



Stay & Train Program

Crash Course: Stages of Learning

There are four main stages in how all animals (including humans) learn. While your pup has been training with me and my team, we have focused on the first two and dabbled a bit in the third. Now that s/he is home, it is your job to focus on the last two!

1. **Acquisition** - animal acquires the behavior. Typically through luring, capturing or shaping.
2. **Fluency** - animal can perform the behavior at a high success rate. Usually you can tell the animal is becoming fluent in the behavior when they can perform it without a food lure. Maybe you just use a hand signal +/- a verbal cue before reaching for the cookie to reward.
3. **Generalization** - animal performs the behavior in different environments. Your dog may readily sit in your living room where there are few distractions and you have reinforced it 100 times. But an animal has not generalized a behavior until they can perform that behavior with fluency in a variety of environments and in the face of different distractions. This means if you take "sit" to a busy park, you may need to back up and lure it a few times in this new environment, before expecting the dog to perform the sit with fluency.
4. **Maintenance** - animal is able to perform the behavior well after it has been acquired. This requires intermittent reinforcement from the handler! Yes, you will need to randomly reward behavior you like for the rest of your dog's life! Behavior is either reinforced or punished. You pick how you want to teach your dog!

Creating a Food Motivated Dog

To reward behavior we must utilize things that the dog finds intrinsically rewarding. We call these things "reinforcement." Reinforcement can be categorized as primary; things the animal needs in which to survive or secondary; situations that become associated with a primary reinforcer. Primary reinforcers include: food, water, shelter, and access to mating partners. Secondary reinforcers include: verbal praise, petting or playing. It is only because verbal praise, petting and playing are associated with access to primary reinforcers that our dogs come to love those things as well. For a domesticated animal that we share our home with, secondary reinforcers can become ways in which we do reward our dogs *after* they are fluent in a new behavior. This means that we need to utilize primary reinforcers first to teach new behavior.

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Now, we don't ever want to limit our dog's access to water or shelter and we don't utilize access to mating partners in training our domestic pets BUT we can utilize our dog's food or access to food to teach them new things! It is important and imperative that we keep dogs motivated for food if we have training goals in mind. This means that you need to portion out your dog's daily calorie needs wisely. Here are ways in which to go about it:

1. Measure out each of your dog's meals - talk to your vet for recommendations on how many calories your dog needs in a day. Compare that to the brand of food you are feeding your dog (every brand is different!) and portion out each meal to add up to that total number for the day
2. Offer pre-measured meals at timed intervals - I like to offer young puppies breakfast, lunch and dinner for three meals total in the day. Adult dogs can continue at three meals or be switched to two meals a day based on your preference. Meals are to be measured as stated in the last step and set down for 15 minutes at a time. Whatever your dog does not finish, pick up the bowl and discard or put that kibble back into the food bin! DO NOT add the next measured meal onto what your dog left earlier in the day!
3. If you have a group class or a big training session on a certain day, only offer $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the dog's previous meal so they are hungry (but not hangry) for class! If you feed your dog three meals a day, maybe skip one of those meals all together. Your dog does not need tons of extra calories from treats ON TOP OF their normal calorie intake from their regular meals.

Dogs who are free fed (food is left out all day) can suffer from obesity, are not usually motivated to work for food (even treats) and you may miss early signs of illness if your dog goes off feed. For all of these reasons I strongly recommend following the above outline to keep your new dog happy, healthy and motivated for food!

Training Exercises

What's The Clicker For?

Clicker training is a great way to tell your dog that they "got it right." Every time your dog does something that you like, or want them to repeat or do more often, you can mark that behavior with a click from the clicker and then follow it with a food reward. As your dog gets better at the behavior, you can start to put it on cue (name it). Once the dog is fluent at the behavior (around 90% success rate every time you cue it) you can begin to fade the clicker and subsequently, the food reward.

Example: You want to teach your dog to sit. You start by luring the dog into the sit position with a cookie over their nose. Once the dog sits, click the clicker, then feed the treat.

When you first start clicker training, the clicker doesn't really mean anything to the dog yet. They don't know that it means a treat is coming. Therefore, in the first few training sessions you have with your dog, start by "charging" the clicker. Click once, pause for a moment, then feed the treat. In this situation, you are not requiring the dog to perform any behavior, you are simply teaching them the clicker equation: click = treat.

*Your puppy has a fairly good idea of what the clicker means because Jay and I have been using it with him the last few weeks. BUT now YOU need to get good with handling the clicker and your timing. DO PRACTICE charging the clicker at the beginning of your training sessions for the next few days.

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Name Game/Baby Recall Step 1

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for responding to his/her name

Verbal Cue: Your dog's name!

