

Adopting a Dog

Conservative estimates are that around two to three million (yes, that's million) dogs and cats – up to a third of those that enter animal shelters – are euthanized as surplus every year in the United States and Canada. So, if you're considering adopting from a shelter, you are part of the solution to this national disgrace. Before you adopt, however, be aware those shelter dogs were probably originally acquired by well-meaning people rather like you who just didn't think it through. So be sure you've considered the full ramifications of a dog.

All That Biology

The very best dogs on the planet urinate and defecate several times a day, make noise, need arrangements when you go out of town, cost hundreds, maybe thousands per year in food, gear and medical care, shed up a storm, won't do anything you want unless you invest in training, and regurgitate grass on the carpet, usually just after it's been cleaned. Lots of people in our techno world, understandably, aren't ready for this much biology.

Dogs are Time-Intensive, Not Space-Intensive

Most dogs are not space intensive - that's a myth - but they are extraordinarily time intensive. If you're sure that over the next fifteen years you've got time for daily exercise (being put in the backyard doesn't cut it, unless you want to end up on "Animal Cops"), training and cleaning up all that biological waste, then you can start the "okay, WHICH dog" quest.

Selecting the Right Dog

Find out on what days your local shelter is less busy, so you can get more personal attention. Bring everyone in the household. If the shelter keeps records, scope for information on how the dog was in a home environment. Breed or breed mix info is sometimes illuminating though one must be good at deciphering breed standard euphemisms to get the full import. "Loyal," "aloof" or "discerning" usually translates into "fearful or aggressive to strangers," and "profuse double coat" into "dog hair on everything."

One of the huge benefits of shelter adoption is the fabulous selection of young adult animals, dogs in the one to three years or so age range. Not only is what you see what you get size and appearance-wise but also the dog's personality – especially his gregariousness - will be pretty evident. Look for a dog that is friendly – approaches wagging, with ears plastered back and on a mission to lick your face, and one whose exercise requirement – the shelter staff can help you here – is a realistic option for you.

If a prospect emerges, take him for a test drive: a walk in the neighborhood. How does he react to kids? To other dogs? Handle the dog all over his body. Is he handleable?

You'll quickly notice that the cliché of shelters being full of problem dogs has little truth. People relinquish dogs for people-related reasons, rarely dog-related reasons. If you find The One, don't balk at any possible sticker shock. Most shelters do not give animals away. Not only do they need the money to do their good work, a non-trivial adoption fee is a means and seriousness filter. Anyone blanching at the initial fee of a hundred or so dollars is also likely to blanch at routine maintenance costs. Plus, there is usually massive value added at most shelters. Spay-neuter surgery alone is worth more than the adoption fee. Combine this with vaccinations, micro-chipping and training class discounts, and a shelter adopter is way ahead of someone acquiring a dog from another source. A good shelter will also quiz and counsel you a fair amount. This is a good thing.

When You Get Him Home

For the first several weeks, confine the new dog to one well dog-proofed room (e.g. no shoes, rugs, chew-able furniture etc.). Pet gates are great for this. Put in a comfy bed, water and a large variety of chew toys. Dogs differ in how much they chew and what they like to chew, kind of like how we differ in how much we read or watch TV and which kinds of books or programs we like. Set up a bathroom routine (dogs that have been kenneled often need a refresher), walking and feeding schedule. Come and go a lot in the first days to teach the dog that when you leave, it's no big deal, you always come back. Many brief absences is best. Before the first few long (2+ hour) absences tire him out with hard exercise, a long walk or a training session. Give him more of the house once he's proven himself housetrained and chew-trained.

Enroll in a well-run dog training class. Do this even if you think you know what you're doing and even if the dog seems to have reasonable manners. The dog training profession has come a long way in the last twenty years and you'll pick up valuable tips and insights. Avoid classes that emphasize jerking the dog around on some sort of collar or have stale concepts like "dominance" prominent in the promo literature.



Aggression in Dogs

Understanding Aggression

Aggression is normal, adaptive behavior in virtually all animal species and domestic dogs are no exception. Animals have a variety of aggressive behaviors in their repertoires, to defend themselves from perceived threat as well as to compete for resources such as food, mates and territory. Also, as predators, dogs may chase and bite in the context of hunting for food. Selective breeding – *domestication* - has toned down or stylized aggressive and predatory behavior in most domestic dog breeds. Behaviors like watchdog barking, herding, pointing, compulsive fighting and retrieving are all modified forms of either aggression or predation. Most aggressive encounters are ritualized. Growling, snarling, snapping and biting without maiming force are all examples of ritualized aggression. Ritualization allows contests to be decided without the use of (more “expensive”) fatal or maiming force to either participant. We humans would like no aggression, even of the most ritualized sort, directed at us. To achieve this “no arguing” standard requires pro-active prevention programs for all dogs.

Aggression to Strangers

When a dog is uncomfortable around strangers, or certain strangers, such as men or kids, it is usually because she has been selectively bred as a guard dog and/or not been fully **socialized**. A **socialized** dog is comfortable around unfamiliar people. To become socialized, a dog must have sufficient exposure and positive experiences, especially when young. Aggression comes into the picture when the dog encounters something she is not socialized to. She will be highly motivated to increase the distance between herself and who or whatever is making her uneasy. She can achieve this in two ways: she can flee or she can try to make the person flee by behaving aggressively. The underlying motivation is anxiety.

Fear of novelty is a normal, adaptive trait in animals. In the case of dogs certain individuals, breeds and lines of dog are genetically more difficult to socialize. It takes greater effort, including formal behavior modification, to make them more comfortable with strangers. Sometimes only minor gains can be made and their environment must be managed more carefully, both to avoid risk to strangers and stress to the dog. A stranger may be a kind, gentle dog-loving person, but this is not relevant to an unsocialized dog. The fact that they are unfamiliar will provoke fight or flight reactions.

Aggression to Family Members

When dogs threaten or bite family members, the usual suspects are resource guarding and poor tolerance of body handling. Ritualized defense of food, mates, sleeping locations and other resources is an adaptive trait. This behavior frequently pops up in our pet dogs, in the form of possessiveness of anything from food dish and bones to sofas, tissues and even garbage! Luckily, there are exercises owners can do to make their dogs much more relaxed around resources.

Body handling problems are also common in pet dogs. Many will be naturally reluctant to have their bodies touched or manipulated, in certain places or in certain ways. If they are not taught to accept and enjoy handling, they may threaten or bite in this context. Gradual exercises can desensitize dogs to being patted, hugged, grabbed by their collars and to tolerate having their feet, mouths, tails and bodies handled and restrained.

Bite Threshold and Combined Issues

A mild resource or handleability issue can combine with a mild or unnoticed socialization problem to produce a “sudden” biting incident. Although seemingly unprovoked, careful detective work often reveals that the dog had unaddressed problems in both areas. When these came together, the dog’s *bite threshold* was crossed. This is why veterinarians and groomers are bitten so often and so use preventative measures such as muzzles.

Treating Aggression

Dogs that are undersocialized can often be gradually improved with a combination of remedial socialization and classical conditioning. Both the speed and likelihood of improvement depend on the dog’s genetic make-up and the owner’s compliance with instructions.

Another important factor is how well developed the dog’s bite inhibition is. Young puppies learn “soft mouth” by play-biting other puppies constantly. When one bites another too hard, the hurt puppy will yelp and stop playing. Gradually, with repetition, the puppies learn not to bite too hard so that play can continue. This is called *acquired bite inhibition*. When humans forbid play-biting, puppies don’t get feedback on their jaw strength and are at higher risk to grow up without this important line of defense against aggression. Dogs with poor bite inhibition are more difficult to treat for any kind of aggression problem because of the dire consequences of any re-offenses along the way. When they bite, they inflict worse damage than soft-mouthed dogs. It is therefore extremely wise to allow soft play-biting from puppies and to target the harder bites with immediate non-violent consequences, such as time-outs, to teach the puppy to bite softly before teaching him to not bite altogether.

Most resource-guarders and hard-to-handle dogs can be improved with desensitization and counterconditioning exercises. Prognosis depends on owner compliance, the presence of protracted warning signals – stares, growls, snarls and snaps – and the degree of bite inhibition.

Dog-Dog Aggression

Some dramatic looking, non-injurious squabbling between dogs is normal – it is the dog equivalent of arguments. Problems arise when altercations are non-ritualized (i.e. dogs are being seriously injured) or when the incidence is greatly elevated. Luckily, there are a number of things dog owners can do to minimize the frequency and intensity of dog to dog aggression.

On-Leash Aggression

Dogs are highly social. When most dogs spot another dog on the street, they are highly motivated to approach and investigate. Being on leash restricts their ability to do so. The resulting frustration translates into increased excitement and agitation, which can be alarming to the owner, who may then restrict access, tense up before encounters or even punish the dog. This starts an association between the sight of dogs and frustration plus possibly punishment. A vicious cycle is then born that often culminates in thwarting-related or “barrier frustration” aggression. This is mainly why so many dogs are more aggressive on leash than off.

Part of the solution is recognizing the inherently abnormal situation of dogs meeting other dogs without freedom of movement. Owners can mitigate this by allowing dogs to approach and investigate friendly dogs or allowing them to do so after performing a “please may I” command such as “sit.” If a dog already has barrier-related aggression, changing the association from negative to positive, and remedial socialization can produce profound improvement.

Sibling Rivalry

Fights between dogs who live together are fairly common. Dogs compete for resources such as food, bones and owner attention. Many dogs are also sensitive about proximity and body contact.

If the fights are not too frequent and are non-injurious, there are a number of options, including non-intervention. People sometimes argue and so do dogs. Fights are usually context-driven and, once the triggers are uncovered, management and time-out penalties for fights will bring relative peace. If the fights are damaging to either participant, efforts must be much stricter, with an airtight management regime usually being necessary.

Dog Park Fighting

Dogs can be bullies, competitive over resources, socially uncomfortable and defensive, and male dogs are at statistically higher risk to tangle with other males. If dogs play well usually but seem to target certain dogs for bullying, they can be given time-out consequences for their bullying behavior. Resource guarding dogs are rarely dangerous unless they inflict injurious bites to other dogs. If dogs are undersocialized, their confidence can be sometimes be gradually built up with exposure to the right dogs, or exercise options other than dog parks employed. And, it is difficult to overstress the importance of neutering male dogs, mainly to prevent their scent from triggering other males.

Preventing Aggression

Prevention of aggression is much easier than treatment. Socialize your puppy to as large a variety of people and friendly dogs as possible. Make it fun with lots of treats and playing. Practice anti-guarding exercises. Teach puppies to bite softly by using time-out consequences for hard bites *before* forbidding all play-biting. Handle your puppy all over and make it fun with treats and praise. Find and enroll in a reward-method puppy kindergarten class that covers these exercises and allows free puppy play. Maintain socialization and comfort around resources and handling in adult dogs with regular practice. Allow your dog regular opportunities to socialize with other dogs.



