# ANIMAL
# COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE

# BASIC
# ORIENTATION

# *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

**W**e are a vocational training school for those who wish to be a dog trainer and a place for professional dog trainers to further their skills. We also offer, by popular demand, training classes for the general public. These classes include private in-home training, group classes for all levels, and a boarding school where we do all the training for you, then transfer the training to you or your family.

**O**ur goal in training is off-leash obedience without the use of food in our formal training program. Our format is using the least amount of force necessary to get the job done; we use a praise/correction balance to achieve this goal. If our goal is off-leash control, our maximum correction must come in the form of a voice command; after all, we have no leash to hold the dog back. Our reward must also come from our voice. We use modern scientific methods to program the proper behavior and mood in the dog. We are after a happy working pet with an enthusiasm for learning.

## Training Theory

**A**s we approach the study of dog training theory, we must understand that for generation after generation for the last 2000 years the common dog has been a loyal companion, guardian and servant to his master.

**D**ogs are social animals, which means they survive and live in packs or groups. These groups have a structured pecking order in which each position has certain duties and privileges. The struggle for dominance begins with the puppies as they learn to dominate and fight. As they grow through adolescence the rivalry gets more serious and a pecking order is established and honored by all members. However, the pack harmony changes when the performance of any member in the pack changes significantly, especially the pack leader. As the leader loses his strength or superior instincts, he also loses his respect, credibility and dominance.

*In dog training it is essential the trainer earn his dog's acceptance, respect, trust and loyalty so he may be recognized as the leader.*

**M**ost dogs will strive for dominance at one time or another, but are just as happy to be followers rather than leaders. If challenged, the handler must show the dog their place by responding intelligently and understandably with a firm, yet loving hand.

**O**ne of the most valuable assets is the dog's innate desire to please their masters. As a dog trainer, you must realize that the subordinate has rights too and to jeopardize this by being abusive or administering punishment out of sequence will only lead to mutiny by the dog, and rightfully so. Persons who are unreasonable, inconsiderate, impatient, ill tempered or violent should not train a dog.

## Canine Communication

**W**e know a dog cannot understand words or sentences as we understand them. They have no comprehension of the human language; they are conditioned to respond to sounds in a specific way. It really doesn't matter which word the trainer uses for a command just as long as the chosen word is short and unique in its sound.

**W**hich brings us to how the word is said or the sound of the command. If you teach the dog to respond to a long tone si- i- i- it, and then you tell him sit in a short tone, your dog will get confused and probably experiment with different behaviors until he finds one that works. They might guess right the first time, but would still be guessing, not responding with confidence. So once you figure out how you're going to say the commands, you need to say them the same way consistently.

*Now that we know how we will say our signals, the next step is to condition the dog to respond to the signals in the appropriate way.*

**W**e do this initially by saying the signal at the same time we gently manipulate through physical guidance. When the dog learns to associate the command with the behavior, the guidance is eliminated and the dog responds to the command when given. In other words, the command has become a substitute for the physical manipulation or, scientifically speaking, the primary cue (physical force) has been replaced by a secondary cue (spoken command).

**D**ogs have great observational skills. In the wild, dogs primarily communicate through body gestures and cues, so it is much more natural for a dog to respond to a visual cue rather than a sound cue. If dogs were given the choice, they would rather respond to the visual cue over the sound cue.

**W**hile it is rather impressive to demonstrate how your dog responds to silent commands, they have only limited use when the dog is not paying attention to your signal or cannot see the signal due to light conditions or other obstacles. In my opinion, a soft-spoken command is better than a hand gesture.

## Two main factors, heredity and environment, shape all of our dog's behaviors.

**T**he importance of heredity is often ignored due to the fact that most people get involved in dog training after they acquire their dog; even the best environment can never compensate for a lack of natural abilities. Therefore, if one wants the best prospect for a top dog, the heredity should be seriously considered. Since we cannot change our student's genetic makeup we focus our attention to the aspect we do have control over—the environment.