It does not matter what position your dog is in. Say your dog's name ONE TIME! Do not repeat it over and over! Once is enough! Hold your food lure between your fingertips and stick it right in front of her nose. Move it so the dog follows your lure and turns in your general direction. Mark and reward the behavior. Repeat.

Hand Target

Behavior: Dog bops (targets) nose onto your flat palm

Verbal Cue: Touch

It does not matter what position your dog is in. Hold your food lure in the flat palm of your hand at nose level to your dog. Let your dog take the treat from your hand, do not bring your hand to her. When she does mark the behavior. Repeat with your opposite hand. Gradually fade out the lure and offer her an empty flat palm. When she touches her nose to your palm, mark the behavior and toss or offer her the treat from your other hand.

Sit

Behavior: Dog sets bottom half of body onto the floor from a standing position

Verbal Cue: Sit

Dog should be in a standing position. Hold your food lure between your fingertips. Stick your food lure right in front of her nose. She might even try to lick it/steal it from you – don't let her! Instead once she is focused on the treat, move it up and back simultaneously. She will follow and push herself into a sit. Mark and reward when she does.

Down

Behavior: Dog lays in sternal recumbency (abdomen, chest, and elbows are touching the ground) from a sit or stand position.

Verbal Cue: Down

Dog should be in a sit position. Hold a food lure between your fingertips. Stick your food lure right in front of her nose. Once she is focused on the treat move it in a 90 degree angle (straight down) to the floor. Then slowly move the treat towards you. Keyword here is SLOWLY! Move to fast and she will stand up to try to keep up with her treat! Once her elbows have touched the ground, mark and reward the behavior.

Drop

Behavior: Dog drops an item in their mouth with a food lure

Verbal Cue: Drop

Practice this behavior during toy play. Use the same technique when your puppy gets ahold of something they are not supposed to have. Once the dog has the item in their mouth, gather most of it up and ask

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the dog to “drop.” Then put a cookie in front of their nose to lure them to let go of the item. Once your puppy lets go, click the clicker and feed the treat.

Magic Mat Step 1

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for being on the mat

Verbal Cue: None at this time

Lay your dog’s mat on the floor. If they make any movement toward the mat, have a BIG party – mark and reward – by sprinkling 3-5 cookies on the mat! Let your dog move around and forage on the mat. This step is only about building value for the mat. We want them snuffling/exploring with cookies falling from the sky onto their magic mat! After a few moments, invite your dog to leave the mat, pick it up, set it back down in a different spot, and repeat for 3-4 repetitions!

Magic Mat Step 2

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for being on the mat and returning to the mat

Verbal Cue: None at this time

Like last week, start by laying the mat on the floor. Mark and reward any movement toward the mat by sprinkling 3-5 cookies on it. Once your dog eats the last cookie, instead of sprinkling more, cue her to “find it” or use another release cue and toss one a few inches away from the mat. She will step off the mat to eat the reset cookie. Once she orients herself back toward the mat, or interacts with the mat again, mark and repeat the exercise! After a few repetitions, you will toss the reset cookie further and further from the mat. Your goal for this week is to get your dog to seek the mat again after every reset cookie.

Magic Mat Step 3

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for offering a sit or down on the mat

Verbal Cue: Mat/Bed/Place

Lay the mat on the floor. When your dog comes over wait about 5 seconds and see if they offer you a sit or down on the mat. You are not cuing the dog in any way to sit or down, just simply waiting to capture it. If they do, mark and reward on the mat! If not, go ahead and mark for being on the mat then wait another 5-10 seconds to see if she decides to offer a sit or down. Repeat for about three repetitions before tossing a reset cookie. If your dog returns to the mat after eating the reset cookie, mark and reward then repeat the exercise!

Magic Mat Step 4

Behavior: Dog offer down or sit on a mat and stays for 5-10 steps away in different directions before you return

Verbal Cue: Mat/Bed/Place (Pick ONE!)

Cue your dog into a down on a mat or bed just like last week. But instead of backing away from her take a step to your left or right, or turn one step to your left or right looking away from your dog. Mark and reward behavior. Gradually build distance, marking and rewarding for a maintained down in whatever direction you choose. If at any time she gets up, reset her into a down on her mat and start with only one step away again.

Name Game

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for responding to his/her name

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Verbal Cue: Your dog's name!

It does not matter what position your dog is in. Say your dog's name ONE TIME! Do not repeat it over and over! Once is enough! Hold your food lure between your fingertips and stick it right in front of her nose. Move it so the dog follows your lure and turns in your general direction. Mark and reward the behavior. Repeat.

Flying Cookie Game

Behavior: Dog chases a reset cookie, then returns to handler when name is called

Verbal Cue: Your dog's name

Call your dog's name, like in the name game, mark and reward for any re-orientation toward you. Then show your dog another cookie, but toss it away from you with the cue "get it." Let your puppy run after and find their reset cookie. Call their name after they've found the reset cookie and repeat the exercise. The reset cookie can be tossed in a different direction each time.

