



How dogs learn?

Dogs learn socially from each other, from their environment and from us, even if we don't realize that they are learning!

From picking up his lead or dog bowl, putting on our coats or picking up our car keys, our dogs are learning that all these things may have a consequence for them & very quickly they learn to associate what is going to happen next. This is called Classical Conditioning, as they learn without being taught. In the same way we may associate a certain song with a past holiday or person.

So how do we teach our dogs?

Teaching a dog to do a specific behavior is called Operant Conditioning as the dog is learning by being taught.

When you start a new behavior we don't name it as he would not understand what that cue word means. Start by using a method called luring (think the donkey & the carrot) which shows him what we are teaching. Once he is in, or near the position we require reward it with a tasty treat. Wait for him to succeed approx. four or five times then you can add the cue word. He then pairs the action with the word & it makes sense. **We don't name it till he loves it!**

We prefer to teach the dog using food rewards, the food makes him feel happy as it releases a 'feel good chemical' in his brain which is called Dopamine. As his brain floods with happy feelings he will associate this with doing the behavior you are teaching, & he will want to do it again **..Release that Dopamine! This is the power of Positive Reward training & why we use food rewards.**

You can adjust the amount of food he has so your dog does not gain weight during the training course.

How does he know if he gets it right?

If you were learning to drive & every time you got it right the instructor congratulated you & offered you your favorite sweet it would really speed up your learning process & keep you feeling confident.

We use a method in dog training called 'Marking & Rewarding'. This keeps the dog feeling happy & confident and alleviates any frustration for your learner.

It's simply marking the absolute moment he gets it right with a verbal cue (YES!) or a by using a clicker.

- 1) You ask the dog to sit
- 2) The dog sits
- 3) You mark the exact moment his bottom hits the floor (YES! OR CLICK)
- 4) You reward with a tasty treat.

Once he has learnt the new behavior well at home with no distractions you now need to teach him the same behavior in different places, start in a low distraction area and gradually increase. Be prepared to teach the whole behavior again as dogs do not generalise well. By this we mean that the behavior he can do well in your lounge is the same behavior that he will not be able to perform well on the beach or in the woods! The more he learns the easier this gets for you both.

This is called proofing the behavior & you will hear me mention it a lot!



Just a few minutes training per day is sufficient.

'Happy Training' & remember make sure all dog's training & encounters are happy ones.