

DOG TRAINING

LINGO

By Laura Pakis

If you've ever taken dog training classes, then you know there are specific expressions and terms used: "Give your dog a job", "Be the leader", "alpha dog", "socialization", and so forth. The meaning of these words and expressions may not be obvious. It can become even more complicated when the techniques used to change a dog's behavior are called "positive punishment" and "negative rewards". In this article, I will define some of the vernacular used in dog training. A little perspective on how to understand the dog and its training can clarify and improve a client's relationship with their pet.

spots, mates, etc. A dog with a dominant temperament will always be dominant, but can be trained to control its dominance.

Alpha - Being the highest ranked or most dominant individual. Alpha dog is the dog that receives privileges first, such as eating and playing, or sleeps on higher ground than others. The alpha dog is not necessarily the leader; it is the dog that gets its way by force.

Leader - A person who motivates a dog to act toward achieving a common goal that the leader determines. The best leaders are patient, firm but fair, have a clear goal to achieve, and know the steps to take to achieve the goal. If you are inconsistent or show inappropriate amounts of affection or force to your dog, the dog will instinctively take on the leadership role and not show respect to you.

Respect - A positive feeling of approval as well as specific actions and conduct. Respect translates into reliability of commands. It is shown in the dog that sees its owner as its leader and performs commands whenever given.

Behavior - A dog's actions, manners or activities. Behaviors can be modified and changed. They are the response to some stimuli. Behaviors include barking, jumping, running away or towards something, and growling to name a few.

Temperament - The aspects of a dog's personality that are generally thought to be innate. The dog's activity level, mood, attention span, curiosity, drive, adaptability, ability to change/be trained, social tendencies, and fight/flight response are some of the more common measures of temperament. A

dog's temperament influences, but does not determine the dog's behavior.

Personality - The combination of behavior, temperament, and emotional/mental state that create a unique individual. Dogs have a combination of six personalities: overconfident, fearful, hyperactive, sluggish, reserved, and outgoing. Every dog has an individual personality which may or may not be representative of the breed.

Dominance - Taking something by force; aggression to establish superiority over resources such as food, preferred resting

Socializing - The process in which a dog learns its world and the human world. Socializing is more than allowing dogs to play together. It involves exposing the dog positively to a variety of sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes while teaching the proper response from the dog. It is important to note that a dog that is not continually exposed to new things regresses in social development. It is also critical that dogs and puppies be well socialized to people including children. Too many puppies or dogs get sent back to the breeder, or worse yet, on a one way trip to the vet because of bites inflicted on humans.

Training - The act of teaching a dog a particular skill or behavior. It is an ongoing educational process that begins at the dog's birth and continues throughout its life.

Negative Reward or Reinforcement - Removing something unpleasant from a situation to increase the chance of the behavior being exhibited again. For example, constant stimulation of an electronic collar is removed when the dog behaves appropriately.

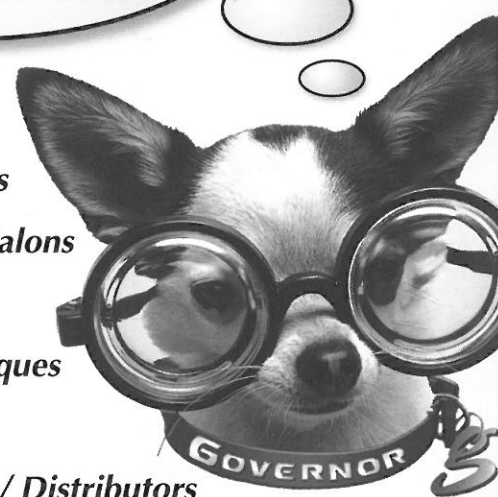
Positive Punishment - Something unpleasant that is applied to a situation in order to decrease the chance of the behavior being exhibited again. For example, when barking, a dog is punished with a startling squirt of water. Punishers suppress behaviors. Positive punishment is used to train a dog not to do something.

Learning - The process in which relatively permanent behavioral changes are produced through experience and memories. This requires using the proper training method based on the dog's personality and temperament. There are three phases of learning for a dog: the learning phase when the dog learns to understand what a command means, the reinforcement phase when the dog "re-learns" the command in different settings, and the proofing phase which teaches the dog reliability in every type of environment. The good news is your dog will never forget what it learns. The bad news is that without consistent use, your dog will be less reliable.

Trick - A difficult, dexterous, or clever act designed to amuse. Tricks develop a stronger relationship between the dog and human.

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LEARNING PROCESS FOR THE AVERAGE DOG

24 HOURS

If not repeated; the memory is absent.