**W**hen we use our control over the environment, it is very important that we maintain a constant environment. That way it makes it much easier for your dog to recognize when the environment changes; like one handler during the learning phase of training. Keeping the dog on a regular schedule for food and exercise is very important in maintaining a constant environment. Also, it is very important to keep your dog away from any situation that may interfere with your dog's interpretation of cues like access to mean kids or other interference while you're away at work. Portable kennel dog runs are an excellent way to control the constancy during training and can provide a secondary barrier away from high traffic fence lines. Tarps around the sides provide a wind barrier and visual barrier from the elements.

**T**he second aspect of controlling the environment is consistency. In order to obtain a patterned response, it is very important to maintain consistent cues. It is important that the handler respond in a predictable way as not to confuse the dog. When we teach our dogs, the environment must be free of as many distractions as possible. That way when we give our cue (signal) and manipulate our dog through gentle force (stimulus), our dog has two choices in response. He can assimilate or try to change the environment by trying

to get the handler to stop by playing, growling, snapping, or biting. Or they can accommodate by adjusting to the proper position.

Understanding these two choices for the student, a skillful trainer will make the choice of assimilation even more unpleasant. He will encourage accommodation by immediately rewarding the student for the desired behavior. The smart trainer will stage the situation where he is in absolute control over all outcomes; either by long line, fenced-in yard, throw chain, electronic collar, an assistant, or any other means to assist in being able to be in control of all outcomes.

**Behaviors are result-driven; that means if a positive result occurs after a behavior, that behavior is likely to occur again. If something bad or negative happens after a behavior, the chance of it occurring again will be less.**

*The students are motivated to do something or refrain from doing something.*

Motivation is the single most important factor in dog training in that what motivates a dog is a large factor in the dog's emotional state. There are two main reasons for motivation: either the desire to receive a reward or the desire to avoid the punishment. Just as we would work harder to receive a larger paycheck, we would also leave a movie theatre very quickly in the event of a fire. We are very motivated in each case to achieve a goal; our dogs are capable of similar reasoning.

If we are to use the reward as the motivator, we need to be sure that the reward we are offering is what the dog finds valuable. The stronger the dog desires the reward, the more effective it becomes in training. Basically, there are a few ways to increase the desire of something and that is to first select the reward that the dog finds most attractive; chasing or pulling on his favorite ball or toy, or a tasty liver treat as opposed to his regular food. Then, temporarily deprive the dog of the need to which the reward applies either by withholding food for a period of time or by temporarily confining the dog in an isolated spot. Then save the reward for those times when your dog has really earned it. In other words, if our dog receives treats or toys all the time, why do they need to work for them? Remember, our dog will not normally volunteer to listen to us since most of the time what we want the dog to do is in conflict with what they want to do.

The rewards that are most often used are praise, play, and food. Praise would include soft, high tones or words, a smile, a relaxed body gesture, a pat, a rub, a scratch on the head or chest, or a hug. Play would include a dance of joy, running and chasing a stick or Frisbee, romping, swimming or playing. It is important that all of these be done with their master. Food has different levels of effectiveness, in that a piece of broiled liver is tastier than a stale dry kibble.

The use of rewards in dog training plays an important role in teaching the dog what we want them to do. We call this shaping a behavior; in that, in the beginning we reward

even the smallest attempt by the dog to work toward our goal. As the dog accomplishes each step, he is rewarded. We then build off each small task progressively to accomplish the entire behavior, rewarding each and every step along the way. This is called constant reinforcement since we reward all the efforts by the dog. We say the dog has learned the behavior when we ask for the behavior and it can be accomplished 80% of the time.

Once we reach this point, we move to the second phase of our training in which we change from constant reinforcement to intermittent reinforcement, in which we may reward three times in a row, then we would reward after five times, then every other time. In another words, the rewards would come in an unpredictable manner.

When we withhold rewards, the dog may think that his performance was not good enough to earn the reward. He should strive to do better on the next attempt. It is very important to keep in mind that each dog and handler team is different and that the dog needs constant feedback from the handler about each performance. Even though we might withhold the big reward, we must give them at least a tone as to whether the performance was good or not.


