

# Positive Reinforcement

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Positive reinforcement develops a relationship between you and your dog that is quite different from traditional training methods based on fear and coercion. Positive reinforcement fosters a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation. It teaches the dog to think and engage in problem solving. You are not the leader of a pack that includes your dog. You are a companion with your dog.

When using positive reinforcement, you reward the behavior you want and generally ignore the behavior you don't want. In *The Power of Positive Dog Training* by Pat Miller, the concept is explained this way: "You do not have to punish your dog in order to make a behavior 'not rewarding.' You just have to figure out how to make the right behavior rewarding enough that your dog will choose to do that behavior instead of an inappropriate one."

Pat Miller also reminds us that, "Your dog already knows everything you are going to teach him. He knows how to sit, and he knows how to lie down. He can walk quietly by your side, he can come bounding to you from a distance and he can stay in one place for long periods of time - when he wants to. All you are going to do is teach him the English words for those behaviors and make them very rewarding and fun for him so he will want to do them when you ask him to. Of course, he always has a choice. If you're a good trainer, you'll program a pattern of responses in his brain so that he will want to do them and will choose to do them when you ask."

Positive reinforcement captures the dog's self-interest in obtaining things that make him happy. Reward the behaviors you want. Ignore the behaviors you don't want. While you are developing desirable behaviors, manage the environment to prevent the dog from performing behaviors that you find undesirable. For instance, don't put the turkey carcass in the garbage can if the dog can reach it.

Begin to rethink the way you communicate with your dog, and you will be on the way to a better, more positive, and rewarding relationship.