



CANINE PUNISHMENT AND REINFORCEMENT

Canine Punishment

All punishment decreases responding, if the behaviour goes down, it's punishment. Punishment can be verbal, postural, or physical, and it means giving your pet something unpleasant immediately after she does something to decrease the behaviour. Punishment makes it less likely that the behaviour will occur again and should **NOT** be a method used to train a pet! To be effective, punishment must be delivered while your pet is engaged in the undesirable behaviour—in other words, "caught in the act." If the punishment is delivered too late, even seconds later, your pet will not associate the punishment with the undesired behaviour.

Causing injury to an animal through discipline is an offence under the Animal Protection Act and the Criminal Code of Canada and is punishable by a maximum fine of \$20,000 dollars or 6 months of jail time.

Never use physical punishment that involves any discomfort or pain! Not only is this inhumane, but it may cause your pet to become fearful and or aggressive causing them to bite to defend themselves. Holding the neck skin and shaking your dog, or performing "alpha rolls" (forcing your dog onto her back and pinning her on the floor), will likely result in bites. Also, punishment is associated with other stimuli, including people, which are present at the time the punishment occurs. For example, a pet that is punished for getting too close to a small child may become fearful of, or aggressive to, that child—or to other children. That's why physical punishment is not only bad for your pet; it's also bad for you and others. Punishment delivered by you may erode your dog's trust. If you're too late in administering it, punishment will seem totally unpredictable to your dog. She's likely to become fearful, distrustful, and/or aggressive, which will only lead to more behaviour problems. What we humans often interpret as "guilty" looks are actually submissive postures by our pets. Animals don't have a moral sense of right and wrong, but they are adept at associating your presence, and the presence of a mess, with punishment.

YOUR DOG	YOU
Shreds a book when you are away	Clean up the mess and make your house dog proof or use a safe dog-proof area or kennel to leave your dog
Chewing on a shoe in front of you	Interrupt the behaviour and redirect your dog to an appropriate activity or chew toy
Jumps on you when you enter house	Ignore the behaviour, ask for a sit in place of jumping



Positive Reinforcement – What is it?

The two critical components of positive reinforcement are the adding or giving of something and the increasing or maintaining of the behavior. Food works on all dogs, the dogs that aren't reinforced by food are dying of starvation. Other reinforcers have more individual variation. For example, some dogs find it reinforcing to play with other dogs or toys, and some don't. Positive reinforcement means giving your pet something pleasant or rewarding immediately after she does something you want her to do. Because your praise or reward makes her more likely to repeat that behaviour in the future, it is one of your most powerful tools for shaping or changing your dog's behaviour.

Correct timing is essential when using positive reinforcement. **The reward must occur immediately—within *seconds*—or your pet may not associate it with the proper action.** For example, if you have your dog "sit" but reward her after she's already stood up, she'll think she's being rewarded for standing up. Consistency is also essential. Everyone in the family should use the same cues. Consistency means always rewarding the desired behaviour and never rewarding undesired behaviour.

Using Positive Reinforcement

For your pet, positive reinforcement may include food treats, praise, petting, or a favorite toy or game. A treat should be high value, enticing, and irresistible to your pet. It should be a small, soft piece of food so that she will immediately gulp it down and look to you for more. Small pieces of soft commercial treats, hot dogs, cheese, or cooked chicken or beef have all proven successful. You can carry the treats in a pocket or a fanny pack. Each time you use a food reward, you should couple it with a verbal reward (praise). Say "Yes," in a positive, happy tone of voice.

When your pet is learning a new behaviour, she should be rewarded every single time she does the behaviour, It may be necessary to use a technique called "shaping" with your pet, which means reinforcing small steps towards a final goal. For example, if you're teaching your dog to "shake hands," you may initially reward her for lifting her paw off the ground, then for lifting it higher, for touching your hand, then for letting you hold her paw, and finally, for actually "shaking hands" with you.

YOUR DOG	YOU
Knows "sit" but sometimes offers a paw with the "sit"	Only reinforce the "sit" where all four paws remain on the ground – end result sits without a paw lift (improving the proficiency of a skill)
Learning how to rollover	Shape the behaviour by reinforcing small steps along the way. Reinforce a "down", then



	<p>a “down” over on a hip, “down” on hip and head over shoulders, then reinforce the full behaviour (when teaching a new skill, different dogs will require a different number of steps to learn a new behaviour).</p>
<p>Offers a “sit” when she comes to you</p>	<p>Reinforce the “sit” with a food reward and praise so that you can maintain and encourage an existing behaviour</p>

If you find you are struggling with using positive reinforcement, you can always call our Help Line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website at

<https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>