## Punishment In Dog Training

*The term punishment in dog training is different than when humans think of punishment.*

In dog training, we think of corrections as a punishment. An unpleasant situation happens as a result of an undesirable deed. This unpleasant experience should cause the dog to avoid that behavior. Punishment covers a large range including withholding a reward, ignoring the dog, threatening gestures, startling loud noises, reprimanding, harsh scolding, shaking, slapping, hitting, a quick choke collar correction, a quick pinch collar correction, an electric shock from a remote shock trainer, restraining the dog's movements, isolating the dog, or confining the dog. The correction must always be tailored to the temperament of the dog and the situation. A soft dog will respond to a harsh word, while a tough dog would need a physical correction.

A correction is a sequence of events that must be in proper order and must follow one another very rapidly. It starts with a verbal warning that allows the dog to avoid the correction by performing the learned response or desired behavior. Then comes the unpleasant stimulus or correction. The correction must be forceful enough to make a lasting impression on the dog, but not enough to cause any physical or psychological damage to the dog. The correction must be related to the objective of the exercise, then a physical manipulation into the desired response. We then assist the dog into the behavior rather than allow the dog to guess what response we want and help them into it. Steps two and three are often tied together through the use of the leash correction. While the dog is manipulated into the position, he gets the reward that helps the dog realize where his advantage lies.

**T**he amount of force in step two is different for every dog and each situation. The way we find this level is that we start at the least amount, then gradually increase until a level that the dog responds has been reached; the least amount of force necessary to get the job done. The job is to get the dog's attention. The use of this praise/correction balance is very important in dog training. Always remember that the rewards must be attractive and must always be earned. A warning must precede corrections and the correction must be enough to get the dog's attention. Your corrections must always be followed by praise and, most importantly, your timing for both praise or correction must be precise in order for the dog to understand the lesson.

## Memory is the ability to relate to new situations from a past experience.

**N**ow that we have our dogs learning during our sessions, the next step would be to understand memory theory. Memory deals with how the information is stored in the brain. Memory is the ability to relate to new situations and from a past experience. The process in memory consists of first encoding the information from an experience, which consists of analyzing, processing, then digesting the new information. Then the student stores the information in the brain and, depending on the level of importance, will be placed in an area of the brain ready for recall. Recall is the third phase in the memory process. The ability to retrieve the information will be primarily based on how the information was learned. The reaction of the student will be based on past experience, whatever information is found and compared to the present situation, then the decision of how to respond is influenced by the past.

**A**fter analyzing and processing the information, depending on the level of impression of the last experience, the information will be stored in different levels of memory. Science has termed the levels of memory in the following ways. First is the very short-term memory or VSTM. The VSTM acts like a receptionist for the brain. It takes all the information from the outside world and decides on its level of importance. This is why it is important to reduce the level of distractions during training, because the outside distractions all affect what is learned.

**T**he second level is the short-term memory or STM. This is the level where it takes information from the receptionist and decides where and how the experience will be stored for later retrieval. The knowledge learned is processed then put in proper perspective.

**T**he third level is the intermediate term memory or ITM. This is the location in the brain where, in the opinion of the student, there's a moderate amount of importance. This memory usually is stored for about a week or so. This area in the brain is similar to a shelf we use to place our bills. Once we deal with them, others are sent to replace the old ones. New information replaces the old after a certain amount of time.

**T**he last level is long term memory or LTM. After an intensive learning process at the lower levels of memory, finally it is placed in the long-term memory. This is the area in

the brain that also shapes the personality of the dog. The dog's behaviors are shaped by the attitudes from past-learned experiences. When we deal with behavior modification, we work with the LTM: how the dog stored information and how we change the way the information is processed depends on the dogs reactions to new information. The process of storing learned material from the lower levels to the long-term memory is called consolidation or learning.

Scientists, through the use of laboratory animals, have found that when a pleasant experience follows a learning session, that lesson is easily recalled at a later time. On the other hand, when a session was followed by a shocking experience, that information was not available for retrieval. This is why we suggest that after a session we play with our dogs to allow the experience to end in pleasure. Also, we never end work through a session when we are angry or frustrated because the dog will sense the unpleasant experience and wish to avoid it and everything associated with it in the future. Always end a session with reward and play for the best-learned experience for the student.


