



HOW DOGS LEARN

Animals in the wild learn through good or bad experiences—and they must learn quickly if they are to survive. In training dogs, we provide the good and bad experiences. Our skill in doing this may actually determine whether or not the dog survives. We teach them to behave the way we want by giving them positive experiences such as praise, petting or a treat. We let them know what we don't like with a harsh voice, a correction word or a leash correction. Everything you do with your dog, whether it's in a formal training session or not, is a lesson.

Keep three things in mind when you're training. First, if the dog is sick, frightened or very distracted, he probably won't be able to give you enough of his attention to learn. When you begin teaching something new, arrange for a quiet relaxed place where your dog will have the best opportunity to concentrate on you. Add distractions or change environments only when he's completely mastered the exercise.

Second, for your teaching to be effective, you must concentrate on your dog, just as you want him to concentrate on you. Providing positive and corrective experiences depends on your dog's temperament. Watch your dog's response to judge the effectiveness of your approach and modify accordingly. If a firm, "ACK" doesn't get through, add a hand clap. If you still don't get a reaction, increase the pressure. On the other hand, a more sensitive dog may require a gentler approach and lots of praise. An excitable, emotional dog will need to be calmed and steadied before he can learn. The faster you reward correct behavior, and the faster you nip bad behavior in the bud, the faster he'll make the connection between what he's doing and your reinforcement. You must follow up your commands every time. If you're using food as a training aid, always give verbal praise before the food reward. You want the dog responding to you, not the food.

Finally, in order for your dog to learn, he must be shown "how" to do something many, many, many times. Keep repetitions interesting and fun. Consistency is essential. We can't be as creative as Mother Nature, but we can try!

Rachel@MaverickRanch.net

www.MaverickRanch.net

619-445-1777 (Ranch)

310-717-0740 (Mobile)

Rachel Amado 22205 Mariah Way Alpine CA 91901-3444