everything is understood before a training method is undertaken.

Talk to two different trainers that advertise science-based services and you may get two different experiences. Go with what you feel is the best fit for your dog and your situation.

## Clicker Training (Click and Reward Training)

This is a form of event marker training (sometimes called mark and reward training). An event marker does exactly that. It marks an event, in this case, a specific point in time. You're letting your dog know out of a series of behaviors, which of his behaviors you are recognizing.

### **Imagine the following scenario.**

You are trying to teach your dog to sit on command. You give the command and your dog sits. He's only there for a second and then he stands up. He takes a few steps towards you and stops. He walks around in a couple of confused circles and finally stands still.

If you give your dog a reward of some kind, how does he know which behavior was appropriate? Maybe he thinks he should repeat that entire sequence. Is he being rewarded and praised because he sat, stood back up, stood still or walked in a circle? An event marker such as a clicker lets him know which behavior was appropriate.

You hit the clicker exactly when your dog sits. If he then does something else before you reward or praise him, he can still understand that sitting was the appropriate behavior. This was what earned him his positive reinforcement. As you can imagine, this doesn't work automatically. You have to condition your dog to associate the sound of a clicker with a reward of some type. Then when he answers a command with the correct response or behavior and you sound your clicker, he expects a reward. You deliver the reward to complete the sequence.

There is no guessing game, no trace of doubt, and absolutely no confusion.

Instead of a clicker you could use a hand signal. It could be a sound you make with your mouth. The point is that the signal has to be exactly the same every time. It can't vary.

The reason why many dog trainers use handheld clickers is that they make a reliable sound again and again. The "click" sound they make is easily identifiable by your dog. It's different than natural sounds he may hear. It can't be confused with the sound of your voice, a nearby dog barking or the sounds of machinery or technology.

Conditioning with a hand signal works as well. The problem is that some things you want your dog to do may not allow him to look at you while he's doing them. Things in your environment and other objects might interrupt his line of vision. That's why a clicker works so well. You can be heard even when you're not seen.

That having been said, event markers are almost always handheld clickers. They are simple device devices that make a clicking sound when activated. When a clicker is not used then the event marker is usually some type of vocal signal given by a trainer. The problem with vocal signals is that every voice is different. If you want a dog to respond to its trainer and its owner the same way, a clicker makes more sense than using a vocal command.

The clicker will always sound the same.

Whatever you use as your clicker shouldn't also be used at any other time other than training. This will confuse the animal. Deaf dogs can be trained effectively using vibrating collars or laser lights. They take the place of an audible signal to create a desired behavior or response.



When using a voice command as an event marker, the sound created needs to be distinctive and "punchy". It must be clearly enunciated and short. When using a word, this shouldn't be a word your dog will hear you use in your typical day to day routine.

You'll hear trainers using short shouts and exclamations as event markers instead of words so a dog can't become confused when it hears people speaking. Imagine using a word like "good" or "yes" as your event marker.

An event marker training session works well, and your dog takes to it immediately. Your dog may then hear you or someone else say "good" or "yes" a few times after the training session is over. Try to imagine the confusion in your dog's mind. It will immediately expect some kind of reward if it completes the action it just learned with the verbal cue word as the event marker.

This is just another reason why a device which makes an unnatural, mechanical clicking sound is a popular choice for trainers that use event marking techniques.

## **Are There Specific Clickers Made for Dog Training?**

A web search for the phrase "dog training clicker" returns millions of results. You probably don't have the desire (or the years of time) to search through all those results. What you find looking through the first page of listings is that there are dog training clickers in all shapes, sizes and colors.

You can find dog clickers that attach to your keychain or already have a keychain attached. Some attach to your wrist with an elastic band and others are fitted with a band that slips over your finger. If you can think of a convenient way to hold a small object in your hand, there's probably a dog training clicker made in that configuration.

You can use anything that makes a clicking sound, but you probably shouldn't for the reasons we discussed earlier. Your dog may associate the sound with something other than training if he hears it in another environment.

In other words, to answer the question asked above, "Yes, there are definitely specific clickers made just for training your dog."

You can get them online if your local vet doesn't sell them. They can also be found at many big-box retailers and some sporting goods stores. They're basically nothing more than a small plastic or metal device that can be held in your hand. There is a spring or battery-powered button or tongue that emits a "click" sound when activated.