Handling Exercise: Teaching Restraint

Behavior: Dog is rewarded for holding still

Verbal Cue: Wait or Hold Still

Reach one arm under your puppy's abdomen and the other gently around their neck. Mark and reward. Repeat about three repetitions. Then, on the fourth repetition, restrain as before and give your dog a little squeeze/hug. Mark and reward for another three repetitions. Finally, restrain as before with pressure and hold for the count of three. Mark and reward. As you practice and your puppy gets good at this behavior, gradually increase the duration of your restraint.

Handling Exercise: Accept Grooming

Behavior: Dog accepts handling with grooming tools (brush, nail clippers, ear cleaner)

Verbal Cue: Wait or Hold Still if you want to say something. Otherwise a cue is not really necessary. Before husbandry care can actually take place, it is important to teach your puppy how to "hold still" and accept the grooming tools. This means handling the part of the body where grooming will take place, then introducing the grooming tool to that body part. Follow these steps:

- Gently touch or hold the body part you will be working on (foot for nails, ear for cleaning, other body part for brushing)
- Mark and reward the dog for holding still / allowing the handling
- Repeat, this time add the introduction of the grooming tool toward/touching the body part
- Mark and reward the dog for holding still
- Repeat each step until your puppy is very comfortable with allowing the grooming tool to move toward / touch them

If your dog pulls or backs away from the grooming tool at any time, simply back up a step and repeat there before trying again.

Video Examples:

Handling Exercise: Noisy tools

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Behavior: Dog remains calm around noisy husbandry tools

Verbal Cue: none

Some husbandry tools can be noisy making them a little scary for the puppy. (Grooming clippers, blow dryer). You can also use these steps to socialize your dog to other noisy items (vacuum cleaner, etc.)

- Hold the object out of sight (behind your back)
- Turn it on so that it makes noise (if there are different settings, start at the lowest)
- Feed your dog 3-5 pieces of food in a row
- Turn the object off. Pause for a few seconds then repeat the exercise

Once your dog is very comfortable with the noise, bring it into view and repeat the exercise.

Problem Prevention Scenarios

Puppy Mouthing (Ouch!)

One of the most common problem behaviors of puppies and young dogs is mouthing and play biting. It is important to keep in mind that mouthing and play biting is a very NORMAL behavior in young dogs.

Young dogs and puppies explore things with their mouths. If they were to bite down too hard on another dog or littermate then that dog may give them a correction or yelp as if to say “that was too much!”

Some sources suggest trying to mimic this yelping behavior when your puppy bites down too hard on yourself, but this can become problematic. Unfortunately, humans are not very good at mimicking canine behavior and often puppies may take it as a sign that you want to play and may even end up biting harder! Instead the most useful thing you can do is remove what is reinforcing the biting behavior, typically this is yourself! If the pup is chomping down on your hand, put your hand behind your back and sit still. **By jerking your hand away or moving very quickly this can entice the pup to chase or try to bite harder. If you are at the same level as your dog, go ahead and stand up and be still.** Then, give your puppy an appropriate object that they *can* have in their mouth instead. If your pup is very persistent and keeps trying to bite at your pant legs, then remove yourself all together. This means putting a barrier between yourself and the pup for a brief “time-out.” You can utilize a baby gate, a puppy pen, or a crate.

It is incredibly important that while your puppy is in their “time out” you have given them something they can pacify their mouthy behavior with: A frozen Kong, a bully stick, a nyla bone or another appropriate chew item. Wanting to mouth and chew is an innate (instinctive) behavior, therefore mouthing and play biting behaviors are not resolved overnight. It takes patience and consistency to train your dog that what is a very normal behavior with other dogs or chew toys, is an inappropriate behavior with humans.

DO NOT use forms of aversive physical punishment with mouthy puppies. Some examples might include holding your dog to the ground, holding their mouth shut, spraying with a water bottle, or hitting the dog. While physical aversive punishment *can* be effective in some cases, it is typically only effective with the person who is administering it and often redirects the dog towards becoming mouthier with other people. This is especially not desirable for dogs who will be living/interacting with other people or small children. Physical aversive punishment is also training with intimidation. We do not want our dogs to fear us, rather we want to build a positive relationship with our dog that includes a clear picture of

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ourselves as a strong benevolent leader. Instead of utilizing or relying on punishment, get better at managing your dog's behavior by providing safe alternatives and time out zones.

Cooperative Toy Play

Teaching your dog to play with toys as an extension of playing with YOU has so much value. It builds relationships, creates trust, prevents resource guarding and mouthy behaviors and builds engagement. What better way to teach your dog that you are their benevolent leader than by playing with them?!

