

TIPS FOR TRAINING

Coming when called

Dogs have choices:

We all have choices, including our dogs. Fido's choice to ignore you when calling him can be most upsetting, especially when it happens at the most inopportune times. You're in a hurry and need Fido to come right away, it's freezing outside, and he's decided to park himself on a snowbank, he just ran out the front door for the hundredth time to explore the neighborhood. Dogs are thinking feeling animals who have choices, choices that are not always desirable. Dog training is about changing behavior, behavior for which you desire. When you use positive reinforcement to do so you tip the odds in your favor that Fido will make good choices.

Dogs perspective:

Looking at it from your dog's perspective, what was gained or lost for coming when you called? Did Fido he get his favorite toy, or did he lose his freedom? Did he get a piece of chicken or did his play end abruptly with his best friend? Did coming to you mean a few rounds of fetch, or did the consequence of coming to you result in confinement to the crate? In each of these circumstances the results of coming to you when called either produced reinforcement or punishment. You must ask yourself what consequence is your dog most likely to respond to?

The Solution:

To create desired behavior from your dog you must make it worth his while, you must motivate. Dog's won't work for free and coming when called is no exception. Unfortunately, being the most charming person in the world doesn't guarantee Fido will come when called. Either will the forceful "because I said so" approach. However, if you begin to change the consequence, giving Fido an option, he can't refuse, in other words start paying for it with something you know he desires, and you've just given him a reason to come when called. Options for rewards could include high value treats, special toy for a quick game of tug or fetch, car rides to the park, ear or butt scratches. You may think your dog loves what you are offering but it's up to your dog to choose what's reinforcing or not. Think of it as paying for behavior you like. When you pay for it you increase the likelihood that it will be repeated. Repeated often and consistently makes it worthwhile for Fido to come when called.



608-658-9950

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