The sound these clickers make is very short-lived. It's distinctive and only lasts one note. It's sharp and high-pitched, and a good clicker will deliver a consistent signal every time.

## **You Have To "Charge" Your Clicker before You Use It**

Most clickers aren't battery-operated. If this is the case, then why are we telling you to charge them? When we use the word charge here we mean that you need to connect the sound of the clicker to a pleasurable feeling or emotion.

This is classical conditioning.

You develop a strong link between the sound of the clicker and the taste of a yummy doggie treat (usually a food treat but not always). This has to be something the dog loves. You "charge" the clicker by simply repeatedly clicking it

over and over and then handing your dog a tasty treat or other reward immediately. It doesn't take long for even the most hardheaded dog to understand that the clicking sound leads to good things.

Like with Pavlov's dogs, the clicker creates the taste in the dog's mouth of the treat he's rewarded with. Before he even gobbles down the treat, he has already had a sensory experience that is the same as eating it. The exact same feeling of pleasure your dog gets from eating the treat is what he feels as soon as you make the clicking sound.

**Repetition is the key here to programming your dog with this classical conditioning technique.**

What's amazing is that once you have charged the clicker and associated it with a specific reward, you can deliver that reward seconds after the correct behavior has been exhibited. You shouldn't wait longer than you need to, but you don't have to rush the process either.

There's another point of note here. Don't change up your treat unless you need to.

Whatever reward you're using with your clicker, stick to it. If it's a type of food, decide on one type of treat and use it over and over. If your dog gets to the point that he doesn't like that particular snack, choose something else and start the process over. Everything needs to be as consistent and repetitive as possible.

## **When You Should Stop Using the Clicker**

The clicker uses classical conditioning to teach your dog a lesson. It's easiest when you are teaching or training a new skill or behavior, but it works to correct old behavior also. Once you begin to see a repetitive level of success, you should phase out clicker training.

Event marker training teaches your dog to do certain things. It lets him or her know you want a specific action taken when you give some type of command. Once this process works and your dog exhibits the correct behavior every time, there is a danger if you continue to use the clicker.

**Clicker train too long and your dog will only perform when you give a command and it's followed by the clicking sound and the treat.**

You want to associate the behavior with your command. Once your dog starts to give you the correct behavior with just a command and no clicker conditioning, the clicker's job is done for that command, trick or behavior.

Event markers train behavior, and eventually relate that behavior to a cue word or hand signal. That way your vocal or physical signal takes the place of the clicker. If you don't follow this process, you're going to always need a clicker on hand ... and a limitless supply of doggie treats.

## **NILIF Training - Nothing in Life Is Free**

There's an old saying that says there's no such thing as a free lunch. The idea is that you have to pay for pretty much everything you get in life. You might get some freebies here and there, but don't expect them. Approach life as something that requires you to offer something of value to receive something of value.

That's what this type of dog training is all about.

NILIF dog training stands for Nothing In Life Is Free. It operates on the premise that your dog must do something of value to receive something of value. Attention is given when attention is earned. This is nothing like the "Alpha Dog" school of training, which is largely punishment-based.

It works on almost an entirely positive reinforcement system. It teaches dog owners how to give praise and rewards after the training is over. Instead of lavishing praise for no behaviors or incorrect behaviors, the owners are taught that dogs should receive attention only after doing something to earn it.

Don't worry. If this sounds like the dog doesn't have any fun and you can't love your animal unless it does something special, that's not what happens. Let's take a closer look at this form of positivity training.

## **NILIF Requires Some Groundwork First**

A lot of training regimens can get started from scratch. They don't need any preparation. That's not the case with the Nothing In Life Is Free training method.

Your dog needs to understand a few basic commands for this training to work. Whether you're training a puppy or an older dog, it needs to understand "sit" and "come" at the very least. Your dog should be able to perform consistently when given these commands. If not, it's going to make this training program difficult when your furry Fido is in a new environment.

**Those are the basic minimum commands your dog should know.**

The more cues and commands your dog already understands, the better. This means you want to have your dog trained in basic commands before you start this training. If you do, you can be blown away by just how successful these techniques can be. If you don't, you and your dog are going to struggle.

How do you know if your dog is proficient enough at basic commands?

He should be able to recognize and respond to your cues and commands in different environments. He should be able to "sit", "come" and "stay" in different situations and with different levels of sensory input. The better your dog is at this simple part of training, the more successful your NILIF experience is going to be.

