



We continually update our skills and knowledge so that we stay current with the best practices that can help you and your dog.

cheerfuldogs chronicles

cheerful dogs, happy people

Issue 19

Living with Dogs: If You Like It, Reward It

A simple fact of biology is that all organisms do more of what rewards them. If you received twenty dollars every time you smiled, you'd walk around grinning. If wearing a certain coat predictably unleashed a flurry of compliments on you, chances are that coat would spend very little time in your closet.

Dogs are no different. Any behaviour they think works to get them something they want becomes more frequent. Say your dog drops a tennis ball in front of you and barks, and you pick up the ball and throw it. You just trained your dog to bark to have his favourite game perpetuated. As a strategy, barking paid off and sure enough your dog will bark

more. By contrast, ignoring the ball and walking away teaches the dog that barking doesn't work. When he next drops the ball by your feet without barking, pick it up and throw it to reinforce the delightful quiet.



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Dog quotes

“Dogs’ lives are too short. Their only fault, really.”

—Agnes Sligh Turnbull

cont.

.... If you like it, reward it

This simple exercise contains the essence of dog training: Ignore what you don't like and be quick to reward what you do like. The principle applies to all situations and it pays to become aware of the many ways we accidentally reinforce behaviours we don't like. We often reward a dog for jumping up to greet us, either by petting and sweet-talking the dog, or by pushing him away and saying 'no,' which is more than enough attention to be reinforcing. Turning away or leaving is much more effective.

To get a well-behaved dog quickly, always be on the lookout for ways to reinforce behaviours you like. Four paws on the floor when greeting, for example, should always earn a 'good dog' or a pet or a treat.



Healthy Dog: Dog First Aid & CPR

Prompt and informed first aid saves lives—for dogs as well as humans. Losing a dog to an asthma attack or a common type of poisoning is all the more tragic in cases where CPR skills or knowledge of first aid could have kept the dog alive until his owners reached a veterinarian. And not just those who hike trails with their dogs need to consider such scary scenarios. Dogs can choke on bits of kibble on the kitchen floor. Thankfully, courses for pet guardians are readily available. Learn to perform pet CPR and first aid, including tending to wounds and recognizing emergencies. Most good classes cover choking management, insect bite, stings, heat injuries, vitals assessment, and seizures.

To take a pet first aid class in person, check out SkillsFuture short courses offered by our polytechnics, or do a web search for appropriate online courses.

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