

Dog Training Dictionary

by Robin Sockness

Adolescence - A dog leaves puppyhood and enters adolescence at about the age of 6 months. The dog stays an adolescent until age 2 or 3 years. The most challenging age is usually between 6 to 18 months (which is when most dogs are surrendered to shelters). Some dogs pass through the phase with little trouble, but most drive their guardians crazy! During this phase it can be hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Adolescent dogs have an insatiable curiosity about the world, which they explore through all their senses, including taste. They have no idea what things are supposed to look like or how much they cost. They don't know what cars can do to them or that people on bicycles are really people - to the dog they can be moving objects to be chased and nipped.

Aversive training - The use of an unpleasant stimulus to modify a dog's behavior. Examples: pinch collar, choke collar, prong collar, jabbing, alpha rolling, yelling, spanking, spray bottles, shaking a can of coins, etc. The use of aversive techniques is less effective than the use of positive reinforcement. The risk of emotional and physical damage is great.

Bite Inhibition – Bite inhibition refers to a dog's ability to control the force of his mouthing/bite. A puppy or dog who has not learned bite inhibition with people does not recognize the sensitivity of human skin, and so he bites too hard, even in play. Puppies usually learn bite inhibition during play with other puppies. We also teach it in the first few weeks of puppy class.

Conditioned Emotional Response (CER) - An emotional response a dog experiences that results from an exposure to something. It can be good (Positive CER) or bad (Negative CER) We want dogs to have good CERs about situations, people, and other dogs. A good CER is the goal of counter conditioning. Neutral response can be acceptable too. Negative/bad CERs are worrisome and are at the root of many behavioral problems. We want puppies to have lots of positive CERs during their growing period.

Counter Conditioning - Also called “Pavlovian Conditioning” because Pavlov discovered it. Remember “Pavlov’s dogs”? It is learning by association, where one thing predicts another thing and produces a conditioned emotional response (CER). In dog training, we use counter conditioning to create good emotional responses to known triggers. We also use it to get rid of bad emotional responses. This happens by repeatedly pairing the stimuli with something pleasant or valuable to the dog.

Duration, Distance, Distractions – This is how we train behaviors and make them “stick”! First, teach the behavior without any distractions! Then, gradually increase the time (duration) still without distractions. Gradually add in distance/distractions - starting with short distance and minor distractions. Then, combine difficulty, distance, and distractions together. Do not move to the next step until the last step has been mastered. If your dog has trouble with any of the steps, go back to the previous step.

Fading out the reinforcement – This means you systematically remove the training tool (food reward, toy reward) from a behavior. It is the process of transferring responsibility from you controlling the dog to your dog controlling himself. We do not want our dogs to be dependent on the tools. Thus, we fade out the food rewards as soon as a behavior is reliable. Keeping in mind, it takes about two years for a dog to be fully trained. Never rush to get rid of the food rewards.

ExPen/Exercise Pen - Like a dog crate, but no top - they serve as a way to contain your dog. They give your dog plenty of space to move around and play. Most dog exercise pens are made of connecting

panels that can be set up for use and then folded for storage. We recommend them for short term, supervised confinement in your home as puppies cannot have full run of the house until they are housetrained and have gotten through the chewing stage. We do not recommend them for unsupervised containment. Crates are better for that.

Flooding - Flooding is a technique used to force dogs to be in the proximity of something that they are afraid of. Many trainers incorrectly use it without an understanding of how negatively it effects dogs. Eileen Anderson wrote a wonderful blog, that is worth the read: *Sink or Swim, 8 Ways You Might Be Flooding Your Dog*. What happens after a dog has been flooded: the stress of being forced into a scary situation builds up to a point where they may lash out. A flooded dog may lash out, or they may shut down, which some interpret as “calm submissive”. But there is nothing calm about it. Signs your dog has been flooded: disengage from you, look away, lie in a corner, hide, shake and tremble, pant, lip lick, whale eye (whites of the eyes showing), paw lift, pacing, rounded body, tail tucked, frantic barking.