## **Understanding the Basics of NILIF**

This may be difficult for you to take at first. Just bear with us. Don't develop any assumptions or mental pictures just yet. Many dog owners find this training method successful where traditional methods have failed. It can develop a loving, obedient dog and a healthy, happy relationship between dog and owner.

It all starts with the basic idea that your dog is not given your attention immediately whenever it approaches you.

**This means your dog has to "earn your permission" before it engages with you.**

Even if you've never trained a dog before, you've seen this in action. How many team times have you seen a dog walk up to a table full of people eating a meal? Does the dog jump up into a chair, pick up a fork and start eating? Of course he doesn't.

He "asks permission" by sitting and waiting patiently where he knows at least one of the people at the table can see him. This is a classic example of a dog asking permission to get a person's attention.

Someone notices the dog and looks at it. The dog will then begin barking or whining and excitedly moving about. This is his way of asking the person to feed him from the table. He earned the attention of the person and now he believes since he got the attention, he's allowed to make contact. He does whatever he can to get some table scraps.

This is an example of NILIF dog training method basics.

The dog might lay his head on the table to try to get your attention. He might nudge your leg. When you use this dog training technique, he doesn't get your attention. You teach him to earn your attention by sitting instead of nudging your leg. You teach him to lay down rather than to put his head on the table. You trade an undesired behavior for a desired alternative.

## **The Reason NILIF Works**

This training method works for one simple reason. Dogs usually want whatever they consider to be the best experience in their environment. If they have a choice between doing five different things they will go after what they think is the object or experience that delivers the greatest value.

It's why a dog will immediately go to its owner as opposed to strangers in a crowd. The dog is familiar with that person. That person gives him love and attention and takes him for walks and feeds him.

**He is the highest-value object the dog can see.**

When the dog approaches a high-value object, it might start barking. It might jump up on a person. It will do anything to get attention. If it understands you will tell it to stop barking if it barks, it might still do this. It would rather have negative attention than no attention at all. Learning to ignore your pet when it's looking for negative attention is at the core of successful NILIF training.

## **You Begin Giving Positive Attention to Good Choices**

In every situation, it's better to give a dog a choice. If all you do is punish bad behavior, the dog gets frustrated. There's no positive or enjoyable alternative. It may continue to choose the negative behavior since it knows it's going to get attention. In this unique training style, you give your dog options. If he behaves in an acceptable way, you will give him the attention he so desperately needs. His choice is to act some other way, in a manner that you don't like. His reward in that instance will be no attention at all.

This seems like a pretty basic training strategy. It is when you think about it. What's amazing is how well it works time and time again for different types of dogs, different ages different sizes and breeds. You can use it in every aspect of



your dog's life. Give your dog the choice of no attention or positive attention and he'll accept the positive attention choice every time.

Your dog learns to sit by the door patiently if he needs to go outside and use the bathroom. When you're feeding him, he understands he must perform a "stay" and wait for you to put his bowl down or he won't get a bite.

Dog training teaches your dog to ask permission for the things he wants and to look to you to teach him what that permission needs to be.

## Dog Training Puppies Vs. Older Dogs

You may have heard the saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. That's actually not true. In the real world, puppies are often harder to teach and train than older dogs. This is especially the case if the dog has been taken away from its mother before he is 7 or 8 weeks of age.

Your dog learns several things from its mother before it's a couple of months old. If he bites too hard during playtime, mother will nip him or give him a little tug. He begins to learn that this isn't the right way to play. If he's overly aggressive with his owners mom will correct that behavior too.

**This means you should never adopt a puppy that has been taken away from its mom before it's 7 or 8 weeks old.**

This is a vital time in the puppy's life. If he is removed from the litter too early there are so many things he isn't taught. A domesticated mama dog passes on all she knows to her little ones. This includes lessons like how to act around people and other pets. Sometimes being successful at training your puppy means letting mother nature do a lot of the work for you.

Don't adopt a puppy that has been removed from its mother before a couple of months of age. The training experience will also be much easier for both you and your pet.

## Older Dogs Aren't Immature, and They Often Train Quickly

You may have heard that 1 year of a dog's life equals 7 human years. This calculation comes from a rough average of all dog life expectancies. It's somewhat accurate if you look at the entire life of a dog, but not the first couple of years.

