



**Pawsitive Experience**  
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**Training Tips: A good trainer is fast, patient, generous, creative, and motivating. A good trainer is unpredictable -- they vary when, how much, and how they reinforce. Good trainers are variable -- they use many different reinforcements.**

1. Concentrate on and reinforce the things your dog is doing right. Try to ignore behaviors you don't want to see repeated. If you can't ignore it, manage it.
2. Practice Obedience during the day. We often ask our dogs to do something when we need them to. This is often when they are distracted, like when someone is at the door, we are at a friend's house, or at the dog park. Practice obedience "just because" and when distractions are low. If you are downstairs and your dog is upstairs, call them to you and praise them with pets and love when they come. While making coffee in the morning, have them do a down/stay and release them after a few minutes. Asking for behaviors for no reason and throughout the day will teach your dog to listen to you all the time.
3. Set up for success. Don't ask for behaviors they are not capable of performing. It only frustrates you and your dog.
4. Make it harder. If you get perfect sits, then ask for sits at a distance or at a higher distraction level. But, go back and read #3-when making it harder still set them up to succeed.
5. Distractions -- introduce new challenges by doing obedience in unfamiliar settings or when there are other activities going on nearby. Don't make it too easy, but don't make it too hard. If you can't get your dog to perform around distractions, move down a level or two. When you are trying something that is extra challenging or teaching something new, always go to a higher value reward.
6. Use intermittent rewards on the skills your dog really has mastered. Replace food with praise. Remember when you go to a higher distraction, the dog is performing a new behavior and food rewards should be used. Often behaviors breakdown. Your dog suddenly doesn't want to do a down anymore. Don't get mad and call your dog stubborn. Think of it as a training opportunity, go back to kindergarten and start again with a lure and work your way back up again. He/she will get the behavior back again.

7. For beginner dogs -- feed for a year. If you commit to intermittent rewards for one year your dog will be close to perfect. Most mistakes in reward based training is weaning off the food too soon, or going from always rewarding, to no rewards. This can produce a dog who works only for food.
8. Never take a behavior for granted. This leads to the straight A Student Syndrome. If no one pays attention to you when you are good... you'll be bad. Let your dogs know you appreciate them, and give them attention for good behavior.
9. Be Positive -- Dogs learn much faster and are more reliable if they learn to feel good when they do what you ask. You'll have a much better behaved dog if you learn to use positive reinforcement rather than forcing your dog into a behavior.

Meredith Gage

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