

Punishment versus reward

There are hundreds of ways your puppy can make the wrong choice, (and how much do you want to punish?), - but there is only *one way* to get things right, it is therefore up to us to show puppy what is right

- ***PUNISHMENT*** Is always associated with the ***punisher***
 - *Is always associated with the situation*

Any correction or punishment you administer for any behaviour is a blatant advertisement that you have yet to train your dog correctly.

Whereas... each reward you give your dog for the correct behaviour (whether you have asked for that behaviour or not!), improves your dogs view of you and the situation – the training.

- Any reward you give increases the likelihood that the immediately preceding behaviour will happen again.
- Any reward you give increases your value in your dogs mind, which further cements your pet person relationship.
- Any reward you give increases your dogs enjoyment of the immediately preceding exercise

Telling your dog off for being wrong doesn't tell him how to be right. So any punishment you use in training (and there are 100's of ways to get it wrong that will need punishing remember), still leave the way for further punishment as they DON'T teach what is right. Teaching what is right leaves the way open for opportunity to reward, and remember reward increases the likelihood of the behaviour happening again.

- **Punishment after the fact doesn't give puppy the opportunity to alter his behaviour to then make the correct choice.**

And telling off your puppy for being wrong can often make them too scared to try again next time.

The only kind and/or fair punishment to use is removal of the reward.

Punishment alternatives

- ***TEACHING THE CORRECT RESPONSE BEFOREHAND***
- Instructional corrections (or mistake saving commands)
- Emergency verbal reprimands
- Counter commanding
- No reward marker
- Extinction (Ignoring the behaviour until it goes away)
- Teach an alternative behaviour

Our first choice should always be retrain the correct response

Instructional corrections or Mistake saving commands

Instructional corrections (or I'd prefer to call them mistake saving commands), may be used in an emergency, as they instruct the dog how to get it right, so you can then reward. No scolding in tone of voice though because if your puppy is about to make a mistake then chances are the correct behaviour has not been properly instilled yet.

- Example – puppy about to pee on the lounge room floor. Saying no, bad dog, don't do that etc doesn't inform the puppy what the correct choice is. Saying 'puppy outside, quickly' informs your pup HOW to get it right. The urgency in your voice will convey more than growling at him. (Do make sure first though that your puppy already understands the 'outside' command). Then praise!

Just saying 'no' doesn't teach him an alternative, so he can still make another incorrect choice. 'Don't do that' should be 'do this instead'. Instead of 'don't chew the plant' replace it with 'chew this chew toy', 'don't jump on the visitors' becomes 'sit to greet people', 'don't lie on the lounge' becomes 'lie on your mat'.

Emergency verbal reprimand

Used only to create a 'space' or pause for you to fill immediately with a correct rewardable behaviour.

Counter commanding

Means teaching a behaviour that is impossible to do at the same time. Best example of this is puppy jumping up on people, if you teach SIT, He can't physically jump and sit at the same time.

No reward marker

A no reward marker is something we actually teach our puppies, that means 'bad luck, that doesn't earn you a reward, try again'

How to teach - Choose a word that suits, good example is 'oops', 'too bad', or 'excuse me', take a piece of food in one hand, hold out both hands to puppy, if he sniffs the hand minus the food say 'too bad', as you open your hand to show it contains no reward. If he sniffs the hand with the food, say 'good dog' and open your hand to let him have the treat. After only a couple of repetitions puppy will quickly pick up that 'too bad' means no reward.

When to use - When your puppy is sitting reliably say 90% of the times you ask, if you ask for sit and he either ignores you or perhaps lays down instead, you may then use the 'too bad', generally what will happen then is his response will look to us like 'woops, got it wrong, lets try this instead'.

When you are sure his response is generally reliable, but you have occasion to use the no reward marker, after the 'excuse me' when your dog responds correctly second try, a quick pat will suffice for praise at this stage, we save the really effusive treats and rewards for the correct response **FIRST TIME**

Continually needing to use No Reward Markers indicates that the behaviour is not fully understood and needs further positive training.

And... don't forget that no reward markers can be too confusing and therefore too stressful for puppy when he doesn't understand the initial request properly.

Extinction

The term used for behaviours that go away when you ignore them.
There are some do's and don'ts with extinction.

Self rewarding behaviours will not go away if you ignore them, as the puppy will be getting his own reward. For example chewing is a self rewarding behaviour, it is actually a stress reliever for dogs as well as being a fun past-time, so ignoring chewing won't work.

Crying at the back door is a behaviour that will respond to ignoring, puppy receives no reward at all, so he will after a while go and find a more fun behaviour for himself to do. (At this stage when he goes away on his own to play I would be going outside to reward him, as not crying at the door is what we want, and remember behaviours are more likely to happen again if they are rewarded, so when he is not crying at the door reward!

And yes it probably will bring him back to the door again, but this time he will cry for less time and wander off sooner. And sooner and sooner.

Other self rewarding behaviours are digging and barking at the postman. For these we use 'teach an alternative behaviour'.

Teach an alternative behaviour

Or an acceptable behaviour

For self rewarding behaviours such as chewing or digging, the best approach is to train our puppy to spend his time doing things that we find acceptable, instead of leaving him to amuse himself, and probably choosing to do something that is OK by puppy, but not acceptable to us.

Digging is a normal dog behaviour, so our best option is to channel this into an area that is acceptable. Build a doggy digging pit, cordon off an area that is out of the way, make this area rewarding to puppy by burying bones, toys etc, or things of value to puppy, so digging here is much more rewarding for him.

Chewing is again normal, only puppy doesn't realise that we have decided that some things that look like perfectly good chew toys to him are unacceptable to us, and as again there are 100 ways he can get it wrong, teaching him what is the right thing in the first place is much easier.

Stuffed Kongs full of food is the best alternative, puppy can spend hours trying to extricate the food from the Kong, instead of carting off our shoes.