

WEEK 4: TRAINING CONCEPTS



POSITIVE SOLUTIONS FOR PROBLEMS

What are problems?

For dogs, these are typically normal elements of their behavior repertoire that just don't mesh with what humans deem acceptable.

- Chewing
- Barking
- Digging

Even though most humans don't *want* to resort to punishment with their dogs, when at their wits end, some do. This isn't ideal, as it can damage trust in the relationship. So let's talk about how to get our needs met without resorting to a heavy hand.

DIFFERENTIAL REINFORCEMENT OF AN INCOMPATIBLE BEHAVIOR (DRI)



In simple terms, get into the habit of playing cruise director for your dog. You'll be saying, "Do this!" so that you're not having to say, "Don't do that!"

When using this method, there are a few rules:

1. The behavior or activity you direct the dog to should be fully incompatible with the behavior you're eliminating.
2. The new behavior or activity provides the dog with an equal amount of opportunity for reinforcement.
3. You provide the desired activity **BEFORE** the undesired one starts.
 - a. You are giving your dog a target behavior rather than saying, "No!" over and over again until by chance they finally land on something you deem acceptable. Help them hit the target!

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DRI (CONTINUED):

Example:

If you have a dog that likes to put their nose on the table at mealtime, before food is placed on the table, the dog is crated with their own chew or dinner. The dog can't be in both locations at the same time, and we've met the dog's need for reinforcement by providing a chew.



Not only is this dog prevented from accessing food on the table, she's also unable to continue rehearsing the behavior of counter surfing. Plus! She's learning that her crate is an awesome place to be during meals because we've provided reinforcement by way of the stuffed chew toy!

Your turn!

If you have a dog that likes to jump on you at the front door, following these rules, what is an incompatible behavior or activity you can provide them to do in its place?

NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT (P-)

THE REMOVAL OF SOMETHING DESIRABLE FOLLOWING AN UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR.

While it's very important for us to teach a dog how to appropriately engage for affection or attention, sometimes they catch us off guard.

In negative punishment, we remove what the dog was seeking following the undesirable behavior.

Example:

Dog jumps up on you to solicit attention. You leave.

This works because the dog was after engagement with you, but the behavior actually made you get further from the dog.



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P- (CONTINUED)

It is incredibly taxing on the human end to remove ourselves over and over again for every "wrong" behavior. The dog is left to experiment with tons of iterations of getting it wrong before they ever figure out what's right. Think about how tiring teaching a puppy bite inhibition is. Now imagine doing that on every undesirable behavior. Exhausting! So while occasionally we might remove reinforcement (in this case, us), we really need to focus more on teaching dogs how to get it right. So do prompt a sit before jumping occurs, or do use DRIs to get them on the right track for behavior, etc.

REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULES

Phase 1: Continuous Reinforcement Schedules

When we're building brand new skills, we pay 100% of the time. This ensures that these brand new behaviors are really strong. Each behavior has its own bank account.

Phase 2: Variable Reinforcement Schedules

- Reward 80% of the time, replace food with an alternate reinforcer like tug, major praise, or if your dog likes it, affection!
- Reward 70% of the time, replace food with an alternate reinforcer, etc.

Decrease rewards too quickly or too much all together, your dog will stop performing, and all that hard work you've put in will be wasted. Always make sure that before you decrease, you've seen a high reliability trending for several days to weeks. They need time to adjust to inflation!



No matter how much you love your job or your boss, you won't work for free for very long. Neither will your dog!

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ALL BEHAVIORS HAVE THEIR OWN BANK ACCOUNTS

For any new behaviors you introduce, this is just a friendly reminder that you will pay at 100% until those behaviors are well-established before tapering back. So for instance, if your dog is at an 80% rate of pay for sit, but you start teaching a spin, that spin will be paid at 100% until it is reliable. Only then would you start replacing food reinforcers with alternate reinforcers.

TRAINING-WISE

Training-wise is when your dog has learned when it's highly likely you're going to pay and when it's highly unlikely you'll pay. This is super normal but can cause problems for us if ever we're asking for behaviors without food rewards.

Dogs use their behavioral dollars wisely. For instance, they probably know the sounds of that one cabinet opening, or what your treat pouch sounds like when you put it on. Or when you open a bag of goodies. They also know that when you walk in the door, you never have treats, so what's the point of doing a sit right now? The dog might be like, "They literally never pay me when I sit when they walk in."



Look familiar?

Dogs learn when one event predict another event when they're paired enough times with each other, so we need to break those pairings a bit. Move on to Getting Treats Off Your Body to decrease training-wise.