Are Dogs Really Pack Animals?

For generations, dog trainers repeated many times per day the phrase “dogs are pack animals.” This piece of information was never questioned: dogs were strong bonding animals and fit well into human families, sometimes to the point of developing disorders like separation anxiety. And a lot of dog behavior was interpreted with social hierarchies in mind. Nobody ever examined what dogs do when they are not inserted into human families, i.e. are free-ranging. But now more is known about feral or semi-feral populations of dogs around the world. It turns out there are many such populations. And it turns out - to everybody’s surprise - they don’t live in packs.

For example, during the tenure of dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu, a poorly thought out reconstruction effort in Romania resulted in the demolition of thousands of houses and the relocation of thousands of families into small apartments throughout the country. For family dogs, this meant being turned out onto the street, where they have multiplied and eked out a marginal existence ever since.

Although a sad situation, the explosion of free-ranging dogs in Romania has provided information that challenges the idea that dogs really are “pack animals.” The dogs in Romania have not formed packs. Their associations with one another are brief and casual: a couple of dogs may hang out together temporarily and then part company. Dogs are often drawn together by a scarce resource like a food source but once this magnet is gone, they go their separate ways.

Significant populations of free-ranging domestic dogs also exist in sub-Saharan Africa, South America, India, Mexico, Tasmania (Cook Island Dogs), Hawaii, Bangkok and, in a situation paralleling that of Romania, in Moscow. Pariah dogs on the Indian subcontinent are thought to be the longest-running continuous population of feral dogs – 14 000 years, nearly as long as archaeological evidence has existed for domestic dogs.

In all these populations, there are cases of dogs joining with one or more dogs for days at a time, and dogs being drawn into proximity to each other by food sources, however none of the above populations form packs the way wolves do. Males, in fact, do not participate in the rearing of puppies, which is the foundation of a wolf pack (see below). And, feral dog populations rely far more on scavenging than on hunting, which is another difference from wolves, who primarily hunt for their food.

Dingoes are also a kind of dog. Accounts regarding their social behavior are much more conflicting. Often the same source will in one paragraph say that Dingoes are primarily loners that only occasionally pack up with a few others to take down a large prey item and later state that Dingoes are pack animals with stable hierarchies, like wolves. Recent genetics research has showed that Dingo-domestic dog hybrids are often outwardly indistinguishable from pure Dingoes to an untrained eye. So it could be that these disagreements are partially due to some observations being of hybrids and some of pure Dingoes.

Veterinarians and veterinary technicians who volunteer in the Cook Islands to provide veterinary care to the feral dog populations have observed two things: a large numbers of short-legged dogs (achondroplasia, as seen in Bassett Hounds), and the absence of social groups. The medical staffs expected and *looked for* packs, having heard and repeated for years, as we all have, that “dogs are pack animals.” Again and again, they witnessed no packs. Instead, they observed what Dr. Ian Dunbar has termed “loose, transitory associations.”

Such observations of feral dogs contrast with wolves who do in fact live in packs. As explained by University of Minnesota wolf biologist David Mech, each pack is a nuclear family consisting of a breeding pair and their offspring. When the offspring reach maturity around two years of age, they disperse to avoid inbreeding depression and, if they live long enough, mate up and start their own packs. The male and female are pair-bonded and often remain together for life, in contrast to free-living dogs.

Backyard Blues

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS HOW WE PUNISH SOCIAL ANIMALS

Dogs were domesticated by humans to perform a variety of functions, the most common of which is companionship. Dogs form extremely strong social bonds and their most important psychological need is to be around the people they are bonded to. Making a dog live in the backyard is an unnatural, lonely existence – they **need** to live with you.

People sometimes mistakenly believe that a dog, like livestock, will be happier with fresh air, grass and more room to “run around.” But when did you last see a happy, relaxed backyard dog “running around” his yard? Such dogs are inevitably sad, bored and lonely, wanting only to be able to spend time with their families in the house. When they manage to get human contact, they are desperately over-excited from deprivation and are likely to misbehave. Ironically, most dogs that are banished to the yard never develop house manners or social skills and so, if they are tried in the house, do poorly and re-condemn themselves to solitude. The humans also miss out on the benefits of dog companionship.

Backyard dogs suffer from greatly increased incidence of aggression, digging, barking and howling problems and are at elevated risk of being relinquished to animal shelters. They are too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter, often lack adequate shelter and fresh water, and are often dirty and ungroomed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Please don't get a dog, large or small, unless you are prepared to let him live with you in the house. This means investing time in housetraining, chewtraining, daily walks, and teaching good manners. It also means buying appropriate toys.
2. If you would like to leave your dog in the yard for part of the day when you're gone, make sure the fence is visually opaque so that he is not teased by the sight of passersby or tormented by kids. Leave him chew toys, proper shelter and fresh water. Bring him in when you're home and provide daily walks. Being outside in the yard does not count as “exercise.” Make sure he is micro-chipped, appropriately vaccinated, and wears an identification tag.
3. Help educate about the plight of backyard dogs. *It is psychological cruelty.*

Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons:

- 1) Watchdog Barking serves the dual purpose of alerting pack members that there is an intruder and warning the intruder that they have been noticed.
- 2) Demand Barking is the dog's way of communicating to the owner that he would like something NOW. Typical requests are "open the door NOW," "pay attention to me NOW," "let me out of here NOW," "I wanna see that dog NOW" etc.
- 3) Spooky Barking occurs when the dog is uncomfortable about something in the environment and barks to say "I'm dangerous! Don't come any closer!"
- 4) Boredom Barking can result when the dog's daily needs for exercise and social stimulation are not met. The dog has gone mad from boredom.

Watchdog Barking

Teach the dog a competing response – such as fetching a certain toy or doing a down-stay on a mat (which cuts barking in many dogs) for tasty food rewards. Practice out of doorbell or "intruder" contexts first and then incorporate the game or command into real-life situations. The dog will need some coaching and prompting the first few times in the real-life situation so prepare to budget some time for that. Even better, set it up with a cohort to play "visitor" a few times, so you can focus on the dog rather than being forced to attend to the person at the door.

Another effective technique is a (non-violent) penalty for barking. After a few barks, warn the dog to be quiet ("quiet please"). On the very next bark, mark the behavior ("Oh! Too bad for you!") and immediately impose a time-out penalty in a bathroom or backroom: anywhere far from the action. With repetition the dog will learn that it is his barking that is producing the removal and he will start heeding the warning.

Competing response and time-outs can be combined as a one-two punch. If he gets does his go-to-mat, he is rewarded as usual. If he barks, he goes into the penalty box.

If your dog "goes off" for the smallest sounds and changes in the environment, it would help the cause to get him better habituated. Take him out more, invite people and dogs over to socialize, expose him to a wider range of sights and sounds.

Demand Barking

When they want something, dogs will experiment with various behaviors to see if any of them work. They quickly figure out that barking works. If you don't like barking, stop rewarding it with attention, door-opening services, releasing from crates etc. Period. No buts.

Don't provide door-opening services to barking dogs. Don't let a barking dog out of a crate until he's quiet. Ignore dogs who bark at you. And so on. If you have been rewarding it for a while, the barking will get worse before it goes away. You're changing the rules and the dog will be frustrated at first. Whatever you do, don't crack and reward WORSE barking!

Above all, start noticing the dog when he's quiet. Teach him that there are payoffs for lying quietly, chewing on a chew-toy and refraining from barking.

Barking When Alone

Prevention is best here. When you get a new dog or puppy, set a good precedent right away. Don't smother him with your constant presence and attention. Come and go a lot and never go to him when he's vocalizing. Wait until he's quiet for at least 30 seconds so you don't risk rewarding the barking. Tire him out before longer absences.

Dogs are a highly social species. They don't cope well with prolonged isolation. Consider daycare or a dog-walker at lunchtime if you work all day.

Increase physical and mental stimulation. In a natural environment, a lot of your dog's energy would be spent acquiring his food. Take walks, play fetch, play tug-of-war, hide & seek, and allow opportunities for free-play with other dogs. Make him work to acquire his food. Stuff it into a Kong toy and hide it in the house before you leave for work, scatter it in the grass in the backyard, or make him earn it piece by piece for tricks.

Find out what kinds of chew toys he likes and stock up. Hold chewies for him. Teach him to find a toy that you've hidden in the room and then celebrate his find with tug of war or fetch. Teach him his toys by name. Ask him to bring you one when you come home.

If your dog is anxious to the point of panic attacks, he has separation anxiety and need formal desensitization and/or medication. Contact a competent trainer or veterinary behaviorist.

Spooky Barking

In this case, it is important to get at the underlying undersocialization. Socialize puppies extensively to as wide a variety of people and dogs as possible. You cannot overdo it. Expose them to plenty of places, experiences, sights and sounds, and make it all fun with praise, games and treats. Find and attend a good puppy class.

If you missed the boat socializing your puppy, you'll have to do remedial work with your adolescent or adult. Whatever it is that your dog is spooky about must now become associated with lunch. This is how undersocialized dogs work for *their* food. If he doesn't like strangers, meals need to be fed bit by bit around strangers until he improves. It takes a while to improve adult dogs so persevere.

Boredom Barking

If you don't have time for a dog, don't get a dog. Dogs are not space-intensive, they are time-intensive. If you have an outside dog, train him to be an inside dog. There is no quick fix here: you must meet your dog's basic needs for stimulation, exercise and companionship.

Cats and Dogs

BEFORE ADOPTING

Before taking the plunge, it's important to know whether the dog is a good candidate to live with a cat or vice-versa. The best possible indicator is confirmation that the dog has successfully lived with a cat(s) before and that the cat has lived with a dog(s).

If there is no history of successful cohabitation, the next best thing is to gather history on the animals and "audition" them with the other species before proceeding. Dogs who are not well socialized to cats are likely to react to cats as though they were either other dogs or prey objects. This means they will direct play, investigation and posturing at cats or will give chase. Sometimes they will do both, partly depending on what "role" the cat plays.

If the dog is gentle, relaxed and friendly and is not much of a predatory type (i.e. doesn't chase cats or squirrels when outdoors), he is a better prospect to develop a relationship with a cat. Predatory types are much more stressful for cats and must be constantly managed when around the cat if they are to live with one. Predation is not something a dog can be easily trained not to do as it is deeply ingrained.

When you audition a dog with cats, do it on leash, to avoid overly stressing the cat(s) and any flat-out chasing. If possible, use a cat with dog experience – they are less likely to flee or be stressed. It's also good to try out the same cat on more than one occasion. Good signs are cautious investigation and wagging, along with respect (i.e. backing off) for cat defensive signals. Bad signs are instant attempts to chase, out-of-control straining at the leash, whining, barking and agitation. Many dogs will fall somewhere in the middle, which will make your decision less clear.