## Practice Increases Performance

*The more frequent the practice lessons, the more reliable the performance.*

For the dog to associate the specific commands with the desired behavior, it is important to practice often. The more frequent the practice lessons, the more reliable the performance; just as when we learned to drive a car we were very cautious and careful about making turns or more complex driving skills like parallel parking, which were very difficult. When we practice over and over, we learn to maneuver the vehicle with greater ease until driving moves into the subconscious. Then driving becomes second nature.

It is the same with a dog when they practice on a regular basis in an ever increasingly complex set of commands. They become second nature and automatic. Like any skill, it is important that it be practiced on a regular basis. Dogs are like people in that forgetting becomes worse as time moves on. Finally, the arousal of the dog is directly related to the memory. When the dog is relaxed around the house, they are much easier to control than when we open the front door and their level of arousal increases in the anticipation of satisfying their curiosity. Also, a dog who is moderately excited anticipating a reward is a better learner than a dog who is dull, distracted and inattentive. Then to make it even more interesting, their level of arousal is directly related to what is processed in their brain. A dog in a low level of arousal would process relevant as well as irrelevant cues; a dog in a high level would not process all cues. Depending on the exercise, we would require a different level of arousal for each.

So we strive for the optimal level for each exercise. We practice the exercises on a regular basis and keep our sessions short and fun. This formula will keep the lessons fresh in your dog's mind.

## Success In Training

*Success in training our dogs is much like that to raising our children… Byhaving the opportunity to make the mistakes, they can learn and perform the correct behavior on a reliable basis.*

Success in training our dogs is much like that to raising our children. It is important that the student have a certain amount of curiosity to forge ahead and explore the unknown. We find that dogs that learn this way have a greater ability to recall that learned information. This is called latent learning or hidden learning where they discover the behaviors that bring them the greatest reward and avoid those that don't.

Which brings us to the personal experience of the student. When the dog receives reward on a consistent basis for behaviors, those behaviors are more likely to be repeated, which leads to more success.

One important point about all this success in training: it is critical that the student be allowed to make mistakes in training. That way they can learn that certain actions bring reward and other actions bring less than desirable results. By having the opportunity to make the mistakes they can learn and perform the correct behavior on a reliable basis.

## Three Approaches to Dog Training

*There are three different approaches to modern dog training. These theories are as follows:*
 *1. Obedience Theory (compulsive training)*
 *2. Reinforcement Theory (inductive training)*
 *3. Cognitive Theory (elements of both theories)*

Obedience theory involves a moral judgment in that the dog is good or bad, cooperative or uncooperative. Training follows a pattern of increasing the amount of force in stages if the preceding one fails. This method can escalate the amount of conflict with you and your dog and, in general, be ineffective.

Reinforcement theory forms its basis on the idea that behaviors that are reinforced positively will be repeated. The behaviors we don't want, we simply ignore and they will extinguish themselves. We would simply take the spectator role and wait for the desired response, then reward it. In time we would associate a signal while they are performing the behavior then receiving the reward. The goal is to set up a situation where latent learning can take place.

The problem with this theory is that some behaviors are self-rewarding. The barking dog who loves to hear his voice will continue to bark no matter how much we ignore them. Or

the digging dog that finds satisfaction laying in and playing in loose dirt will continue because the behaviors lead to rewards in the dog's mind.

Cognitive theory is similar to reinforcement theory in that we do reinforce all desired behaviors that work toward our goal. It acknowledges that the dog is a thinking animal and will make a decision based on past experiences. We allow the dog to make those decisions and learn the results of those behaviors. Some behaviors bring reward and some behaviors bring corrections.

When we embark on a training program, our first job is to remove as much of the outside stimulus as possible. We show the dog what we want through play and fun games, then once they know what is expected of them, we correct undesired behaviors and praise their efforts. No correction will ever be effective unless the dog is taught how to respond after the correction. With all the distractions removed, the dog has a limited amount of choices to make in regards to the exercise. Now we can use a reward as a motivator for the dog to make the right decision. At this time the reward is used like bait, luring the dog into compliance.