1. Two Ball Game: Teach your puppy the game of fetch with two identical balls. They should be identical so that your puppy does not begin to favor one over the other
 - Get puppy interested in ball #1. Bounce it on the ground or bat it around in front of you. As soon as she is interested, toss it away. Initially you do not have to throw it across the yard or the room. Even two or three feet will do.
 - As soon as puppy picks up ball #1, you immediately begin to bounce or toss around ball #2. You have completely forgotten about ball #1. You want puppy to realize that ball #1 is now lifeless and ball #2 is where it's at. Eventually, she will spit out ball #1

Jumping up

A perfect time to practice a no jumping behavior is when your puppy is small and is not knocking anyone over yet! The key to generalizing this behavior with all types of people that your pup meets is CONSISTENCY. It is very hard for people to resist an adorable puppy and you may have many people asking you if they can greet and pet them. We definitely want our puppies to be meeting lots of new people and creating positive associations with them, but we also want them to be learning manners at the same time! If someone asks to pet your puppy, make sure you are prepared to reward the pup for four paws on the ground. You might even put a few treats on the ground for the puppy to focus on so they are not so tempted to jump up at their new friend's face! If your puppy does jump up, ask the friendly stranger politely to stop petting and gently get all four of your pup's feet back onto the ground. Start over and get some treats on the ground. If your puppy is just so excited to meet someone new that they cannot focus on anything else but jumping up, then simply end the greeting session and try again with the next friendly stranger.

Resource Guarding

Resource guarding is another normal behavior that dogs will exhibit towards other dogs. It is our job to teach our dogs at a young age that guarding food or objects is inappropriate and unnecessary when living with humans. The best way to prevent food guarding is to get everyone in the house involved with the following:

- (1) Periodically hand feed your puppy their kibble (a great time to do this is during training sessions!)
- (2) Drop even better treats into and around her dish when you approach him / her eating
- (3) Provide a timed feeding schedule. Do not leave food dishes full with food out all day.
- (4) If your puppy gets ahold of an object that is not a toy and you want to get it back from them, do **NOT** chase your puppy for the item. Instead, go grab a few pieces of kibble or treats, return to the dog and ask them to "drop" as you set the food down in front of them. Your dog will drop the item to take the food.

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Pick up the item. Now you are in possession of the item and your dog has learned that dropping items results in a food reward.

DO NOT attempt these exercises without providing your dog with food trades or treats. If you only ever handle your dog while they are eating (or sleeping or playing with their toys) and do not follow it up with a reinforcer (the treat) the dog may actually learn to resent your interaction while they are in possession of the resource. Think of how you would feel if you were eating dinner and someone suddenly approached you and began stroking your hair, taking food off your plate and sticking their fingers in your ears. You would not learn to accept their behavior. You would become increasingly annoyed and frustrated about it! Imagine, instead, if you were eating dinner when someone else approached you and said “hey! Would you like to trade your brussel sprouts for some ice cream?!” You would then be more likely to get excited for the ice cream and learn to anticipate and enjoy the approach of this person while you were eating.

Dogs & Kids

Encouraging and managing appropriate interactions between kids and dogs will set them both up for success and hopefully a lifelong positive relationship!

Your new puppy’s personality is happy, confident and s/he would like to play and go just as much as s/he wants to cuddle. Do note, however, that restraining / snuggling puppies when they would rather play will provoke them to communicate their discomfort in the only way dogs know how to communicate: by mouthing or biting. If the puppy is ever interacting with children, the children should be coached to respect this from the dog as this is normal puppy behavior and should be addressed as outlined under Problem Prevention Scenarios. I encourage new families to enroll their pups in training classes to continue to build on the human animal bond with all members of the household!

Here is a general breakdown of ages & stages of children and types of appropriate interactions/how can kids can help:

Ages 0-2

- Parent must be touching the dog if the child is, too
- Never leave infant / toddler alone with dog (no matter how friendly the dog is)

Ages 3-5

- Constant and close supervision from parent
- Put down food dish for puppy **if the puppy can sit and wait**
- Toss toy for puppy that will wait for toss
- Help with clicker training (maybe the parent mans the clicker, child gives command and tosses food reward)
- Drag long toy on the ground for puppy to chase

Ages 6-11

- Adult supervision is still required
- Give puppy food and water

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- Handle puppy in obedience class with parent's help (my age requirement for kids to attend classes with parents is around 7-8 years of child)
- Help with grooming **if puppy tolerates the brush etc.**
- Put away puppy's toys
- Teach tricks
- Children in this age range and under should not be responsible for walking puppy

Ages 12-16

- Handle puppy independently (as judged by parent)
- Feed, groom and train with parental guidance
- Handle puppy independently in obedience class
- Play a major role in training
- Walk puppy independently (as judged by parent)