Sometimes, with diligence and perseverance, a predatory dog can be taught to stick to carefully trained rituals and routines when around the cat, but this is tricky and does not work in every case. Dogs who are less intense are better prospects. It is important to know that dogs can and do sometimes injure and kill cats. A pair or group of predatory dogs is at greatest risk. It's also important to know that most dogs who chase cats are not in this category. They chase but do no physical damage if they catch or corner the cat. The psychological stress for the cat is still present with these dogs, of course, and is an important consideration.

There is a range of temperament in cats. In general, relaxed, laid back cats and kittens are the best prospects to accept a dog. They are at lower risk to flee and trigger chasing, which will allow a social – rather than a predator-prey - relationship to develop. Shy, skittish and de-clawed cats are less rosy prospects.

Cats who have not been socialized to dogs will almost always behave defensively, by fleeing and/or with an aggressive display the first time they encounter a new dog. If the dog does not come on too strong, and if the cat is given dog-free zones to retreat to, many cats will gradually get used to the dog and sometimes even become bonded.

AFTER ADOPTING

If you've decided to blend a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:

- ✓ Have a “safety room” or rooms as well as high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. Baby-gates, cat doors and clearing high surfaces can accomplish this. It is important that the cat can retreat to regroup and relax away from the dog and then venture forward into “dog territory” at her own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area so no interactions with the dog are forced.
- ✓ Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding her, caging her or otherwise restricting her desire to escape. This is stressful and does not help. Aside from it being inhumane, stress is a common reason for cats to break litter box training.
- ✓ For the first introduction, have the dog on leash in case he explodes into chase. If it seems to be going well, take the leash off and supervise closely.
- ✓ If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for his good manners.
- ✓ Interrupt any intense chasing and try to redirect the dog's attention to another activity – this is very difficult so you may be forced in future to keep the house divided up.
- ✓ In the first few weeks, observe the trend: are things getting better or worse? Monitor interactions until there is a pattern or plateau in their relationship.
- ✓ If the dog is the newcomer, be sure to give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she does not associate this change with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates the new intruder with good things for him. Shoot for positive associations always.
- ✓ Dogs should not have access to the cat litterbox – it is too stressful for the cat and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – feed cats in the cat's “safe” room or on a high surface.



Charging the Clicker



The purpose of this exercise is to teach your dog (*by association*) that the sound of the click means something wonderful is coming next. Once the clicker is charged, you can use it as a timing aid in training.

The most important thing to remember is to “be a statue” when you click. The click should stand alone and not coincide with reaching for a treat, offering a treat or other “telegraphing” actions. Clicks come *before* all these.

Exercise 1

- Prepare about 10 high value treats and store them in the fridge or other place that doesn't tip your dog off to their existence
- Settle yourself comfortably with your dog near you and a clicker ready
- When he seems to least expect it, click the clicker one time
- Right after the sound, start praising your dog as you head over to the fridge. Give him a nice generous treat from your store, then resume your day
- Several times per day, at random times, repeat the process: click the clicker and then happy talk your dog all the way to a fabulous treat

Exercise 2

- Prepare 20 treats and store them in a bait pouch or zip lock baggie in your pocket
- Get your clicker and sit down to read, watch TV or work on your computer for a while, until your dog gives up interest in your bag of goodies
- When he's settled down, click the clicker and then give him one treat
- A minute or so later, do it again: click followed by treat
- Repeat at random intervals between 5 and 60 seconds until your stash is gone

Your clicker is now charged!

What if He's Afraid?

If your dog shies away from the click or leaves, stop charging. Muffle the clicker (wrap it in a towel or thick cloth until you can barely hear it) and begin again. As he begins to respond to the muffled sound by looking for the treat, gradually unwrap the clicker.

Choke and Prong Collars: How Do They Work?



When choke collars or prong collars work to stop pulling on leash, they do so because they hurt. The dog learns that it hurts to pull and so ceases. The reason you sometimes see dogs gasping away on one is that sometimes the collar doesn't hurt *enough* to dissuade a particular dog from pulling. This is a matter of individual pain thresholds and the technique used. For instance, sometimes owners start out with a regular collar and, when that doesn't work, try a choker and then, when that stops working, go to a prong collar. Ironically, although they are trying to be kind by gradually escalating the painfulness of the device they are using, they might be desensitizing their dog to the pain and so end up using quite alarming levels of force to get the job done.

A dog taught not to pull with one of these collars must continue to wear it – usually for months or years, and sometimes for life – as pulling on leash is easily relearned once the collar is off. And, if their owners alternate back and forth, the dog may learn that it is dangerous to pull when the choke or prong collar is on but safe to pull when it's off and so adjusts his behavior accordingly. This is a function of how animals learn and not an example of dogs being “bad.”

Happily for dogs, the discussion about such collars is an increasingly academic one, as alternative means of training and managing even extra-large dogs are now available. Head-halters and anti-pull harnesses for dogs achieve terrific control mechanically (i.e. by changing leverage points) rather than through the use of pain.

So, given the existence of more humane devices, the role of choke and prong collars is questionable at best. There are trainers still advocating them and owners still buying them, as they are currently still legal. But they will likely be made illegal over time.

No-Fail Coming When Called

Do ten of each step, then move on to the next. *The key to a recall is a great pay-off every time.*

Sequence:

1. Cue (novel word or sound)
2. Prompt (happy talk, bend over, back away)
3. Dog comes
4. Reward – **use very high value**, something that is never given at other times

Checklist

Leash	Prompt or No	Distance	Location	Distractions	Did 10
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	10 feet	At home or in yard	None	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	Maximum	At home or in yard	None	
Off leash	Cue only	Random	At home or in yard	Dog is not expecting it	
On leash	Prompting as needed after cue	6 feet	On walk	Whatever is around	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	6-10 feet	Off-leash area	Low as possible	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	Maximum	Off-leash area	Low as possible	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	3 – 6 feet	Off-leash area	Dogs present	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	10 feet	Off-leash area	Dogs present	
Off leash	Prompting as needed after cue	20+ feet	Off-leash area	Dogs present	
Off leash	Cue only	20+ feet	Off-leash area	Dogs present	

Confinement and Crate Training

Owners are often unsure whether they need to crate-train their puppies or newly adopted dogs or whether to simply confine them in a dog-proofed area during the early weeks or months following adoption.

Crate training helps with the following:

1. Housetraining: prompts the dog to hold bladder and bowels when unsupervised to expedite housetraining
2. Chew-training: prevents the dog from chewing furniture, walls and anything else except the chew toys he is crated with so good habits automatically form
3. Settling down: patterns dog to be inactive when alone
4. Owner as good guy: by decimating housetraining and chew-training mistakes, dog partially "self-trains"
5. Preparation for possible close confinement: dogs that are used to close confinement are less likely to be stressed when caged during a hospital stay or travel

Chewing and activity management could be accomplished with a well dog-proofed room or an ex-pen and these are alternatives if the dog is solid in his elimination habits. If the dog is shaky on housetraining, however, you're better off crate-training him as the close confinement will inhibit urination and defecation. To get the crating effect, the crate should be only large enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably in. An ex-pen, dog-proofed room or too-large crate allows the dog to use one end as bathroom area and the other end as bed.

HOW TO GET HIM USED TO HIS CRATE

You can't just throw the dog in the crate and expect him to adjust. That would be traumatic. Early association is huge. Make the crate comfy with a nice crate pad or blanket, situate it in a high traffic area like the kitchen and, whenever the dog isn't looking, drop a couple of treats at the back. Don't point these out to him. Let him discover them on his own. Feed him meals in there, always with the door open. Using heavy string, tie an attractive stuffed chew-toy to the rear inside so that the dog must lie in the crate in order to chew on it.

After a few days of this, start teaching the dog to enter and exit on cue. Say "into bed" or "into the crate," throw in a treat, praise as the dog goes in and eats the treat and then let him exit. Repeat this a few times and then change the order of events slightly: instead of throwing the treat into the crate after you say "into bed," wait for him to go in on his own before dropping in the treat. If the dog doesn't enter on cue, simply wait. Do not cue him a second time and do not crack and throw the treat in. Just wait. If he doesn't go in, end the training session without comment. Try another session in a little while, still withholding the reward until the dog goes in on his own. When he does (and they all do eventually so hang in there), give him a double or triple reward, do a few more rewarded reps and then end the session. Always leave the dog wanting more.

When the dog is going in and out on cue, you are ready to try the first lock-in. Play the in/out of the crate game, only now close the door after he has gone in and feed him treats through the grate for a minute or two before opening the door. Do this several times. Then practice walking around the crate and around the room while he is locked inside, pitching treats at him occasionally and then, after a couple of minutes, opening the door and letting him out. Make the whole thing a

positive experience for him.

The next step is to add some real duration. Crate him while you watch a movie. Stuff a couple of chew-toys with something good. Set the crate up right next to your chair and, just before you sit down to enjoy the movie, cue the dog into the crate. When he goes in, give him the chew toys, close the door and start the movie. Leave a few times to get a snack or a drink, but always come back within a minute or so. The first experience being locked in the crate for this length of time must be an overwhelmingly easy and good one. Any noise, agitation or tantrum from the dog should be ignored. At the end of the movie, if the dog is quiet and settled in the crate, simply open the door and let him out. Do not open the door if the dog is misbehaving, as this can potentially reinforce the misbehavior. When you do open the door, behave neutrally. Make the exit an anticlimax. All the good stuff should happen while he's IN the crate, behaving nicely. Now spend a few days crating the dog with the door closed when you're at home, going about your usual business. Ignore any noise. Provide interesting crate puzzles (i.e., chew toys) each time.

The next step is leaving the house. The first time you do, leave for just a minute, then come back. Then do five minutes, fifteen, thirty, an hour, two, three and four hours. Throw in some short ones (a minute or so) in between to mix it up. Depart and arrive without any fanfare. Tire the dog out with vigorous exercise and training before the longest absences. It is important to gradually condition the dog to being in the crate this way before using it in your day to day life. And don't forget the chew toys.

HELP! HE SOILS THE CRATE

If you discover your dog is soiling his crate, the first thing to try is removing the pad or blanket for a week – the porous material may be triggering elimination. Be sure, also, that you are not stretching the dog too long between bathroom trips and forcing him to eliminate in his crate. Keep both the dog and the crate scrupulously clean. You can often nurse back the clean instinct. It would also be prudent to have him checked by his veterinarian for a bladder infection or sleep incontinence.



Desensitization and Counterconditioning

Systematic desensitization is a technique that was originally developed by behavioral psychologists to treat people with anxiety and phobias. The subject is exposed to a fear-evoking object or situation at an intensity that does not produce a response. If you were terrified of ants, for example, your first hierarchy rung might involve showing you a cartoon of a pink, unrealistic ant. You wouldn't be the slightest bit afraid (hopefully). The intensity - in this case, degree of realism - is then very gradually increased contingent upon you continuing to feel okay. A hierarchy is developed at the beginning of treatment, ranging from the easiest to most difficult versions of the stimulus.