The first 2 years of a puppy's life he is maturing at an extremely rapid rate. The American Veterinary Medical Association tells us that the first year of a medium-sized dog's life is 14 or 15 years when compared to a human's life. This tells you just how fast that puppy is growing in year number one. The second year of your dog's life equals about 9 human years. After that each year equates to 5 or 6 human years for your dog.

**It is for this reason that puppies can be very difficult to train.**

A dog age is the equivalent of 1 human year old in just its first 24 days. That means while you're trying to train a dog that is less than a year old, his body and mind are changing rapidly.

There is so much pulling at his attention. His physiological and mental processes are constantly changing. From day-to-day you are trying to reinforce good training habits but so many things are going on in that dog's life. It may be tough for this young pup to remember all that you're teaching him.

**This is why dogs after 2 years of age are often easier to train than younger ones. They have matured a little.**

After you have been with the dog for its first two calendar years of existence, it's roughly 24 human years of age! It's much more mature than a young puppy.

We mention this just so you understand you shouldn't steer clear from adopting an older dog. A puppy that's a few months old can be much easier to train than a 2-month-old, because the dog has matured so much in a short period of time.

Under any circumstances, using training methods the right way can instill the correct behavior in puppies, adolescents and adult dogs.

## **9 Steps for Finding the Right Dog Trainer**

You consumed a lot of information to this point. Your bottom line is that you want to do what's best for your dog. The quicker you can get your puppy, adolescent or older dog trained, the better for you and your pet. This means you might be anxious to get started. The last thing you need to do is jump into any type of training just because it's available.

That means you should ask yourself and your trainer certain questions before you choose one doctrine or over another. Even if you are considering doing the training yourself, you ought to run through this list. As we said in the introduction, before you undertake any type of dog training yourself, you need to get the input of a trained professional.

This list of steps for finding the right dog trainer will give you an idea of what you need to know before you choose a trainer for your dog. It can also help you ask the right questions to make you a more efficient and successful trainer yourself.

Go through the following checklist of 9 steps for locating the perfect trainer for you and your dog. It lets your trainer know what you expect, and ensures you and your canine will be happier with the process.

### **1 – Check with Your Friends and Previous Customers**

People that love animals spend time together. This means you probably have a lot of friends that have dogs. Ask around. See if they've used trainers in the past. What did they think? What were the ups and downs of the experience?

Another good idea here is to consult friends that have the same kind of dog that you do.

This doesn't necessarily mean the same breed. What you want to look for are friends of yours that may have had a dog trained that is approximately the same age as yours. It's the same size. It has the same temperament. If you can find someone like this that has paid for training in the past that has been successful, you've struck an information goldmine. See what they have to think. Ask lots of questions about the process.

If none of your friends have used a dog trainer before, check with other dog owners. The next time you're at your local dog park or taking a walk and see someone walking a dog, introduce yourself. Ask them if they have any experience with dog trainers. This can generate a lot of valuable information, and you also get to make a connection with another dog lover.

Finally, you can ask any dog trainer you're considering for a list of references. Then be sure to let any trainer you choose know that you talked with some of her previous customers. It will make her feel good that some of her customers are saying nice things. It also lets her know that you will probably be passing on your experience to others, good or bad.

## **2 – Ask for Certifications and Organizational Connections**

You are totally in your right to run a background check on possible trainers. This just makes sense. A simple trip to a trainer's business can help you out in this regard. Trainers proudly display certifications and awards they have received from notable organizations in the industry.

You should ask for any relevant certifications, awards and achievements if you don't see what you're looking for. Don't think you're overstepping your bounds if you ask what abbreviations and certifications mean.

### **What would you do in the following scenario?**

You set up an interview with a trainer. You go to her place of business. On her office walls you see several licenses and certifications. The trainer boasts about her TYO certification where she received the highest grade in the class. She doesn't tell you what words TYO stands for. This sounds pretty impressive to you, and on the merits of that recommendation you choose this trainer.

Would you be surprised to find that the TYO label stands for "Train Yourself Online" dog training course? She took a 60-minute course online and answered a few questions and, presto ... she received her TYO certification.

*(We just made up that TYO certification name and scenario, so don't go looking for it!)*

In other words, you have to understand what certifications and registrations stand for. You can't do that unless you ask questions and to do your own research. A CAAB designation means the trainer is a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist with a PhD in Behavioral Science. This designation means more than 200 behavioral cases have been completed successfully. That obviously carries some weight.

