Task Training for Dogs in AAI

Training foundations, tasks, and skills and how using them in practice helps maintain engagement, enthusiasm, and motivation over time

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Foundation Principles
Understanding Motivation

- Out of animals control
- Fluxuates with environment
- Changes over time
- Requires maintenance to maintain
Applications for Dogs Working with People

Human interaction enough is not alone to maintain our dogs motivation and prevent burn out over time

- Not all interactions are fun
- Most people are not great at reading or respecting canine body language
- We are always in competition with demotivators
### Principles of Operant Conditioning

#### Behavior shaped through consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person cues dog to “sit”</td>
<td>Dog puts bottom on ground</td>
<td>Dog receives treat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person calls dog excitedly</td>
<td>Dog jumps to greet person</td>
<td>Person pets dog</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toddler reaches towards dog</td>
<td>Dog leans body into toddler</td>
<td>Toddler pulls dog’s hair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Person calls dog excitedly</td>
<td>Dog jumps to greet person</td>
<td>Handler corrects dog</td>
<td></td>
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Positive Reinforcement in Training

- Gets our dog excited about learning
- Provides clarity around what we want
- Increases motivation and enthusiasm
- Prevents unexpected or unwanted associations
- Prevents frustration when our dogs are not motivated to do what we would like them to do
- Is safe others to see and model

*It is up to the teacher to ensure learning and training is never painful, scary, or aversive for the learner*
Using a Love for Training to Your Advantage

Building confidence, enthusiasm, and love for training:

- Adds a major layer of reinforcement
- Creates a CER+ to training itself
- Reduces reliance on interactions themselves to maintain motivation
- Prevents feelings of disconnect or rejection when motivation itself for interactions are low
- Prevents demotivation due to stressful interactions
Training Time!
Preparing for Training

- Get your treat pouch
- Outline your goals
- Choose your location
- Split your criteria
- Ensure your learner can get it right
- Preference test for reinforcement (and pay fairly!)
- Be prepared to walk away
**Event Markers**

Act as a signal to the dog that they got it right

- Marks the exact moment in time the desired behavior was performed
- Puts responsibility of communication onto the teacher
- Shifts focus from errors to correct responses

**Frequently used markers**
- Clickers
- Whistles
- Verbal markers
- Thumbs up
Teaching Chin/“Rest?”
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dog hears prompt “Need a rest?”</td>
<td>1. Approach person</td>
<td>Dog receives treat and praise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Orient body to person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Put head in hand/body with mod pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Remain in position until hand is removed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chin

Step 1
Head into hand

Step 2
+ duration in hand
Chin

Step 3
Find, go to, rest head in hand

Step 4
Generalize for hand location
Chin

Step 5
Transfer to new location
*Identify trainer error: Feedback delay*

Step 6
Generalize for leg location
# Leave It

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dog hears or sees something drop to the ground</td>
<td>Look away from object without approaching</td>
<td>Dog receives higher value treat than what was ignored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leave It

Step 1
Foundations

Step 2
Adding difficulty
Leave It

Step 3
Generalize to other items
(Trainer error on criteria increase)

Step 3
Generalize to other items
Step 3
Add difficulty and generalize
Other Useful Behaviors to Teach
A Choice-Based Greeting Protocol

Increase the quality of your interactions while also teaching others about dog safety.

- Make it a game
- Spread out
- Allow dog to approach
- One person at a time
- Teach “safe” locations
- Provide contact-free alternatives
- Give them choice and control

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“Go Say Hi”
Hand Target
Emergency Go to Location
Take a Bow
Behaviors for Contact-free Interactions

- Spin
- Wave hello
- Cover your eyes
- Retrieve an object
- Jump
- Speak
- Nose or paw target
Improving Welfare and Preventing Burnout
Watch for Signs of Fatigue

Be aware of signs your dog may be tiring out or requesting to decline

- Difficulty responding to known cues
- Rejecting food or attempts to interact
- Easily distracted
- Lack of engagement
- Attempts to exit
- Cut off signals
Monitor for Signs of Stress

- Licking lips
- Yawning
- Scratching
- Shaking off
- Shedding
- Sweaty paw pads
- Excessive sniffing
Manage Your Expectations
Find a Qualified Trainer

CAAB
Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists

CCPDT
Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers

IAABC
International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants
And Have Fun With Your Dog!
Thank You!
References

CEUs for Professional Dog Trainers
or to contact me directly, email:

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