Desensitization is most often performed in conjunction with another technique, *counterconditioning*, which is an application of classical (or Pavlovian) conditioning. In classical conditioning, when one event becomes a reliable predictor of another event, the subject develops an anticipatory response to the first event. The association between the two events is particularly evident if the second event is relevant or potent.

There are important advantages for animals of learning the tip-offs to important environmental events. Dogs learn that a leash coming out of the cupboard means a walk is next. Cats learn that the sound of the can opener means food is next. This is all classical conditioning.

So, what if, whenever I show you the picture of the ant, I then give you a bit of favorite Belgian chocolate? With repetition, you will start to have a nice feeling about that ant.

It's crucial to maintain the distinction between classical and operant conditioning. In classical conditioning the animal is learning about events and their predictive relationship with other events. In operant conditioning he is learning about his own voluntary behavior and its consequences. Classical conditioning is about associations. Operant conditioning is about rewards and punishments. And, the anticipatory response that is conditioned using classical conditioning procedures is involuntary.

All kinds of involuntary responses can be classically conditioned, such as gastric and salivary secretions, immune responses and autonomic reflexes. These are of little practical interest in dog behavior modification, but *emotional* responses are of tremendous interest. Pairing one stimulus with a meaningful second stimulus can create a Conditioned Emotional Response, or CER. We can actually teach dogs to like things.

Counterconditioning is about changing associations. It's called *counterconditioning* rather than simply conditioning because the dog already has an unpleasant emotional response to the thing we're trying to condition, so we *counter* that by establishing a pleasant CER. So, a dog who is uneasy around strangers learns that their presence, proximity and later, contact, predict his favorite things in the world.

How this looks in actual treatment is the presentation of a low-enough intensity, or *subthreshold*, version of the trigger, immediately followed by a potent, pleasant counter-conditioning stimulus.

This is repeated until the dog is evidently and eagerly anticipating the counter-stimulus when the trigger is presented. Then, the intensity of the trigger is increased and the procedure repeated. If, at any point, the dog shows the original reaction to the trigger, it means the intensity is too high. It is important to then back off to a reduced trigger intensity and work back up gradually again. No good comes of teaching the dog the world isn't mostly safe. In fact, it can make the dog worse.

Order of Events in Classical Conditioning

The difference between establishing a beautiful CER and literally achieving nothing is very often due to how well the trainer orchestrates the order of events. In order for a dog to have an anticipatory response to the first event in a classical conditioning procedure, it must have high predictive value that the second event is coming. This predictive relationship can be muddled by a couple of common errors.

First, there is a risk of simultaneous or backward conditioning. Simultaneous conditioning refers to presentations where the second event occurs simultaneous to the first, so there is no predictive relationship. Backward conditioning refers to presentations of the two events in reverse order so that the predictive relationship is also reversed. Dogs get excited at the sight of their leash coming out of the cupboard because the walk comes *afterwards*. If the walk happened simultaneous to or before the leash came out of the cupboard, the leash's appearance would not be a very good tip-off. It wouldn't give the dog any information about when a walk is coming.

Similarly, if events in stranger desensitization procedure are not in the correct order, conditioning won't take place (or the dog may become tense around food if people are presented after the food and at too high an intensity). The first event is the approach, appearance of the person(s) at low intensity (i.e. high distance, low movement etc.). The second event is the fabulous pay-off: a happy owner and the super high value treats.

In counterconditioning to strangers, this means that the appearance of, approach by or touch of the stranger must *precede* the delivery of the counterconditioning treat. If the trainer is trying to "prevent" a reaction by showing the dog the treats up front, or if the order of presentation gets sloppy, the emotional response either will not get conditioned or will get conditioned, but to something other than the approach and/or removal. Many people feel intuitively that if events are close together in time, animals will form associations regardless of the precise order of events, but this is a mistaken intuition. There must be a *predictive* relationship. Strangers predict goodies.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to use food to train my dog?

You don't have to use any particular tool to train your dog. Professionals like food because it is one of the most powerful motivators in animal training. The reality is that you get more strongly conditioned behavior if you do not limit yourself to praise alone. Another advantage of food is that you can use it to target the dog into position. Food therefore has two roles: as target ("lure") and as reward. Training with positive reinforcement allows the dog to relax and learn, and strengthens the bond between you and the dog. Over time, you can expect "more for your money," that is more behaviors for fewer treats. You will also become skillful at incorporating other rewards into training.

Aren't I actually bribing my dog by luring him into position with a treat?

You can't bribe a dog for doing something he doesn't even yet have in his repertoire! Put yourself in his place. Imagine that someone said "palana." What would you do? Nothing, because you don't understand what that person wants you to do let alone why you should do it. Physically placing your dog into position slows down learning and has negative side effects. Using a target allows you to elegantly obtain the correct behavior.

Will I always have to food reward my dog?

Certainly not as frequently as for a newer behavior, but yes, maintenance of established behavior with (concealed) intermittent rewards is a must. There is no free lunch in behavior. Think of it this way: you have to feed your dog anyway. You can give it all to him for free in a bowl or you can reserve part of his daily caloric intake and make him earn it! Also, don't forget that there are other rewards besides food: everyday things such as play, sniffing, door opening, car rides and access to other dogs can also be used to reward established behavior.

Isn't crate training cruel?

A crate is a safe, comfortable place that most dogs voluntarily use when the door is left open. How might you treat an untrained human toddler when unsupervised? Would you consider it "cruel" to leave her in a crib and "kind" to let her wander around? Crating also prompts dogs to hold their bladder and bowels, facilitating housetraining.

I have heard that playing tug of war causes aggression. Is this true?

The only study ever done found no correlation between dogs that play tug and aggression. If you teach your dog to "take" and "out" on cue and cancel the game if he breaks one of these rules, there is no reason to deprive your dog of this fun and efficient energy burner. Tired dogs are well-behaved dogs. Fetch is another great game to play.

How long will it take to house-train my puppy?

Puppies don't hold on as well as adults. If you adhere to a strict schedule, taking them out many times a day, most puppies can be house-trained in a few weeks. Reward the puppy immediately

when he eliminates outside with both verbal praise and a food treat. This means you must accompany him out, otherwise your reward will be too late. Confine the puppy to one puppy-proofed room and supervise him so there is no way he can make a mistake without you interrupting. When you see him winding up to eliminate, interrupt him and hustle him outside. Praise when he finishes here. When you can't supervise, crate him (up to an hour at a stretch - don't force him to soil his crate or else you lose its value as a housetraining tool). Don't punish accidents, especially after the fact. Late punishments, even a few seconds late, are not associated with previous behavior and are abusive.

My puppy keeps nipping me!! What should I do?

If you watch a litter of puppies playing, you'll notice that they spend most of their time biting each other. This is normal puppy behavior. When you take a puppy from a litter and into your home, he will start play-biting you.

A puppy has very sharp teeth but weak jaws. This means the puppy can cause pain when biting but cannot cause severe damage. An adult dog has duller teeth but a powerful jaw, capable of mutilating damage. It is therefore important to teach a puppy to control the force of his biting before teaching him to not play-bite at all. This way, he grows up conditioned with a softer mouth that is less likely to do damage if he should ever bite. This is known as "acquired bite inhibition," an important line of defense against aggression.

To teach bite inhibition, screech "ouch!" when the puppy play bites hard and then supply a brief time-out consequence. The message is: "if you bite hard, you are instantly alone." The best way to do a time-out is to get up abruptly and leave the confinement area. The time-out should be no more than one to two minutes long. Then go back to him and practice again. It will not work instantly but, over time, the puppy will start controlling both the force and the frequency of his biting. When he consistently bites softly, start re-directing him to his toys and timing him out for all bites to human flesh or clothing.

Housetraining

To begin with you will require the following:

- a) a crate only large enough for the puppy to lie down comfortably stretched out
- b) a schedule for going outside
- c) treats for whenever you go outside with the dog
- d) good observing skills to prevent accidents
- e) patience

A) Crate

Crate the puppy whenever you're away or can't actively supervise, i.e. when you're busy around the house, sleeping etc. This will make him hold on so that you can have a success outside later. If you find the puppy is soiling his crate, the crate is probably too large: the puppy can use one end as bed and the other as toilet. It may also have gotten dirty.

B) Schedule

Provide the puppy with a set schedule for eating and for going outside. If you are away for longer than 4 hours, have someone come to the house to take him out. Optimally, there is always someone at home during the housetraining period. A typical puppy outing schedule looks like this:

- ✓ First thing in the morning and whenever the puppy wakes from a nap.
- ✓ After each meal. This is often when puppies will have a bowel movement. You will discover your own puppy's rhythm.
- ✓ Depending on the puppy's age, every 30 to 90 minutes. Take the puppy outside to the same spot each time so he begins to associate the area with its purpose. Don't interact with the puppy. If nothing happens after five minutes, bring him back into the house and crate him for thirty minutes. Then try again. If he does eliminate, he may have a free period in the kitchen or confinement area, or, better yet, a nice walk. This acts as an added bonus for performing.
- ✓ A very young puppy (6-8 weeks) may need to go out once during the night.

C) Treats

Every time the puppy eliminates outside, lavish him with enthusiastic praise and a treat. If the praise makes him stop in the middle of eliminating, save it until just after he finishes.

D) Good Observing Skills

Puppies give signals prior to eliminating. It's essential that you learn what these are so you can prevent mistakes. Common behaviors include circling, restlessness and sniffing. Whenever you see these, take the puppy out! Have treats and leash ready near the door.

E) Patience

Don't lose your cool. Most puppies will have accidents, especially in the beginning of training. Since your puppy will only be loose in the kitchen when he is "empty," mistakes will be seldom. Supervise so can take him out if you see him winding up.

If you see him starting to eliminate, urgently say "outside" and then get the puppy there as quickly as possible. Stay outside for the 5-minute period and praise and treat if he finishes eliminating. If not, bring him back inside and either supervise or crate him for another try later. Never punish as this may inhibit the puppy from eliminating in your presence.

If the puppy has an accident in the house or in the crate and you did not see it happen, it is futile and detrimental to punish him after the fact. Simply clean up the spot and then apply a commercial odor neutralizer. Vow to supervise more closely in future and/or add another outing to your schedule.

Most Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if there is no one to come home while I'm at work to let him out after 4 hours?

Try to find a dog walker that can supply outings while you're at work. The more accidents that go without feedback, the longer it will take to housetrain.

I follow the schedule but my puppy urinates several times an hour in the house! Is he normal?

Take the puppy to the veterinarian.

My puppy is four months old and still having frequent accidents. Help!

My guess would be that he has too much unsupervised, loose time in the house. Remember that each time he eliminates in the house, he is being de-trained. Tighten up your regime. Re-read the rules.