Other legitimate and notable organizations include ...

- APDT (Association of Professional Dog Trainers)

- IAABC (International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants)
- NADOI (National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors)
- APDT (Association of Pet Dog Trainers)
- CCPDT (Certification Counsel for Professional Dog Trainers)

All of the above organizations either require or recommend ongoing education for trainers. That's a good sign to look for.

### **3 – Talk to the Trainer about Your Goals for Your Dog**

Your goal might be to teach your puppy not to be so aggressive. You need to communicate this to your trainer. Some entry-level classes work to develop a number of behaviors. They have a basket full of multiple behaviors they work on. They don't just teach your dog to fetch, roll over and sit.

Put simply, your goals should line up with your trainer.

You might just want to get your dog to socialize with other animals. You're doing this to have some fun and make your dog a little less rough around the edges. You don't have any hard and clear goals.

Your case might be just the opposite. You might have a list of results you're trying to achieve. That's fine. If this is the case, make sure you communicate your goals and hopes with the trainers you interview.

A tip here is to not reveal your hand at first. Ask the trainer what type of results he produces. Ask him what his specialty is. Some trainers aren't very well-rounded. They're good at producing one result but not so successful in other



areas. After finding out what your trainer has as specific goals for training, then discuss what you're looking for with your pet.

## **4 – Get Feedback on The Training**

Some trainers are great with dogs, but not so much with humans. They're very good at what they do. They may have been a dog in a previous lifetime exhalation point just because they're good at talking to animals doesn't mean they're automatically blessed with effective interpersonal communications skills.

Ask a prospective trainer what type of feedback you'll get. He shouldn't just hand you your dog and ask for your credit card. You should get a report card and plenty of feedback.

You can also get your own feedback before the training takes place. How does the person make you feel? Did your trainer talk down to you or did she make you feel comfortable? Did the trainer ask a lot of questions about your dog? If so, that's a great sign. Feedback is important, before, during and after the training takes place.

## **5 – Monitor a Class**

Many trainers offer open classes. They train dogs while the owners are on hand. Some don't mind if you monitor a little bit of a training session. They know this level of transparency gives you a lot of faith that they know what they're doing and they aren't hiding anything.

If you get to monitor a training class, ask yourself a few questions. What's the ratio of trainers and helpers to the number of dogs being trained? You shouldn't expect a trainer to handle more than 5 or 6 dogs at a time.

You may think a trainer should work with dogs in a one-on-one basis, and they do at some point during training. However, basic dog training classes take place with one trainer helping multiple dogs. This is an industry standard. It gets dogs used to hanging around each other. A smart trainer uses positive reinforcement with one dog as a way to get other dogs to exhibit the same behavior.

What does the training environment look like? Is it clean? Are there danger hazards? What tools are being used? You're looking for things like flat collars and leashes. Bite-size treats and toys are nice, as is a visually positive environment. Halters and harnesses accompanied with lots of positive feedback and praise are more signs that your dog is in safe hands.

If you see lots of choke collars, prong collars and dominance training, you probably want to look elsewhere.

## **6 – Ask What Method of Training Is Predominantly Used**

This is straightforward. It should be one of the first things you ask a trainer you're thinking about hiring. There are so many different training methods. You should be able to get a straightforward answer when you ask what training techniques are being used.

Look for specific methodology and verbiage here. Your trainer needs to clearly describe the approach that's going to be used. Also, stop her if she uses terminology you don't understand. When words like "energy" or "balance" are

used, you could have someone trying to avoid being direct with you. Ask exactly how results are achieved.

When the trainer speaks of "positive reinforcement" that may sound great. But what does that really mean? Ask what reward and punishment methods are used. These are the things you need to ask to get a clear picture of how your dog's going to be treated.

## **7 – Are the Dogs and Their Masters Happy?**

This one's easy. When you're monitoring a class, are the dogs, their owners and families happy? Many trainers involve the family as much as possible. The dog is going home with the family, so it makes sense for the training to take place with the family as well. If the dogs aren't happy, is the training going to stick? Why aren't they happy? Are they being punished needlessly or physically?

Ask the dog owners how they feel. Tell them you're thinking about using this particular trainer. You want to make sure they are happy with the experience, and their dog is too. When a dog enjoys his training, he's more likely to stick with it. This means quicker results and a happier pet, and isn't that what you want?