Generalization/Generalizing – This means a dog becomes able to perform behaviors and understands those behaviors in a variety of contexts and environments (not just at your home). Dogs are not naturally very good at this. After your dog has moved past initial learning in your house, you want to quickly help him/her generalize to other environments and contexts. You want your dog to be able to sit/stay/leave it/walk on leash at places other than at home. This should be done slowly and methodically. Train your dog other places than at home for them to be able to apply those skills you have taught.

High, Medium, Low Value Treats – We recommend carrying low, medium and high value treats in your bait bag aka training pouch. Low value: kibble. Medium value: biscuit style treats like Crunchy O’s or Charlee Bears. High Value: soft and stinky treats such as a jerky style or dehydrated meat.

Learned Helplessness - This occurs when a dog feels totally helpless to avoid negative situations. It usually happens after the dog has been flooded (see above). This is fallout from punishment training and/or overuse of aversive training tools like choke chains, pinch collars, shock collars, etc. If you are unclear or are weak in your communication with your dog, this can also result in learned helplessness – your dog just gives up and walks off or stands there looking at you. The dog thinks “there’s no way to shut off the negative experience and so I will nothing at all”.

Lure-Reward Training Method- Invented by Dr. Ian Dunbar and what we mostly use in training at MBB. Lure-Reward Training follows the ABC pattern: Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence or more simply RRR: Request, Response, Reward. This is the science of dog training! Lure Reward Training is a 1234 process no matter what you’re trying to teach in this manner: 1: Request, 2: Lure, 3: Response, 4: Reward. The lure is a piece of food or can be a toy if that motivates your dog. We phase out the lure once the dog has learned the behavior we are teaching.

Management – This is all the things we do with our dogs to prevent annoying or destructive behaviors. It is important to block these behaviors without damaging their motivation. We set up the environment so a dog can succeed. It’s called puppy proofing your house!

Mark and Pay (Pay) - A Marker Word is **any sound** you will use to tell your dog when he/she did something right. We say the word “yes”, which means you got it right and I am going to “pay” you with a reward. It is the first thing you should teach your dog and even though sometimes we “think” our dogs know what we are saying, it is very important to actively train this special word. Some people say “good dog” and others use a clicker as the marker.

Positive Reinforcement - The addition of a pleasant stimulus to increase the frequency of a desirable behavior. Essentially, it is reward-based training.

Proofing a Behavior – Proofing, in dog training, means practicing a behavior you taught your dog in different environments and situations, until your dog generalizes that desired behavior and can do it anywhere, even with distractions.

Socialization - Allowing a dog to experience the world including places, people, things, new stimuli, and novel experiences in a positive way to ensure confidence and stability. Socialization is most important for puppies. For adolescent and adult dogs, socialization is also important, but becomes more challenging as developmental deadlines pass by. Under-socialization in puppies is one of the most common causes of future behavior problems in dogs.

Threshold - A dog's tolerance for certain things such as pain, stimulation, time, and proximity to triggers. It is the boundary line from where a dog can maintain composure to where they "lose it" You always want to work below threshold. Build skills/behaviors in a neutral environment, and then build on it.

Trigger - Any stimulus (something your dog sees or hears) that initiates a strong emotional and/or a physical response. These can be both good and bad, but generally we discuss triggers in regard to annoying behaviors. For example, in reactive dogs, seeing another dog can be a trigger. For some dogs with kennel aggression, someone approaching their kennel is a trigger. For resource guarders, a human or another dog approaching can be a trigger. The intensity of the reaction depends on the dog's prior experiences, level of training, and proximity to the trigger. Reactions can range from fear, to aggression, to reactivity like lunging. We always consider threshold (see above) in conjunction with triggers. We want to work below threshold to reduce the reaction to the trigger. Working above threshold (which is called "Flooding") is unproductive, and in some cases can be psychological