I want my dog to eventually go outside but I'm confused. Should I paper-train first and then later train him to go outside?

If your goal is for the dog to eliminate there, paper training is unnecessary. If you must leave him for extended periods where he will have no choice but to eliminate, laying down turf at one end of the kitchen (with bed and water at the other end) may help condition him to employ a grassy surface.

I live in a high rise with a small dog. How do I only paper-train?

All rewarding will be for use of the paper, rather than outside. Choose one location for the paper and confine the dog in that room. Gradually give him more and more house access as his training progresses.

Housetraining

Dogs are naturally clean animals: given a choice, they will urinate and defecate away from their sleeping and eating areas. However, it is not obvious to dogs that carpets and floors are inappropriate elimination sites. They must be systematically taught to discriminate indoors vs. outdoors and to exclusively use the latter.

The key to housetraining is getting a history of rewarded trials in the desired area.

HOUSETRAINING PROCEDURE

- **Decide** where the doggie bathroom is going to be
- **Go there regularly:** first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, shortly after meals, when he comes out of his crate and, in the case of a puppy, every hour or so
- **Go out with the dog** so you can cheer and reward at the right moment
- **Cheer and reward** at the right moment
- **Confine to one room:** never, ever give an untrained dog or puppy access to more than the kitchen or a small, easily cleaned area
- **Supervise** whenever he's uncrated, especially if he's "full." If you must take your eyes off him, even for a minute, crate him
- **Interrupt mistakes.** Catch him as he starts to go, not afterwards. After interrupting him, hustle him outside to the bathroom area: praise if he finishes here. Then clean up the indoor mess
- **Never punish late:** if he made the mistake one hour or ten seconds ago, you are too late. It is unfair and abusive to punish late
- **Catch him in the act of doing it right:** follow the rules so you are the good guy

TRAINING REGRESSIONS

Illness can cause a trained dog to regress as can a change in routine. A sudden diet change often causes diarrhea that the dog can't control. Many dogs do not generalize their housetraining to all indoor locations. This plus the stress of adapting to a new home may cause a trained dog to make mistakes in new surroundings. New owners must supervise closely to interrupt on time, and provide extra opportunities, with rewards, for newly adopted dogs to use their new bathroom areas.

Exercises to Reduce Jumping Up

When You Come Home

Pre-train sit using food rewards until the dog will sit on the word every time. Then, whenever you greet the dog after an absence, ask for a sit. If he jumps, go back outside, closing the door behind you. You greeting the dog is the reward now. Wait a few seconds and try again. After a few tries, most dogs sit. (But it's trickier, because he's excited, so be patient.) When he does sit, greet him by crouching down so he can lick your face (often a big piece of the motivation to jump up) and, if he does particularly well, give him rewards stashed in your pocket.

Jumping on Other People

Practice the exercise above with a couple of cooperative visitors – where they repeatedly “withhold themselves” as reward until the dog sits. The next best thing is for you to arrange to have food rewards on you for a period of time so that you can pay sit in the presence of people greeting your dog. Over time, you can reduce and then phase out the food rewards. But do make him sit before anybody pats him, to keep the sit strong.

Avoid violent techniques such as yanking on collars or kneeling the dog: they are unnecessary and abusive.



Kong Stuffing



We humans tend to be chronically over-stimulated – we crave down time. It's understandably difficult for us to empathize with our dogs, who have the opposite problem. One of the most pervasive and serious - yet invisible - welfare issues for domestic dogs in the developed world is under-stimulation. Dog brains evolved to handle the career-family juggling act of 1) hunting and scavenging for a living and 2) dealing with the social complexities of running into other dogs while hunting and scavenging. A lot of domestic life, safe and secure as it is, flies in the face of this genetic legacy; most dogs are provided with little opportunity to exercise their hunting and scavenging propensities or are punished if they try. They also endure lives of relative solitude from both their human families and from the company of other dogs.

Environmental Enrichment Strategies for Dogs

You can bump up your dog's mental – and by extension, physical – health with some easy interventions. One is to increase the amount of novel sights, sounds and smells he is exposed to every day. Another is to up his quota of free dog interaction, with the proviso that he and the other parties involved have adequate social skills.

A third way is work-to-eat. The work-to-eat strategy encompasses training and problem solving. The value of training here is process, not product. This means that, even if the kinks are out of your dog and he's obedient enough for you, enroll him in something anyway: tricks classes, advanced obedience, clicker classes or take up a sport such as Agility, Musical Freestyle or Flyball. Remember, it doesn't matter if he's not gifted at your chosen activity – it matters that he's getting out, having a good time and solving some problems.

One of the greatest innovations in the work-to-eat problem-solving category has been the Kong toy. Into these robust red (or black, if he's a Power Chewer) rubber hollow toys can go all manner of dog food and goodies. A nicely executed Kong stuffing job can keep a dog occupied for half an hour or more doing what dogs do so well: solve a problem to get some good eatin'. Here, then are the basics and a few of the finer points of the art of Kong stuffing.

Kong Stuffing Principles and Pointers

Many people's Kong stuffing efforts consist of inserting a few dog cookies. This is scratching the surface of the creative food acquisition challenges you can cook up for your dog. To bump your Kong stuffing prowess up to the next level:

- ✓ The level of difficulty should be appropriate to dog's level of experience and
- ✓ temperament – is he persevering or a “giver-upper.” Any increases in level of
- ✓ difficulty should be done in small increments, so the dog succeeds while developing
- ✓ perseverance. In other words, start easy - then make it tougher gradually
- ✓ Easy stuffings are: loose and incorporate only small, easy-to-fall-out pieces
- ✓ More difficult stuffings are: tighter with pieces that take concerted effort and hole-manipulation (to the point of vice-grip style squeezing) to get in (and get out!)
- ✓ You can employ a matrix (peanut butter, spreadable cheese, canned food, toddler food) to

- hold the smaller bits in and give the dog side-polishing challenges
- ✓ Hide stuffed Kongs around the house so the dog has to hunt around to find them before unpacking them
- ✓ Give him all of his food this way, especially if he is a particularly “busy” dog
- ✓ Stuff meat, mashed potatoes etc. in and freeze, or plug the small hole with peanut butter and fill the cavity with broth, then freeze to make a “Kongsicle” (note: this can be messy – best to give it to your dog outside!). You can freeze unsweetened applesauce with banana or carrot bits for lower-cal options
- ✓ Stuff cheese cubes in and then microwave it briefly to nicely coat the insides
- ✓ Clean your Kongs regularly with a bottle brush and/or in the dishwasher

Recipe Suggestions Archeology Kong (tight and moderately advanced)

- ✓ Layer 1 (deepest): roasted unsalted cashews, freeze dried liver bits
- ✓ Layer 2: dog kibble, cookies or Liver Biscotti, Cheerios, sugar-free/salt-free peanut butter, dried banana chips
- ✓ Layer 3: baby carrot stick(s), turkey and/or leftover ravioli or tortellini, dried apples
- ✓ Pack as tightly as possible. The last item in should be a dried apple or piece of ravioli, presenting a smooth “finish” under the main hole.

Archeology “Lite”

For cashews, substitute crumbled rice cake; for freeze-dried liver, substitute baked tofu; for peanut butter substitute fat-free cream cheese

Super Pro Kong with Veggies

This recipe is both super-pro in the sense that it’s pretty advanced as well as in the sense of being very high protein, and so may not be suitable for dogs on ultra-low protein diets.

- 1) Jam in as large a piece of fresh, raw stewing beef as possible – this may take a fair amount of wrestling but it’s worth it to get a bigger chunk in
- 2) Completely plug the small hole with peanut butter or spread-able cheese.
- 3) Grind a combination of carrots and broccoli in a food processor (finely grated would do but really finely ground is better)
- 4) Add pulped up veggies to Kong around and over beef chunk
- 5) Pour in a little chilled beef or chicken broth as matrix – low sodium is best (keep broth-filled Kong inverted on a glass to prevent spillage during prep)
- 6) Freeze in inverted position until solid (3+ hours) 7) Best enjoyed outside or in easy-to-clean area in case of soup drips and spillage – to use indoors, omit broth Variation for raw diet feeders: employ chicken wing pieces in place of beef cube

Caesar Kong

Toss together ½ cup ground baby greens, ½ can water-packed sardines, ¼ cup Caesar croutons and 1 teaspoon Caesar salad dressing. Stuff tightly and finish with a small piece of Parmesan cheese. Optional: pine nuts, and hard-boiled egg.

Managing Your Puppy's Behavior

Puppies come with a set of pre-installed behaviors: urinating and defecating when they feel the urge, chewing anything they can put in their mouths, whining, crying and barking if they find themselves alone, eating any food they encounter (not to mention many NON-food items!), greeting by excitedly jumping up, and play-biting all living things. **These are all normal behaviors for any puppy or untrained adult dog.** Notice that there is little on this list that humans are likely to approve of.

In order to have a dog that chews only his own toys, eliminates outside, can relax alone quietly, greets without jumping up and plays without being mouthy, the onus is on us humans to mould the dog's behavior. Puppies need management and the safest policy with newly adopted dogs is to treat them as though they were puppies too.

Here are some important rules for managing your new puppy or dog:

- ✓ Confine any puppy or untrained dog to one room, like the kitchen, to make dog-proofing the room, clean-up and supervision easier.
- ✓ Supervise like crazy: interrupt housetraining and chewing lapses as they start and redirect the dog to the right place or right toy. Never punish a dog late: it is abusive.
- ✓ Help him get it **right**: provide chew toys and praise him when he uses them, take him out often (every 30 minutes for a young puppy) and praise and reward him immediately when he performs outside. Enroll in a reward-based training course.
- ✓ Don't reward barking when the dog is left alone by returning to the dog. Get him used to being alone by coming and going many times for very short periods the first few days you have him, all done very matter-of-factly. If you need to crate train him, do it right (see our handout on Confinement and Crate training).
- ✓ Burn your dog's energy, both physical and mental. Tired dogs are well-behaved dogs. Teach him basic behaviors and tricks with treats, play fetch, tug and hide & seek with his toys, get him out daily for walks and runs, trips to new places and give him regular opportunities to play with other dogs. If you work long hours, consider a dog-walker, or day-care. This way you come home to a happy, tired dog.

Top Ten Dog Behavior Myths

#1: Dogs are naturally pack animals with a clear social order.

This one falls apart immediately, because all the evidence suggests that free-ranging dogs (pariahs, feral and semi-feral populations) don't form packs. Dogs actually form loose, amorphous, transitory associations with other dogs. And males do not participate in the rearing of young as occurs in a wolf pack.

#2: If you let dogs exit doorways ahead of you, you're letting them be dominant.

There is not only no evidence for this, there is no evidence that the behavior of going through a doorway has any social significance *whatsoever*. In order to lend this idea any plausibility, it would first need to be ruled out that rapid doorway exit is not simply a function of their motivation to get to whatever is on the other side combined with their higher ambulation speed. Dogs walk faster than us.

