



Positive Reinforcement VS. Punishment

Positive Reinforcement Training

- Positive reinforcement training is the practice of training your dog through praising and rewarding their good behavior. These methods of training have been thoroughly studied and scientifically proven to be the most effective.
- Positive reinforcement training uses classical conditioning and operant conditioning to train dogs how to perform behaviors, how to feel comfortable with their environment, how to socialize well with others, and overall how to positively interact with the world around them.
- Classical conditioning is practice of pairing positive associations like food with experiences like meeting new dogs. Operant conditioning is the practice of giving your dog the opportunity to work for a reward like asking for a sit and then giving a treat.

Punishment Based Training

- Punishment based training is the practice of training your dog by punishing bad behaviors through the use of intimidation or inflicting pain.
- **KEY POINT:** Many people are unaware that dogs only have a one second learning period after they have done a behavior to learn whether it was good or bad.
- This is why punishment is an extremely ineffective way to train. It is very unlikely that your dog will understand what it is they are being punished for. This is also why we have to be quick with our praise and treats when we use positive reinforcement training.
- Punishment based methods were mainly used throughout the 80's and 90's until studies brought to light how significant the negative effects were. Sadly there are still some trainers who use these methods which has made it hard for the public to know which methods they should really be using to train their dog.



Why Punishment Can Have Disastrous Effects

- If your dog fears you due to repeated punishment, you will not have a dog who is eager to work for you or do what you ask of them. You will instead have a dog who is afraid to respond to your requests because they fear punishment.
- A dog who is fearful is more likely to bite and have major aggression issues down the road. Many dogs who develop fear of humans because of repeated punishment end up in the shelter system.
- There is a fine line between punishment and abuse. Punishment does not have to be out of cruel intentions but it can have extreme effects.
- For example, if a person came home to an accident on the floor and then grabbed their dog by the collar, dragged them over to it and yelled at them, they might not mean any harm by this. They might just intend to teach their dog not to go in the house. The problem is from their dog's perspective they have already passed the time period where they can even remember why they are being punished and are now only learning to be fearful of the person.
- Repeated experiences like the one just described can create a dog who is afraid of human hands coming towards their face or their collar.
- Since dogs most commonly bite out of fear you can see how this can quickly turn into a dangerous situation. Now imagine if a child goes up to that dog and tugs on their collar, this is a recipe for a bite and it's likely they'll now be another dog who ends up in a shelter.
- Dogs who are frequently yelled at, physically restrained, or caused pain by prong collars or shocking devices, have a high chance of developing fear, anxiety, and aggression.