

WALK THIS WAY!
Club Canine SOLUTIONS WORKSHOP

Client Knowledge Handout



*If you have a problem with leash 'reactivity', please make an appointment with Lisa

Behavior & Consequence

We need to give our dogs feedback, guidance and encouragement when we are training them and in all our daily interactions with them.

Please, teach your dog what to do, rather than teaching him or her what not to do!

- We are going to 'reward' the behaviors we want to see more of so that these behaviors are reinforced and will therefore increase in frequency, intensity and duration.
- We are not going to reinforce behaviors we don't want, so, for example, we are not going to move forwards if our dog is pulling.

Please note: Punishment should never be frightening or painful.

When your dog is 'wrong', simply manage your dog and the environment to reduce/eliminate the behaviors you want to see less off:

Remove rewards, remove something from the environment that your dog wants or remove your dog from the environment.

Training in Sets of 5 - The 'Push, Drop, Stick' Rule.

Think of playing a type of Poker!

The 'rules' of the game:

- 4 or 5 correct responses out of 5 - We can 'push': Increase the difficulty!
- 3 out of 5 – We need to 'stick': Repeat another set of 5 at the current level
- Less than 3 out of 5 – We need to 'drop': Make it easier!

Empower Your Dog

- Allow your dog to make choices and avoid situations he/she is not happy about.
- Whenever safely possible, allow your dog access to those things he wants. Let him choose his own reinforcer. Simply ask for a 'nice behavior' such as, a sit, the 'close' or 'front' position and reinforce by saying 'go sniff!' etc.
- Follow the Leader! Why not occasionally go for a walk and let your dog take the lead, going wherever he wants to? You never know where you might end up and what adventures you might enjoy!

Self-Reinforcing Behaviors

Some behaviors are self-reinforcing, this means they give the dog intrinsic reward.

Pulling on the leash to get to greet someone / arrive at the park quicker / get home quicker / reach the smelly piece of grass... The behavior is being repeated because it is being reinforced!

When behaviors are trained well and become habitual they can become self-reinforcing. Make sure walking on a loose leash is habitual and not pulling!

Use a high rate of reinforcement and beat the environment or use the 'competition' the reinforcer – walking nicely results in access to what your dog wants!

Alternative Reinforcers

In the Club Canine Solutions 'Walk This Way' Workshop we used a high rate of reinforcement with yummy, high-value treats.

Please use the same protocol for your first sessions at home following the workshop and then for all new environments and whenever you have a competing environmental factor – whether that be a person, dog or even a nice patch of grass!

Once the behavior is 'known', you can introduce a variety of reinforcers. For example, different sorts of food, tug toys, balls, squeaky toys, praise and life-rewards such as, access to play, access to a nice smelly patch of grass, access to a friend!

Distractions – The Environment Throws a Curve Ball!

Does your dog struggle passing by another dog? Does your dog sometimes pull, bark or lunge to either get closer to something or avoid it?

Example Situations:

- You notice an off-leash dog.
- A person and/or dog is quickly approaching your 'nervous' dog.
- There is something on the ground you wish to avoid.

Solutions:

- Add distance!

Use your 'let's go' cue and remove your dog from these potentially hazardous situations thus avoiding problems, without using force or fearful voice reactions that can contribute to future leash reactivity.

- Can't get away? Pay, Pay, Pay! Use the Rapid-Fire Protocol!

Begin to mark and reinforce as soon as you see the 'distraction' (preferably before your dog has time to negatively react).

As the 'distraction' gets nearer, increase the speed of the reinforcement.

When the 'distraction' is very close, 'rapid-fire' treat, treat, treat or click-treat, click-treat, click-treat when using a clicker. As you or the 'distraction' move away, slow down the speed of reinforcement. When the 'distraction' is out of sight, praise your dog for a job well done!

*Please note: This protocol is not contingent on your dog's behavior – he does not have to sit, lie down, watch you etc. Rapid-fire delivery of 'treats' should be continued even if the dog lunges or barks! We are creating a **positive conditioned emotional response** to the 'distraction' (whatever is causing the negative response). **This is not the time to be insisting on certain behaviors.**

Static distractions are usually easier to cope with than moving distractions.

*Tip – If your dog is finding it hard to cope with a moving distraction and you cannot increase distance by moving away, do not walk forwards, employ the rapid-fire protocol while maintaining a stationary position.

My Dog is Pulling

What should you do if your dog pulls you or lunges forwards?

- Don't move forwards, stand firm. Remember that every time you move forwards when your dog is pulling, you are reinforcing his actions meaning he is more likely to pull in future
- 'Stroke' the leash – a hand over hand stroking of the leash causes a vibration to run down the leash. This is often enough to get the dog's attention
- Use your alert sound
- Cue 'front' or 'close'
- Cue 'this way' or 'let's go' and change direction
- If necessary slowly and gently 'reel' dog in using a hand over hand motion

Remember: If your dog is pulling because he wants to reach a nice patch of grass or anything else that it would be fine for him to access, you can use what he wants as a reinforcer. First ask for a behavior that you want and then 'reward' his nice response with the behavior that he wants.

In an emergency – Transport:

If you need to quickly move your dog away from something because it would be dangerous not to do so, shorten the leash and use your 'let's go' and 'quick, quick' cues.