#3: In multi-dog households, "support the hierarchy" by giving presumed dominant animals patting, treats etc. first, before giving to presumed subordinate animals.

There is no evidence that this has any impact on inter-dog relations, or any type of aggression. In fact, if one dog were being aggressive toward another, the laws governing Pavlovian conditioning would dictate an opposite strategy: Teach aggressive dogs that another dog receiving scarce resources *predicts* that *they* are about to receive some. If so practiced, the aggressive dog develops a happy emotional response to other dogs getting stuff, a helpful piece of training indeed. No valuable conditioning effects are achieved by giving the presumed higher ranking dog goodies first.

#4: Dogs have an innate desire to please.

This is a concept that has never been operationally defined, let alone tested. A vast preponderance of evidence, however, suggests that dogs, like all properly functioning animals, are motivated by food, water, sex, and like many animals, by play and access to bonded relationships, especially after an absence. They are also, like all animals, motivated by fear and pain and these are the inevitable tools of those who eschew the use of food, play etc., however much they cloak their coercion and collar tightening in desire to please rhetoric. So when a trainer says s/he is relying on this, make sure it's not code for some sort of metal collar.

#5: Rewards are bribes and thus compromise relationships.

Related to #4, the idea that behavior should just, in the words of Susan Friedman, PhD, "flow like a fountain" without need of consequences, is opposed by more than sixty years of unequivocal evidence that behavior is, again to quote Friedman, "a tool to produce consequences." Another problem is that bribes are given before behavior and rewards after. And, a mountain of evidence from decades of research in pure and applied settings has demonstrated over and over that positive reinforcement – i.e. reward – makes relationships better, never worse.

#6: If you pat your dog when he's afraid, you're rewarding the fear.

Fear is an emotional state, a reaction to the presence or anticipation of something highly aversive. It is not an attempt at manipulation. If terrorists enter a bank and order everybody down on the floor, the people will exhibit fearful behavior. If I then give one of the bank customers on the floor a compliment, twenty bucks or chocolates is this going to make them *more afraid of terrorists next time*? It's stunningly narcissistic to imagine that a dog's fearful behavior is somehow directed at us (along with his door dashing).

#7: Punish dogs for growling or else they'll become aggressive.

Dogs growl because something that is upsetting them is too close. If you punish them for informing us of this, they are still upset but now not letting us know, thus allowing scary things to get closer and possibly end up bitten. Ian Dunbar calls this "removing the ticker from the time bomb." Much better to make the dog comfortable around what he's growling at so he's not motivated to make it go away in the first place.

#8: Playing tug makes dogs aggressive.

There is no evidence that this is so. The only study ever done found no correlation between playing tug and the incidence of aggression directed at either family members or strangers. Tug is, in fact, a cooperative behavior directed at simulated prey: the toy.

#9: If you give dogs chew toys, they'll learn to chew everything.

This is a Pandora's Box type of argument that has zero evidence to support it. Dogs are excellent discriminators and readily learn to distinguish their toys from forbidden items with minimal training. The argument is also logically flawed as chewing is a behavior that waxes and wanes depending on satiation/deprivation. Dogs without chew objects are like zoo animals in barren cages. Unless there is good compensation with other enrichment activities, there is actually a welfare issue.

#10: You can't modify "genetic" behavior.

All behavior is a product of an interplay between genes and the environment. And while some behaviors require less learning than others, or no learning at all, their modifiability varies as much as does the modifiability of behaviors that are primarily learned.

Obedience Training

Dogs learn from the immediate consequences of their actions. This gives the trainer four ways to influence a dog's behavior, summarized in the following chart:

	GIVE	REMOVE
SOMETHING PLEASANT	<i>REWARD</i> (increases probability of behavior)	<i>"TIME OUT"</i> (decreases probability of behavior)
SOMETHING PAINFUL OR SCARY	<i>PUNISHMENT</i> (decreases probability of behavior)	<i>ESCAPE/AVOIDANCE</i> (increases probability of behavior)

What this chart means is that there are 1) good things and 2) bad things and that both these can 1) start and 2) end. Dogs, like all animals, are constantly trying to start and keep the good stuff (attention, walks, food, dogs, play) and avoid starting or terminate the bad stuff (pain and fear). If you take control of these things and make them contingent ("if you do this first, then you can have that") on good behavior, you will control the dog.

Method Choices

Older-school dog training relied heavily on the "bad stuff," such as jerking the dog's neck using a metal collar, to motivate the dog. Dog-friendly methods have since developed that make greater and more sophisticated use of reward and reward-removal as principle motivation. The control is as good as that achieved with traditional methods and avoids the side-effects of the use of pain and fear.

Your Leverage: Reward and Reward Removal

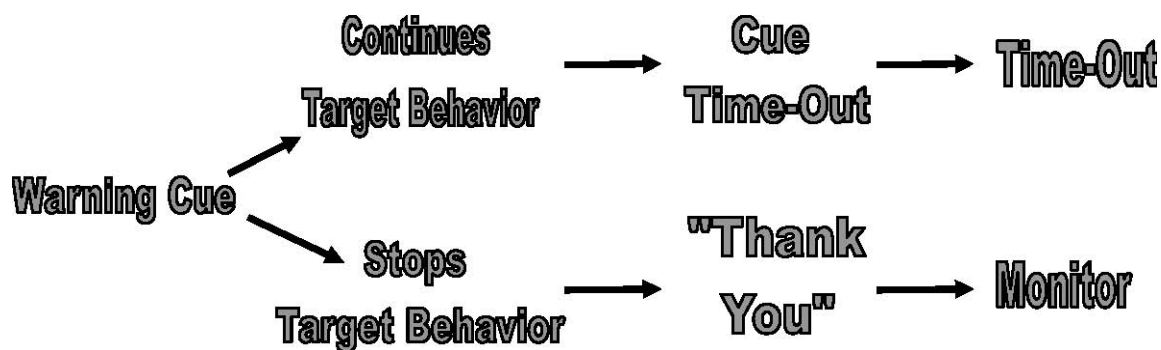
Most dogs will work for: food, play, walks and (if they like dogs) access to other dogs. They'll also work for attention after they've been alone. Timing is everything. Because it's necessary to reward the desired behavior so precisely and it's not always possible to get a treat or game to the dog fast enough, a key word or sound that means "you win!" – called a Reward Marker - is a useful tool. Another valuable aid is a signal that means "you just lost!" and is called a "No Reward Marker (NRM). NRM's require split-second timing just as reward-markers do and are always followed by reward removal.

When training new behavior, a reward is given for every correct response. To maintain "fluent" behavior, rewards are given intermittently. The craftiest use of intermittent reward is to reward the *best examples* of the behavior.

Time-Outs: What to Expect

Time-outs work really well for killing behaviors like play-biting or bullying other dogs. But, they only work if done every time the dog misbehaves. People often try it a few times and then abandon the technique because “it’s not working” (phases 1-2). If only they had stuck with it longer, they’d have had success.

How to Do It



What It Will Look Like: The Phases of Training

Phase 1: “Tra la la”

~Trials 1 – 4 Dog has made no connections between the elements in the flowchart above

Phase 2: May Try Resisting Arrest

~Trials 4 - 12 Dog has made the connection between the time-out and the T/O cue so may try to avoid being caught. But no connection yet between the warning cue, behavior and punishment

Phase 3: Hit and Miss

~Trials 12 - 20 Dog is beginning to put it all together and so is engaging in target problem behavior less and/or heeding warning cue (i.e. ceasing target behavior when warned) but not consistently

Somewhere Between Trials 12 & 20: Success! The Behavior Crashes

Dog has put it all together and refrains from target problem behavior and/or consistently heeds warning cues, with only occasional lapses (time him out for these)

Play-Biting In Puppies

Is My Puppy Aggressive?

Almost all puppies play bite. They do it to other puppies, to adult dogs who'll let them and to their owners. It's important to distinguish this constant biting from bona fide aggression, where a dog threatens or bites when guarding his food, when uncomfortable about someone touching him or when uncomfortable about strangers coming too close. Aggression is less common in young puppies than in adult dogs but is not unheard of. If you think your puppy is showing signs of aggression, get yourself into competent professional hands. Many kinds of aggression can be resolved.

The reason puppies play-bite so much (it is their main activity aside from eating and sleeping) has to do with their ancestry as social carnivores. Wolves and wild dogs are equipped to bring down large prey animals and so must have extremely strong jaws. And, in close social situations, there will be arguments and competition over food, resting places and mates. During these day-to-day scuffles it's vitally important that dogs not use their full jaw strength on each other the way they do on their prey. Instead, they use *ritualized* aggression – threats, body postures and inhibited bites - to settle arguments.

The ability to bite without maiming force is rehearsed in puppyhood during...play biting. Puppies are programmed to do it so they can learn about their jaw strength. When one puppy bites another too hard with those needle sharp teeth, play grinds temporarily to a halt, which provides a potent consequence to the biting puppy. Over time, the bites become consistently gentler, in order to keep play going. Without this constant feedback about their jaw pressure, puppies are at higher risk to grow up without acquiring the capacity to inhibit the force of their jaws.

So What Should I Do About Play-Biting?

The best policy for owners of young puppies (age 6 - 16 weeks) is to allow play-biting provided it is not too hard. Hard bites should result in time-out penalties - cessation of play (leave the puppy alone or put him in a "penalty box" for a minute) - as consequence. Only when the puppy has gotten reliable about biting more softly should play biting be phased out altogether, by re-directing the puppy to toys and giving consequences for all bites. This way, the dog has a much better chance of growing up with good bite inhibition. Free-play with other puppies and friendly adult dogs is another good forum for puppies to develop bite inhibition.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs bond strongly to humans. They can learn to be alone for moderate periods but it doesn't come naturally. It's not surprising then that some dogs develop *separation anxiety*, a disorder consisting of panic attacks: urinating, defecating, frantic scratching and chewing to escape, barking and crying when the dog is left alone.

Separation anxiety may be triggered by a high contrast situation – months of the owner home all day followed by sudden eight-hour absences. Luckily, it responds to treatment. Dogs with separation anxiety are not misbehaving out of boredom, spite or for fun. Some dogs with separation anxiety are fine when left alone in the car or when the owner takes out the garbage – they've learned the difference between “long absence” pictures and “short absence” pictures. Others are anxious in all contexts.

Preventing Separation Anxiety

New dogs are at higher risk if they get constant attention the first few weeks. It is better to leave often for brief periods so the dog's early learning about departures is that they are no big deal and predict easy lengths of absence: “whenever she leaves, she comes back.”

Give dogs both physical exercise *and* mental work to do. Problem solving is mentally fatiguing and so increases the likelihood that your dog will rest quietly when he is left alone. Play fetch, play hide and seek with his toys, teach him tricks, get involved in a sport like Agility, let him play with other dogs, stuff his food into Kongs. Soften the blow of your departures by providing extremely enticing stuffed toys for him to unpack.