Cognitive theory goal is to create a dog that is in anticipation of the reward. Now when the dog reaches the decision point, we hope they will realize the two possible choices: desired responses will bring reward, praise, play, food or fun and undesired responses will bring undesired responses from the handler either ignoring the dog, no attention, no fun, maybe even a little unpleasantness. The dog, having remembered that they were always rewarded for compliance in the past, will probably choose to comply.

Cognitive theory goes one step further in that once the dog accepts reward as a motivator, then the dog has no choice but to work for their basic needs and activities. In another words, for the dog to have access to play, they must first work by complying to some exercises, or to receive food, they must also work during a training session. Even for the dog to have access to go to sleep, they must also perform some obedience exercises. In this way, we integrate the idea in the dog's behavior that work is a part of daily life and hopefully they learn to enjoy working for you.


## Let's Begin…

Our dogs, like our children, must be taught to live and respond in a structured society with rules, rewards and consequences. Our goal in raising our children and dogs is to instill an attitude of a happy, enthusiast learner, ready to respond to any situation with a happy attitude.

Our goal with our dogs is off-leash obedience without the use of food as reward. We use the least amount of force necessary to get the job done, using a praise/correction balance. The job is to get the dog's attention so that they can be redirected. Learning only takes place in a positive environment through fun and play. There is no learning through only discipline. Yes, there must be a structured discipline program in place for the proper

understanding and respect for authority, but by no means is the discipline to be excessive. Discipline must be administered in varying degrees in accordance with the crime and the frequency of the crime.

The only way for your dog or anyone to properly learn is to have the inappropriate behavior interrupted while it is happening, and then have the dog or individual redirected to an acceptable behavior or activity. Only then can this be called a correction. In another words, if you want to teach the dog, interrupt their behavior, then immediately redirect it to the right behavior and then reward enthusiastically.

Our foundation in our learning program is to have our dog respond in a certain way when they hear our voice commands. After all, off-leash means no physical control over the dog with a leash or our hands. The dog must want to be with us and not be afraid of us; this is what we call respect.

We use three commands in our foundation:
1. "Good" (delivered in a soft tone) which means, yes, that is what I want.
2. "No" (delivered in a sharp, abrupt tone) which means stop that behavior and pay attention to my next move or command.
3. "Ah, Ah" (delivered in a sharp, abrupt tone) which means if you continue, a "No" will result. In another words, a warning tone, which gives the attentive dog the opportunity to comply without punishment.

For the dog to respond properly to these commands, it takes some programming to be effective. The dog must, on the subconscious level, respond appropriately to the commands.

Most of us are familiar with Pavlov's Law. Pavlov was a scientist in the 19th century whose great discovery was that of condition response learning. What he did was take a group of dogs, one at a time, and attach test tubes to their cheeks to measure the response of their salivating. He set up a situation where he would ring a bell (as the signal), then present a plate of food to the hungry dog (as the motivation), and the dog would salivate (as the behavior). The response was measured, then the dog would receive the food (as the reward). After a series of repetitions of this exercise, he found that the dog would respond with the same intensity of salivation even when the food was not presented. Which led to the conclusion that behaviors could in fact be triggered with a signal without the motivation or the dog thinking about performing the response or not. It became an automatic response when hearing the signal.

This is the response we want when we say "Good" during the training of our dogs. We want to use our words rather than a bell, but you can use a bell or whistle to trigger the positive signal. Dolphin trainers use a whistle to trigger their reward so that the dolphin can hear the signal even underwater. It is inconvenient to carry a whistle or a pocketful of food, so we use our words to communicate our reward. Food is a primary reinforcer. There are only four primary reinforcers available for all organisms. They are food, water, air, and sex. A primary reinforcer is something that, when applied to an organism, lets the

organism know that this is a positive event. A secondary reinforcer is something (a signal) that triggers a primary reinforcer. Our goal in laying our positive signal is to trigger the most intense response from our signal. Pavlov used hunger to increase the intensity of the dog's responses. We can do the same or offer a more palatable treat. Your dog may get stimulated from a dry cookie, but will get extremely excited when offered a piece of fresh, cooked liver. Your signal will trigger the response you program into your dog. I recommend you make the response very intense for the most attention.

