



## Positive Reinforcement Training: What Is It?

*Positive reinforcement training is a highly effective and humane method for teaching your dog new behaviors and encouraging good behavior. This type of training relies on rewarding your dog for desired actions, making them more likely to repeat those behaviors.*

### Understand the Basics: What Does It Involve?

Positive reinforcement involves rewarding your dog with something they find valuable, such as treats, praise, toys, or affection, immediately after they perform a desired behavior. Dogs learn more effectively when they associate good behavior with positive outcomes. They become eager to learn and perform well in training sessions. Using positive reinforcement builds a strong and positive bond between you and your dog. It promotes trust, respect, and mutual understanding. Other methods of training that involve punishment can create fear, stress, and an escalation of the behaviors we are looking to change. It's important to avoid these outdated training methods and work on positive reinforcement for everyone's wellbeing!

### Tips to Get Started

*Please seek the help of a professional trainer if you are struggling with behavioral issues.*

- **Set Clear Goals:** Determine the specific behaviors or commands you want to teach your dog. Be clear about your expectations and focus on one behavior at a time.
- **Use High-Value Rewards:** Choose rewards that your dog loves. For most dogs, treats like small bits of cheese, hot dog, cooked chicken, or dog-specific training treats work well. Some dogs may prefer toys, belly rubs, or verbal praise. The reward should be something your dog is willing to work for.
- **Timing is Key:** Precise timing is crucial. Reward your dog immediately after they exhibit the desired behavior to help them associate the action with the reward.
- **Start with Simple Commands:** Begin with basic commands like "sit," "stay," or "come." Use these as building blocks for more complex behaviors later.
- **Capture the Behavior:** When your dog naturally performs the desired behavior, reward them. For example, if your dog sits down on their own, reward them immediately.
- **Lure and Reward:** If your dog doesn't perform the behavior naturally, use a treat or toy as a lure to guide them into the desired position or action. When they do it correctly, reward them.
- **Consistency is Key:** Be consistent with your cues, rewards, and timing. Everyone in your household should use the same commands and rewards to avoid confusion.
- **Ignore Unwanted Behavior/ Avoid Punishment:** Instead of punishing unwanted behavior, simply ignore it. Avoid punishing your dog for mistakes or undesirable behaviors. Instead, redirect their focus to the desired behavior and reward them when they get it right.



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- **Keep Training Sessions Short:** Dogs have short attention spans. Keep training sessions brief, usually around 10-15 minutes, and make them fun to maintain your dog's interest.
- **Be Patient and Positive:** Stay patient and remain positive during training. Dogs respond best to encouragement and positive reinforcement. Avoid getting frustrated or using harsh methods.
- **Mix Up Rewards:** Use a variety of rewards to keep training interesting and exciting for your dog. This prevents them from becoming too dependent on a single reward.
- **Practice in Different Environments:** Once your dog is consistently performing or behaving in the way you are training them, continue this practice in new areas with more distraction like outside, at a park, etc. They will likely need to work more before becoming very solid with distractions around.