The gold standard is *systematic desensitization* to change the dog's emotional reaction to departure. The track record for this technique is excellent, but you'll need a professional to design and coach you through the program.

A consultation with a veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist may also be recommended to see if anti-anxiety medications can be used in conjunction with the systematic desensitization.

Principles of Shaping

Economics

Would you do 60 push-ups for a dime? How about for \$10? \$100? How about \$10,000? Because you are a properly functioning living organism, you have dedicated software that estimates the “expense” of a behavior against its payoff. Your price point will be different from that of other people depending on how “expensive” push-ups are for you, what other reinforcers are operative (“I enjoy working out” or “People will be impressed with how well I can push-ups”) and what your financial situation is like (“I need a hundred bucks to get me out of a jam, and quick!”). Dogs are also properly functioning living organisms and so will have price points for behavior. In animal training, we talk about rate of reinforcement (payment) and criteria (what he has to do).

Rate and Criteria

Rate of reinforcement is usually expressed in number of reinforcements per minute. If a dog is being taught to heel and the trainer is timed while training, if the dog is paid 7 times in a minute, the “rate of reinforcement” would be 7 (which comes out to a reinforcer every 8.5 seconds on average).

If the degree of difficulty of any exercise is high (high criteria), the dog will not get as many right, so the rate of reinforcement will be lower. If the degree of difficulty of an exercise is easy (low criteria), the dog will get it right more often, and so the rate of reinforcement will be higher.

Setting criteria too high results in frustration at best and “losing” the dog at worst (dog quits trying). It forces you to get the dog back to the game with ultra-easy repetitions and then re-build to where you blew it with the overly ambitious criteria. On the other hand, setting criteria too low retards progress. You spend more time on some step than you need to. Consequently, the optimal criteria is one that (a) is not so tough that the trainer “loses” the dog *and* (b) maximizes incremental progress toward the final goal behavior. It’s all about efficiency.

The optimal rate of reinforcement for novice animals learning new behaviors is about 10 reinforcers per minute. This averages out one reinforcer every six seconds. For behaviors that do not take long to perform (in trainer-speak, behaviors that the dog can “recycle quickly”), a rate of 15 is not too high! More advanced animals can tolerate much, much lower rates of reinforcement. But be generous with beginners.

A good trainer will determine criteria based on optimal rate of reinforcement, not based on what the dog can do *at all*. The question therefore is not “what behavior is the dog already offering” but “what behavior is the dog already offering at the rate of reinforcement I want.” Thinking about parameters helps trainers set criteria to achieve optimal rates of reinforcement.

Parameter Juggling

Parameters are the different pieces that make up criteria. For example, down-stay has the parameters of distraction, distance and duration: around what distractions, how far from the trainer and for how long does the dog need to stay? A three-minute down-stay ten feet away during a busy dinner party is a clear criteria statement (i.e. has all parameters accounted for),

whereas just saying “down-stay” is vague. To stay organized and train well, increase difficulty on only one parameter at a time. For example, start by adding distractions to the stay close up and for short durations. Then play with distance, keeping distraction and duration low. Then, gradually work up duration. (Duration is inherently tough on rate, so it is best worked last.) When all these pieces are in place, do parameter combos. Failing to train in an organized fashion with identified and carefully controlled parameters can result in a “criteria pile-up:” the trainer inadvertently raises difficulty on more than one parameter at the same time. The usual result of criteria pile-up is that the dog quits, the trainer blames the dog’s stubbornness or other character defect and nobody ends up trained.

Timing

Consequences for dogs must be immediate. If a dog sits and you’d like to reward it but before you can, he stands and sneezes and *then* you reward, you have rewarded sneezing. Experiments have shown that rewards that are too late slow down learning. A clicker is a device that can sharpen up timing. The instant the dog makes criteria, the trainer clicks - and then delivers the actual reward afterwards. With a clicker you are less likely to be late and can mark behavior for reward at a distance. The clicker buys you time. The dog has to learn the relationship between the clicks and rewards. Some trainers “charge up” their clickers before using them to train by doing click-treat pairings. Other trainers start using the clicker right away so the dog is not only learning the task he’s being trained to do, but the meaning of the clicker at the same time.

Clicker Rules



- ✓ Click only **once** and **always** follow it up with a treat
- ✓ Deliver the treat **after** the click, not before or during
- ✓ Use a set position to avoid telegraphing that the click is coming (don’t be reaching for your pocket or pouch before or during your click)
- ✓ Use treats that are valuable, small, and go down fast
- ✓ Do **not** use the click to signal “almost” - click *means* “here comes a treat”

First Days with a Shy Dog

Avoiding Coercion

First impressions are lasting, so, when you first arrive home, make sure the dog isn't forced into any scary situations. As tempting as it might be to give him hugs, scrub him in the bath, take him to people's houses or invite over all your friends, it is much wiser to let him explore his immediate surroundings while you sit quietly, waiting for him to come to you when he is ready. When he does approach you, he may still be wary of your hands or of being touched. Be patient: the best way to win his trust is to not rush him.

Hand-Feeding

A great idea is to hand feed him treats and/or meals. At first, talk to him while you feed him piece by piece. After a session or two, try touching him with your other hand before each treat. If he moves away, go back to feeding him without touches a few more times and then try a smaller touch before feeding. If he is extremely fearful and hides for a long time once you get home, you can toss treats near to where he is hiding and then leave him alone. Once he feels better, he'll venture out and associate it with getting a tasty treat. In time, his forays out will happen sooner and sooner after you toss treats and your presence will become associated with the treats as well. Once he is out, you can switch to hand feeding.

Finding Safe Distances

Take walks and let him sniff and thoroughly check things out. Sudden noises or changes in the environment will make him flatten or try to run for cover. Your best policy is to let him hide or to take him further away from the scary situation. Once he settles down, let him approach as close as he is comfortable to what frightened him. Feed him a few treats and then leave.

Be especially careful of people who think they are "good with dogs" and then try to approach him too quickly or too close. Being forced into more than he can handle is never therapeutic and can even make him worse. Take the initiative to coach people on how to remain passive and let the dog set the pace of contact. A good idea is to carry treats for people to toss to him – if he won't eat, it's a sign that he needs even more distance. Get him far enough away so that he's relaxed enough to eat as this helps him develop a positive association to new people.

Shy dogs warm up and bond strongly to people they live with but remain nervous around *novel* people. The time it takes to warm up to a new person may accelerate over time – whereas early on, it took dozens of visits from a certain person before that person was accepted into the dog's circle, later the dog is comfortable with a new person after half a dozen exposures. So, in the early days, don't become frustrated if it seems he is taking a long time to warm up to people.

Shy Dogs

Fearful dogs avoid people or things that frighten them, and may do a barking display to make what they're afraid of go away. If you've decided to share your life with a shy dog, take heart. With patience, you can build his confidence.

Different Kinds of Shyness

The most common kinds of shyness in dogs are:

Social shyness, where the dog is fearful of unfamiliar people. Dogs like this are sometimes described as "taking a while to warm up," "one man dogs" or "protective." They are usually fine with a person once they get to know them. Examples are dogs who are afraid of men or children, or bark at people with unusual gaits.

Context fears, where the dog is afraid of certain kinds of situations. Examples are dogs who are vet-phobic, panic during car rides or are uncomfortable in new places.

Sound sensitivities, where the dog is afraid of loud noises. They flatten and try to escape when a car backfires, or pace and salivate during thunderstorms or fireworks.

Why Is He Like This?

Fear is common in animals. Although it's possible that a fearful dog has suffered abuse or a bad experience, most fear results from a combination of a genetic predisposition and some lack of experience in the first weeks of life. A dog may have missed becoming *socialized* to new people by simply not being around them enough when he was a puppy.

Will He Get Better?

Most fearful dogs can be helped to gradually improve. This is a slow process in most cases and requires patience. Shy dogs are not for everybody. They need people who have compassion and patience.

The best thing is to expose him to what frightens him but at a ***milder intensity*** and combined with a ***positive association***. A dog who is afraid of children might start to feel comfortable if he regularly sees children but at a distance where he doesn't feel worried. If you pat him and give him treats, he will start to see kids as good news: "Wow, great things happen to me when kids are around!" Dogs learn strongly from association.

How Can I Help Him Settle in to His New Home?

The best strategy is to let the dog go at his own pace. Any kind of pressure or coercion to make contact makes things worse. Let the dog hide if he needs to, investigate things and come to you when he feels ready. Make the world safe for him and he'll improve.

Socializing an Adult Rescue

The field of applied dog behavior is replete with disagreement on every topic. Every topic but one: socialization. Everybody agrees that the highest priority when you acquire a puppy is socialization. Get the puppy out to experience sights, sounds, people and dogs so that, as an adult, he's comfortable and relaxed around strangers and in novel surroundings. There is also good agreement that, between the socialization mandate and training, puppies are time-intensive, to the point that people with jobs outside the home are encouraged to get adult dogs. Couple this with the desire to save a life, and the net effect is a lot of conscientious people with adult dogs from shelters and rescue groups. So, what's the deal on socialization now? Do you need to maintain it? What if you've adopted and your new dog is shy or skittish – or defensive – around people? Is it a lost cause? If not, what can you do?

Most dogs who are shy around new people – and even those who are specifically hand-shy, head-ducking when reached for – are the way they are through errors of omission rather than commission. Fearfulness is a genetic default setting in animals that has been shaped over eons, and that domestication has softened but not eliminated. Erring on the side of avoiding new things served the ancestors of all dogs very well. We can push back against fearfulness in two ways: genetics and environment. If we cease pushing back, default fearfulness will reemerge, which is why shyness and fear-aggression is so prevalent. So, while it's possible a shy dog has had traumatic experiences, such a history is far from necessary to produce fear. In fact, this is why socialization of puppies is such a high priority endeavor.

Play it Safe and Gather Information

When you bring a new dog home, don't take it for granted that he will be friendly to all people, even if he took to you on your first meeting. Socialization is specific: dogs who are comfortable around adults are not necessarily well-socialized to children, and dogs who like women won't necessarily like men. So gather intell while playing it safe around new people. The rule is this: nobody should reach for or touch your dog if your dog hasn't moseyed up to them first. This is called "pro-social" behavior, and is in contrast to anti-social behavior (frank fight or flight) and the less obvious "asocial" behavior, which is a dog giving you no read: no wagging and approaching but no fight or flight either. Still waters running deep. Careful.

If your new rescue dog is pro-social to all groups, first celebrate – this is quite glorious – and, second, think maintenance. Get him out regularly, and avoid bad experiences. Some dogs do "de-socialize" if they are allowed to get rusty. And a really bad experience – think a self-proclaimed expert alpha-rolling your new kid – can create a lifelong fear in an instant.