So the formula for programming or training is: apply the signal for the behavior with motivation, wait for the behavior, when you see the behavior you want, trigger your reward signal ("Good") then apply your reinforcer; either primary (food) or secondary (petting, toys, freedom or play). The two ways to train are: to influence the behavior to happen through manipulation or motivation and then reward; or wait for the behavior to happen on its own, give the trigger, then reward immediately after the event.

During our training sessions, and other times, we need to interrupt our dog's behavior when they start to engage in an activity we find unacceptable. We don't want to hurt or instill pain in our sessions because this alters the dog's mood from a happy worker to a sad performer. Modern scientists did a take off of Pavlov's Law by taking a group of volunteers and putting them in a chair and attaching them to biofeedback meters to measure their body responses. They then told the students that whenever they saw a light signal and heard a tone, they would get an electrical shock. When they received that shock, the students would tense up their bodies to receive the shock. Again, after a few repetitions of these exercises the electrical shock was not applied, but the student would still tense up their body as if they received the shock.

This is similar to our response when an object is moving toward our eyes and we flinch to avoid it. We do this automatically; we are not thinking about doing the response. It is this flinching response we want when our dogs hear our command "No"; that momentary tensing of their bodies so we can redirect the activity.

We are all familiar with the dog who has selective hearing when they are excited about something. Again, we are talking about a mood in our dog. If our foundation training is to be effective, we must train in the most intense mood we can. To program our signal, and for it to be effective, we must duplicate that intense state and then program our signal. In our formal training program, we never want to use a high intensity punishment to ruin the dog's mood, so we train where applying a high degree of force will have the greatest impact in the dog's mind. This will solve another problem we all have--the dog that runs into the street without us, which can lead to a more severe punishment than we can instill. We program "No" by playing with our dog on the sidewalk with their favorite toy, tossing it to and fro, playing tug of war, running and having a merry time. Then with yourself positioned so that your dog is between you and the street, throw their toy into the street and wait until your dog steps off the curb. Immediately and abruptly say "No" and tug on the leash as hard as you can (as if you were really tugging your dog away from a fast moving approaching car). Place the dog on the sidewalk saying "Good" and bend over and show the dog, by pointing to the street, saying "No" sharply. Then point to the

sidewalk saying "Good", then point to the street saying "No" sharply, then point to the sidewalk saying "Good". Then begin playing with your dog on the sidewalk again and repeat the exercise.

If you follow this format, your dog will refrain from running into the street after a fast moving object or toy no matter how much they want to. They also develop a new respect for the command "No". Now you should never have to tug on your dog in that manner again. When we start our formal training, whenever we tug on the leash, we say "No" at the same time. This reminds the dog of the street punishment.


## ATTENTION

In any learning environment it is important that certain understandings be clear before any communication can take place. Of course, the most important ingredient is to have attention. When we think of attention, we think of maintaining eye contact. Once we have eye contact we can, through body gestures, vocal noise, and body contact, begin to communicate with our dog.

For instance, have you ever been to a concert with loud amplified music where the noise is so loud you can feel it? If I wanted to communicate with you, typically I would tap you on the shoulder a few times until I got your attention. Once we have eye contact, we can begin to block out the background noise, and with the assistance of body gestures, pointing toward the door saying in an animated way, "Let's get out of here!"

To our dog, the outside world is like a concert. Who can deny that when we're on a walk with our pets that they are so distracted with noise in their heads that they can't hear us?

Our first goal is to teach our dog to maintain eye contact. Eye contact in terms of animal communication tends to mean something of a threat. When two dogs come face to face it won't be long if one of them doesn't turn away before a fight breaks out. Before an attack, the predator maintains a very fixed gaze at its prey, watching its every move; it's waiting for the moment of weakness and prepares for a strike. When a submissive dog shows respect, they tend to break eye contact. When we correct our dog, they tend to show their respect for us looking away.

If we can't correct for breaking eye contact because the more we correct the more the dog looks away, how can we teach this exercise? Until we lay the foundation for learning we can't even teach eye contact.

Then what is foundational training anyway? Foundational training refers to a basic understanding of a positive situation and a negative situation. These are the two basic elements for learning. They are either "yes, this is a good situation," or "NO!, this is not a good situation!"

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