



**The Puppy Training  
Consultants**



# Puppy Training Tips Do's and Don'ts





## Dog training tips

What exactly do we mean when we say “relationship-based training”? It is a method of training that uses the cooperative relationship between the trainer and the animal to achieve mutually beneficial results, while at the same time enhancing and strengthening their relationship. Here are some of the basic principles:

- **Put the puppy’s immediate needs first.** Is your pet injured, ill, fearful, frustrated, hungry, thirsty, needing to eliminate? Put off training until the animal’s immediate needs have been met and he or she can concentrate on the training exercise.
- **Learn to accurately interpret animals’ body language.** There are a lot of common misconceptions about animal body language, especially for dogs, due to the prevailing myth of dominance-based social structures. These misconceptions frequently lead to human misinterpretation of the animal’s emotional state and intentions.

For this reason, it is important to get sound, science-based information about the body language of the species you are working with. All species exhibit tell-tale signs that let you know how the animal is feeling, whether it’s joy, anger, fear, frustration, or some other emotion. Understanding body language improves communication between people and animals and helps keep all involved safe.

- **Find out what motivates the puppy (e.g., treats, affection, verbal praise, toys) and use it to your advantage.** It's also important to first make sure the animal is motivated to work with you. We tend to assume that pets should automatically adore us, but that isn't always the case.

So, the first step is to build a relationship with the puppy by spending time with them and creating an association between your presence and things they really like.

- **Use positive reinforcement to encourage behaviour you want.** You can elicit and reinforce desired behaviour through the techniques of capturing, luring, shaping, or cueing.
- **Avoid aversive methods.** Aversive methods such as force, threats, fear, pain, intimidation, and dominance are not necessary for eliminating undesirable behaviours. In fact, aversive methods often have many damaging side effects. Instead, ignore the unwanted behaviour and/or teach incompatible behaviours. For example, you can teach a dog to sit and stay for a greeting rather than jumping up; it's impossible for them to do both simultaneously.
- To reinforce the desired behaviour, reward the dog with whatever motivates them, whether it's treats, affection, verbal praise, toys, or something else.

In contrast to aversive-based training, this approach supports the trusting and cooperative relationship between you and the puppy.

**Prevent the animal's ability to continue practicing unwanted behaviours by controlling the environment and controlling the animal's exposure.** For example, distract a reactive dog or limit access to a window, door, or fence line if the inappropriate behaviours are happening there.



**Supervise the animal carefully to set him or her up for success.** You can avoid or prevent unwanted behaviours by simply being aware of what your pet is doing. For example, if a new dog or puppy is not house-trained, don't allow them the full run of the house until they have been house-trained. Giving an animal too much freedom before they have the necessary life skills to navigate that much space can set them up for failure.

**When an animal's behaviour is rooted in a strong emotional state (fear, anger, frustration or even excitement), change the behaviour by changing the underlying emotional state.** You can do that by pairing the stressful situation with something the animal really loves until they feel calm and happy around whatever previously upset them. For example, if a dog gets upset when strangers walk by the gate, we can change the way they feel about strangers by having them toss treats over her gate every time they pass by.



## Dog Training Do's and Don'ts

As you probably know, training your dog has numerous benefits, for both you and your pooch. Training is crucial to him living happily with you and other family members, it helps avoid unwanted behaviours and it enhances your bond with your pet.

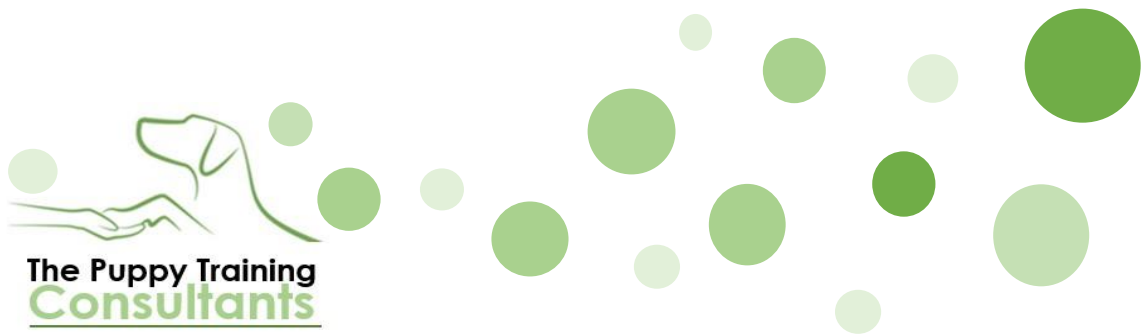
But there are a few basic do's and don'ts that can help set up your dog — and you, of course — for success.

### What to do

Let's start with the things we want to focus on doing:

**Take baby steps.** Have a clear idea of the behaviour you want and then break down the training required into small, attainable steps. Dogs learn better and enjoy training sessions more if they are successful and receive a reward. (Hey, who doesn't?) If your dog doesn't seem to be "getting" what you're asking of him, think about how you can make the training process slightly easier. For example, if you are trying to teach the cue "down" and your dog just sits with a puzzled look on his face, start by rewarding him for simply lowering his head and then increase the criteria from there.

**Be consistent.** Dogs are exceptionally good with details. To your dog, "sit," "sit down" and "Fido, sit" are different cues. With that in mind, make sure you are using exactly the same cue every time you ask your dog for a particular behaviour. This strategy will help to avoid frustration on the part of you and your dog and will help him to understand what you are asking.



### **Use positive reinforcement methods.**

Positive reinforcement means rewarding your dog with treats, toys, praise or whatever motivates him. Just like humans, dogs want some payoff for working. You can't expect your dog to continually work for nothing. With that said, don't overestimate how much praise means to your pet. (It's great when your boss says, "Good job," but you also want that more tangible reward — your paycheck.) So, be generous with the treat or toy rewards, especially at the beginning.

Once your dog learns a behaviour, you can adjust the reward schedule, but you'll want to keep rewarding him periodically for a job well done.

### **What not to do**

And now for those things we need to focus on not doing:

**Don't have your training sessions go longer than 20 minutes.** Most dogs do best with training sessions of 10-15 minutes, so keep them short. Even five minutes of training can be very effective, especially if you are able to do it multiple times per day.

**Don't start training someplace with a lot of distractions.** Like people, dogs learn more effectively if they aren't distracted by a busy, noisy environment. Once your dog is consistently performing the behaviour on cue, you can start to proof it. "Proofing" means practicing a behaviour in different environments and situations, until the dog generalises the desired behaviour and can do it anywhere, even with distractions.



**Don't use force, pain, fear, or intimidation when training.** It can be tempting to push your dog's butt down when teaching him to sit or to yell "no" when he jumps up on you, but those methods can backfire. Some dogs may react with an aggressive response and others may completely shut down. Plus, it's not healthy for your relationship with your dog and may even harm the bond you have with him. Training should be fun for the dog, not a scary and unpleasant experience.

**Don't get frustrated if you have a bad training session.** Learning isn't linear and your dog may fluctuate in his progress from day to day. Stay calm, keep the big picture in mind and do your best with the dog you have in front of you. If it's not working, then stop the session and try again later or the following day.

**Remember,** this is about establishing long-term behaviour for a long-term relationship. So, take it slowly, and above all, have fun.



## Ten Training Tips

1



Pay attention to what your dog is doing

2



Create a calm environment for learning

4



Have tasty treats and toys on hand

3



Keep your posture relaxed, so your dog copies

5



Watch for moments when your dog gets it right

6



Smile, praise and reward

8



Take breaks, play & have fun

Allow for mistakes

7



9



Keep learning

Keep training

10



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