## **8 – Don't Forget to Ask What to Bring**

Don't just assume that a professional trainer will tell you if you need to bring anything other than your dog. It's always better to ask than simply assume. Discuss with your trainer what equipment you will need to bring for the class.

You likely won't be asked to bring anything more than a standard leash and collar. If you are told to supply a "correction collar" or "slip lead", that's a sign of a

trainer that uses punishment-based training. If you're told to bring your dog, a good attitude, your puppy's favorite treats and not much else, that's a good sign.

## **9 – Most Importantly of All ... Be Realistic**

You want the best for your dog. You would love to have your dog act like a perfect gentleman and responsible companion in the presence of animals and people. You might get there one day. You could become lucky and reach those goals in a short period of time. You may not.

The important part is not to expect miracles overnight.

Everything takes time. You're here for a reason. You're getting your dog trained because certain behaviors aren't where you want them to be. Don't expect your puppy to be the star of the doggie daycare class. Be happy with positive steps forward. It's good to set big goals, and as long as you are showing progress in that direction, falling short of those goals might be okay.

If you ask a lot of questions and work through this checklist, you and your dog can have a great training experience.

## Conclusion

There are lots of different ways to train your pup. The same is true if you're training an older dog, an adolescent or an adult. Dogs age a lot more rapidly than humans, so training puppies can be difficult sometimes. Their minds and bodies are going through dramatic changes in short periods of time. In the same time a human being lives one year, a puppy goes from 0 to 15 years of age!

**This means getting your puppy to do what you want can be frustrating.**

He might seem like he's getting the hang of things and then seems to forget everything you've taught him. You want him to behave properly. He can't be aggressive around other animals and people. He shouldn't be nipping at you when you're playing. You don't want him nibbling or downright chewing on your furniture either.

It would be really nice if you could house train him sooner rather than later. You're tired of cleaning up those little puddles and piles of "you know what" on your floor and carpet. Training a puppy can be downright difficult.

**The same can definitely be true for an older dog.**

After 2 years of living, your canine companion is the equivalent of 24 human years old. That means a lot of the things he does are ingrained behaviors. They are hardwired into the mind and personality of your pet. While you think of your dog as a puppy or child because he's only 2 years old or so, he's already in his 20s if you compare his age to a human being.

As you probably have learned in your life, many 20-year-olds are very set in their ways. They think they know everything, and it's difficult to teach them new lessons or change old behaviors. This means training a dog of around 2 years of age can be difficult sometimes.

How about an older dog?

After a dog has lived a couple of years of our time, his aging slows down dramatically. He still gets older much faster than a human does. Each human year a dog ages 5 or 6 years after his second birthday.

**This means the 5-year-old dog you think is a child is actually 39 or 40 doggie years old!**

It can be hard for humans of 40 years of age to change their habits. It can seem downright impossible at times. Remember this when you try to train a dog that is 5 years old or even older. In a lot of cases, older dogs take to training much easier than puppies. It's because they have done a lot of growing up and understand what the training process is trying to do.

This isn't true in all cases.

The bottom line is this ...

**... puppies and dogs of all ages can be a real handful when you try to teach them new behaviors or tricks, or modify old behaviors.**

However, it's not impossible.

This report gives you all the tools you need to work wonders with your canine companion. You've been introduced to classical conditioning and traditional dog training tactics. You understand that techniques that use a lot of dominance and submission have been proven to be problematic for some dogs.

They create aggressive behavior and instill a sense of fear in the animal. There is research that shows the "Alpha Dog" training strategy which uses lots of physical negative reinforcement just isn't the right way to train a puppy or dog for a lot of reasons.

You've also found that there are training methods that use predominantly positive reinforcement. Instead of creating an animal that listens to you because he's afraid of you, these methods make your dog want to behave in a certain way. He understands this creates a positive environment for himself and for you.

We provided you with a 9-step process for picking the perfect trainer for your situation. Move through that process. Take those steps and ask those questions. This is a short checklist that can match your precocious pup or older dog with a trainer that's perfectly suited for him.

**That 9-step checklist also helps you. It gives you peace of mind and keeps you involved in the training process.**

Whatever you do, don't set this report aside and do nothing. Put it into action. Get started today, not tomorrow. As you now know, dogs age incredibly quickly, especially when compared to humans. That means you have a limited time to train your animal, whether he's a puppy, an adolescent or an older dog.