

# HOW DO DOGS AND PUPPIES LEARN?



**THE GOAL:** To understand how, and when, your dog learns and how to use that to your advantage.

**TIP:** Repetition and lots of patience is key!

Your dog will repeatedly do an action or behaviour **more and more** if it is:

- a) a behaviour which is inherently pleasurable; eating, playing, chasing etc.
- b) if doing a certain behaviour or action gets something pleasurable for your dog; food, toys, attention or interaction etc.

If a behaviour or action is **not** pleasurable, does not get your dog anything pleasurable or results in something unpleasant, your dog will do it **less and less**.

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# INTERACTION = FEEDBACK

**Whenever you and your dog interact, you are giving them feedback; they are learning what to do to get what they want.**

For example, if a dog jumps up on you and you push it off, guess what, you just rewarded that behaviour. Your dog gained something they wanted; touch, attention and interaction.

If your dog's play goes over the top or accidentally hurts you ("play" biting, scratching, and boisterous behaviour) and the game does not immediately stop. Your dog learns that the behaviour they displayed is both fun and part of the game, or not really an issue.

Once your dog has learnt that some of these less desirable behaviours gain them something good, it is much harder to "unlearn". It is important to consistently manipulate the consequences to nurture desirable behaviours.

## HOW TO USE INTERACTION TO CRAFT BEHAVIOURS:

**Consistently reward desirable behaviours and ignore or interrupt undesirable behaviours. Simple!**

Over time you will see your dog learn what works and start changing their behaviour to adapt to its new situation. **Patience, consistency and repetition** are the keys to success.



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# BUT MY DOG JUMPS ALL OF THE TIME!?

**Come on... all of the time? No dog *literally* jumps all of the time.**

Even a very energetic dog will have moments where they're not jumping, the key is to notice these moments and capture them by rewarding them with attention or food!

**TIP:** Your dog needs to know when they're doing it right; they need your help to know when that is!

Sometimes your dog won't immediately know what to do in certain situations; you can help guide your dog to make better decisions by giving them something to do. Then reward and reinforce this behaviour.

At the risk of repeating it... repetition and patience is key. There's never a magic fix.

## DO NOT USE PUNISHMENT!

Reward desirable behaviour, ignore undesirable behaviour or remove the reward. E.g. Ending the game or removing the toy/bed which is being destroyed.

Dogs make associations with you and with the situation every time you interact with them. An unfortunate side effect of using punishment is that, whilst they may learn, they may also develop negative associations with you, the environment, the situation, or just training in general.

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# HOW YOUR DOG WANTS TO LEARN

## If this is wrong, what is right?

In the case of a dog jumping, perhaps teach your dog to sit and greet. Or a dog begging at the table, teach them that when you are eating, it's their time to go to their bed/space and chew.

A dog wants to know what the correct thing is to do in order to get their reward.

Please keep in mind, as frustrating as it may be at times, using physical punishment will damage your relationship and can lead to them becoming defensive or fearful. And besides, do you want to teach your dog to get physical with you in return?

Dogs are not trying to be *bad*, or *naughty*, or *cheeky*. They are just being dogs and have not learnt the desirable response to certain situations.

It is up to you as the human, with the full understanding and control of the situation, environment and resources, to teach your dog the rules and expectations to have a happy home.



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