If he's not pro-social to all groups, then the fight-flight-still-waters details come into play. If he's frankly aggressive, don't despair, as this is no longer a death-sentence. But you do need good professional help, so engage a competent trainer or veterinary behaviorist to get you on a therapeutic regime. Professional help is also good if he's an offense-as-defense kid. But because the moral and legal stakes are not so high here, DIY training is an option.

How to Socialize a Spooky New Dog

The technique of choice is classical conditioning: associate the presence of people with incredible snacks, something the dog never, ever gets except when strangers are around.

Shoot for a 1:1 ratio between strangers and the super-high value treat. Maintaining a 1:1 ratio means not missing opportunities, and this is the hard bit. However well-intentioned you are, and however much you understand classical conditioning in theory, you need a practical system to ensure you're always armed with diced chicken or pecorino Romano cheese when there's a situation where the dog might encounter strangers. Prep zip-lock baggies full of ammo. Put some in the fridge and some in the freezer so you're never caught without. You could also have freeze-dried liver or dried chicken strips in a bag that lives with the poop pick-up bags or the leash, as a back-up plan. It's that important to be armed all the time.

The Right to Say No

Some dogs are "asocial" - no frank fight or flight, just no interest in people, that is until they get too close. If anyone makes a move to reach for or touch your asocial dog, slow them down, which may take a bit of doing. People are notorious about thinking they are "good with dogs" and may ignore your instructions. The worst case scenario if you don't keep a dog whisperer at bay is a reach forcing your uncomfortable dog to aggress, which will indeed work like a charm to back the person off. And so he learns in one trial that offense *does* work as defense. Much better if *you* keep the person at bay tossing or hand-feeding treats without any attempts at patting. If your dog wants contact with the person, he'll vote with his feet. All dogs have the right to say "no" and we want them doing this without their teeth. To keep your dog on the road to believing the world is in fact a safe place, prove to him that people don't make contact unless he initiates it. Empower him to have the choice.

Confidence Building Activities

The best one is reward-based training. Even if he's a model dog and doesn't need training, train him anyway. Enroll in a non-force method obedience course, or a tricks class. Or get hold of one of the wonderful, accessible books on clicker training, such as Karen Pryor's "Don't Shoot the Dog!" and shape tricks in your living room. It doesn't matter if you're not much of a trainer, as we're after the process of training here, rather than the product. Another great activity is playing with the dog using his toys. If he doesn't seem to be much of a fetcher or tugger on the face of it, don't give up. Persevere at trying to engage him. Finally, work-to-eat endeavors are excellent for behavioral wellness. A huge variety of sophisticated puzzle toys now exist that can accommodate part or even all of his daily meal ration. Dogs are descended from wolves, who are consummate problem-solving predators, and free food in a bowl is against the grain.

The Prognosis

With good management, which means protecting them from those pushy people, shy dogs tend to continue making gradual improvements over the course of their lives. With classical conditioning treatment, the pace is accelerated and the ceiling (best outcome) is a dog who actively likes strangers rather than tolerates them.

Teaching Dogs to Enjoy Grooming

Some dogs seem to find it naturally pleasant to be brushed and combed. This is pretty intuitive for humans – some of us like having our hair done and having other similar procedures performed on us. Some dogs may like the attention but be less keen on the procedure. Many dogs, even if they like brushing, don't like other grooming procedures, such as nails, baths and blow-dries. And some dogs find all grooming frightening or irritating.

The best possible scenario to teach grooming is prevention: practice on puppies before there's a problem. The best technique to accomplish this is classical conditioning. For example, brushing predicts chicken, or a bath predicts 10-minutes of play with a favorite toy. Clip one or two nails before loading the dog into the car for his trip to the dog park.

Correct execution of classical conditioning is critical to success. There are three rules.

Rules for Good Classical Conditioning

- 1) Order of Events. The thing you're trying to condition must start before – not after and not at the same time as – the thing you're using to condition it. For instance, if you're trying to train a dog to like the feeling of nail clippers touching her nail, touch her nail first and then give a piece of chicken. Don't feed the chicken before touching and don't start feeding the chicken as you touch.

This is an area where our intuitions can fail us. Many people feel that in order to “form an association,” the best possible procedure would be to do the two things at exactly the same time. This is incorrect and can result in no conditioning whatsoever. Classical conditioning is more about *anticipation*, animals learning *tip-offs* to important events by virtue of their predictive value. Tip-offs aren't useful during or after, only before. The first event in a classical conditioning procedure says “here it comes...” and the second event is it.

- 2) Strong (preferably 1:1) correlation. Don't have one thing without the other. For example, if you're conditioning a dog that after the hairdryer comes on, you supply a steady stream of bits of liver, don't expose her to the hairdryer without the liver or to liver without the hairdryer. This 1:1 ratio is especially important the first few times the dog experiences the hairdryer. When an animal perceives something for the first time, they notice it a bit more. It's as though they ask, “hmm, this is a new thing, what does it mean?” And, if you strongly answer, “well, it means LIVER” the information is catalogued. If the answer the first time is “well, it means nothing much” or, worse, “it means YOU'LL BE HELD STILL AND BLOW-DRIED,” this gets catalogued. So it pays very much to capitalize on “first times” – they are opportunities not to waste.
- 3) Rule out competing tip-offs. The real world is messier than a psychology laboratory. We think we're teaching a dog that being combed means cheese cubes but she may be focusing on other things than the combing. Maybe “bait pouch means cheese.” Or the

trainer thinks the dog is attending to the sequence “foot trim predicts chicken,” but the dog is cataloguing “reaching for the crinkly plastic bag predicts chicken.” This “robs” our thing (combing or trimming) of its predictive value. To better isolate your desired thing as The Predictor, spend some time during training sessions with competing tip-offs present but without supplying the cheese or chicken or whatever ammo you’re using. Reach for the pouch but don’t give any cheese. Let the dog smell the cheese but don’t give any. Crinkle the bag but don’t give any chicken. After a few minutes, do a bit of combing and only then actually give the dog some cheese. This way the comb is the best tip-off the dog has that cheese is coming. What we’re after is the dog learning, “Oh! I get it now! It’s the COMBING! The combing makes the cheese start, not the little pouch!”

Finally, it’s important to start very easy and be generous. Build a training plan that starts with brief combing followed by several pieces of cheese. Gradually increase the amount of combing and its intensity. Ditto trimming, brushing, blow-drying or anything else. In dogs with existing problems, one must proceed even more slowly, starting with just showing the dog the implement – such as the comb – before proceeding to touching the dog with it, and finally gradually introducing actual combing.



Transition to a Dog Lifestyle

You are about to get a dog. Integrating him into your life is very much a pay-now-collect-later endeavor. The more work you put in up front – expectation-setting, effort, time and training – the easier it'll be the next fifteen years. Here's a primer to get you started.

Expectations – all that *biology*

We live in an uber-technological age. Dogs are, by contrast, very biological. Even the best dog on the planet urinates several times a day, defecates at least a couple, regurgitates food or bile on carpets occasionally, tracks in dirt on his paws, may roll in dead stuff and will, unless a non-shedding type, shed up a storm on our furniture and clothing. Dogs also learn at dog speed, greet us in dog-speak, i.e. jumping up and licking, and have daily dog agendas, which include chewing, barking, sniffing, playing when we want to watch TV and pulling on leash to visit other dogs so they can spit all over each other. For most of us, this is small price and part of the fascination of inter-species cohabitation. But if you're not ready, the shock from a pristine, controlled household to one with a dog can be rude.

House prep and gear checklist

- ✓ Crate and ex-pen
- ✓ Comfy beds
- ✓ Food and stainless steel dishes
- ✓ Good supply of chew toys, including stuff-ables such as Kongs, and consumables
- ✓ such as bully sticks
- ✓ Fetch and tug toys, such as balls and rope toys
- ✓ Collar, leash and ID tag
- ✓ Small treats for training rewards
- ✓ Brush, comb, nail trimmers, toothbrush

Housetraining refresher

Your new dog will hang out in either a crate or confined area for at least the first few weeks, especially when you're not present, to avoid housetraining and chewing mistakes. Even a perfectly housetrained adult may be bewildered by the transition away from his previous situation so don't give him a chance to screw up: crate him unless you have witnessed both potty functions within the last half-hour, in which case he can be in his dog-proofed room for an hour or two, with chew toys (see below). For the first few days, be present when he eliminates (which means accompanying him even if you have a yard), so you can throw him a little party. Praise, patting and a few small treats from your pocket will let him know he has done a glorious thing as well as make that same glorious thing more likely in future.

Confinement is key

Dog-proof a room by scrutinizing it and removing any potentially chew-able items. Furniture, leather goods, books, power cords and rugs are all viewed through the canine lens as chew objects. Don't let him rehearse even once the chewing of your possessions. Confine him with his chew toys and you virtually guarantee a chew toy habit. If you can't fully dog-proof a room, get an

ex-pen, which is a play-pen for dogs.

There will be plenty of time later on to loosen up your confinement regime once he proves himself reliable. You'll know he's ready for more freedom when he consistently eliminates as soon as he's brought to the doggie toilet area, it's been weeks since you've had any accidents and he consistently seeks out and chews his own toys.

First days – alone training

You and your family will be understandably fascinated by the new addition and you may adopt a dog before a weekend in order to help the newcomer settle in. This is a great idea, provided the dog isn't given continuous attention. If a precedent is set that you never go away and leave him alone, it'll be a rude shock when normal routine resumes. So, come and go a lot for brief periods – anything from a few minutes to half an hour - right from the get-go so that the dog learns that departures predict arrivals. Another crafty move is to tire him out before the first absence of two or more hours. And always leave blow-softening chew toys or Kong un-stuffing "projects" to help him pass his time.

Exercise regime

A tired dog is a good dog, and a happy dog. Investing in daily hard physical exercise is right up there with training for achieving a successful adoption. Power-walking is okay but running is better, and a twenty-minute game of fetch or a half-hour trip to a dog park better still. If you have more money than time, professional dog walkers are plentiful in most urban or populated suburban areas. Day-care is another option; even a day or two a week can provide significant exercise and mental stimulation.

Training

Supervise the new kid so you can interrupt any impure thoughts about, say, chewing or peeing. Your timing is vital: any after the fact punishments are not only useless but abusive. Much better to catch him on the way to naughtiness, interrupt him and re-direct him to goodness. For example, you see him sniffing the TV remote. Say, "uh-uh, hey, where's your bone? Let's go find it!" Then help him track down his own toy and hold it for him while he chews and you praise.

Enroll in a training class. Even if you've got experience, the sophistication (and fun level) of dog training improves by the year, plus your dog will get practice being obedient around the distractions of people and other dogs. The instructor can also help you troubleshoot any issues you're having. Steer clear of trainers who still use metal collars (choke and prong collars). Find one who uses food and praise to motivate, not force.