1 TO 5 DAYS

Repeated daily; the task is in short term memory.

1 TO 30 DAYS

Repeated daily; the task in long term memory.

Improvement in performance continues as training is effective.

Of course, the environmental factors (trainer effectiveness, task complexity, etc.) influence the time frame, as do the dog's genetic factors.



Tricks provide entertainment and engage the dog's mind, which help alleviate behavior issues caused by boredom.

Command - A charge given with authority to a dog to perform a certain behavior such as heel, sit, down, and come. Commands which are consistent and fair become one of the easiest ways to build confidence and respect with a dog since they show you as a leader.

Obedience - The act of the dog obeying the person giving the command. This requires the dog to see the person as a leader and is the dog's way of showing respect. Dog obedience is a mental exercise for your dog, which helps prevent behavior issues. Dogs cannot learn basic obedience on their own; they must be trained.

"Giving your dog a job" - A popular phrase used to explain a dog's need for mental exercise. Exercises that involve the thinking process, not just body movement, are particularly good for a dog. Commands, tricks, and problem solving toys and games provide mental stimulation to diminish boredom, which

(in a dog) can manifest itself in destructive behaviors such as digging, shredding, and self-mutilation.

"Setting Boundaries" - Dogs need clearly defined limits. They cannot cope with inconsistencies such as being allowed on the couch with the family and being corrected for being on the couch when company comes over. Teaching dogs words like "up" and "off" for such actions help define a dog's boundaries as to what is and is not appropriate.

Correction - The act of putting an oral or physical restraint on a dog. This is used when a dog fails to follow a command or doesn't perform an exercise correctly. This can be a verbal "no", pressure from a head collar such as a gentle leader, stimulus by electronic collar, a pop on leash from a training collar, and so on.

Praise - A positive response to connect with the way the dog is reacting. It can be a sweet, high pitched bubbly voice, dog pat, or even a smile. It informs the dog of a job well done. Too many dog owners believe a treat is

Laura Pakis, owner and founder of Acme Canine, LLC has been a professional dog trainer for numerous years. She believes responsible ownership is an important part of having a dog and guides her business toward providing dog owners with not only training knowledge but also care and understanding of dogs. A certified AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator, Laura will soon obtain her Therapy Dog International evaluator certification. She is also certified in breed selection, puppy development, assistance dog training, basic and advanced obedience, Police K-9 and protection training, tracking, E-touch training, Pack to Basics, and pet first aid.



By Laura Pakis, CPT

the same as praise and in the process lose out to food in their relationship with their dog.

Motivation - A way of regulating behavior that is directed toward a goal. All dogs need motivation such as petting, praise, attention, toys, games, food, or playing with other dogs. It lets the dog know it is doing the right thing or headed in the right direction.

Reinforcement - Strengthens or supports an existing feeling, idea, or habit, typically in the form of a food treat, toy, and/or praise.

We in the pet care service industry need to be familiar with these terms and understand the various methods of training. It is important to know when and how to use each given the situation, the dog owner's needs, and the dog's personality and temperament. Doing so can change the dog's behavior, resulting in a happier and better trained canine. 🐾

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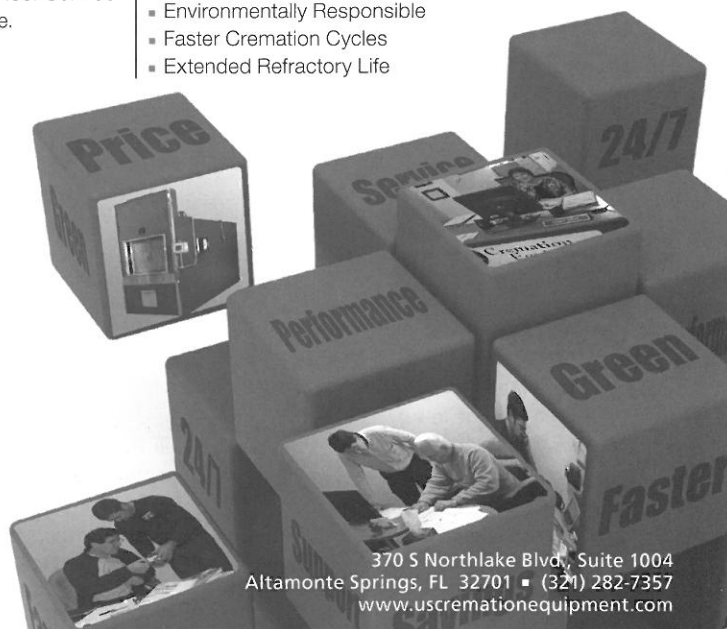
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