

## Training Basics

The duty of every dog owner is to foster physical, emotional and mental growth; protect their dog from danger; and, to establish and enforce rules for safety and social order.

### Effective dog owners:

- 🐾 Develop the ability and have the desire to play, teach and bond with their dog
- 🐾 Develop the skills to provide clear consistent leadership through which the dog learns to be attentive to the owner, demonstrate self control, and practice polite manners in public.
- 🐾 Prioritize time for learning how to communicate with their dog. They attend classes, read web sites, magazines and books, watch videos and television programs, and seek out knowledgeable people to help them with their dog to human relationship.
- 🐾 Seek out social and recreational activities for the dog's physical, mental and emotional health.
- 🐾 Use fun and positive training methods that inspire confidence and creativity and motivate canine cooperation and learning.
- 🐾 Avoid intimidation, compulsion and pain as a means to obtain cooperation.
- 🐾 Establish and enforce appropriate rules of conduct to ensure their dog becomes a good canine citizen, a dog who is welcome in any community.

### Factors that effect canine learning:

- 🐾 Age & growth factors - (physical and emotional changes).
- 🐾 Structure - type effects: agility, strength, stamina, energy, speed, posture, reach, balance.
- 🐾 Visual awareness - motion, shape contrast, color, Eye shape may effect acuity/clarity & depth.
- 🐾 Intelligence - human perspective is relative to design & purpose, genetic.
- 🐾 Prior Experience - first experiences build an emotional foundation and a skill level.
- 🐾 Health & Energy - disease, injury, pain, physical & mental illness, effects from toxins (i.e. parasite control) and vaccinations.
- 🐾 Temperament\_- includes, but not limited to (1) *Biddability* - degree of eagerness to accept & follow human leadership. (2) *Confidence* - degree of sensitivity to frustration & fear & how its displayed (3) *Persistence* & focus. (4) *Playfulness* - social and solitary types, appeasement and social awareness, attraction to people & dogs, (5) *Independence* - degree social needs influence actions.
- 🐾 Genetically Driven Behaviors/Drives - (fixed, reinforced by the brain) i.e. Predatory hunting behaviors - stalk by scent or sight, chase & capture; retrieving; herding; digging; vocalizations i.e. barking; swimming; guarding; etc.

# Training Basics

## Training Terms

### **Behavior**

A behavior is the response a dog gives to a situation or stimulus. It is the way we act or react. It is neither good nor bad, it is a response. Stimulus is THE something in the environment that effects the dog, evokes a response from the dog. A dog sees a squirrel (stimulus) and barks (behavior).

Methods Used to Get Behavior Started:

#### **Capturing**

Capturing can be used to identify a (complete) desired behavior. It is a term used when a trainer Marks & Treats a naturally occurring, desirable behavior to identify the behavior to the dog. Example; most dogs will stand and stretch in a bowing like motion when first rising from a nap. A well timed Mark & Treat can motivate the dog to offer the behavior more often and then a cue can be attached so the dog learns to bow when asked to do so. Essentially, it is watching and waiting for the dog to do something we like and reinforcing the dog so she will do it again.

#### **Luring**

To guide the dog with a food treat. To avoid the dog's dependency or learned reliance on the lure, it must be quickly faded or removed from the training plan once the dog has been shown the behavior a few times. Luring shows the dog how to act and then anticipation causes the dog to repeat the behavior absent the lure. Handler lures a puppy's nose to the floor and the puppy lies down and gets a treat. After a few repetitions the luring is stopped, but the puppy offers the down in anticipation of the treat.

#### **Mimicry**

Mimicry is learning by observing. Many animals learn from watching another animal. Dogs have been known to watch another dog perform a behavior and then attempt the same behavior especially if they are able to recognize that the doing behavior results in reinforcement.

#### **Modeling**

To physically force or guide the dog, using hands and equipment, with the hopes the dog will understand what you want, (i.e. pushing down on the dog's rump and pulling up on the dog's collar to make the dog sit). More respectful and faster methods (like using a conditioned reinforcer) are available today.

#### **Shaping / "Free" Shaping**

Sometimes behaviors are easier to get started if they are broken down into small pieces that can be reinforced. Shaping is the act of reinforcing small approximations to create a desired behavior. As the animal learns the first approximation, a second is reinforced the first approximation is no longer reinforced. An example might be in how to go about teaching the dog to spin in a circle. The dog might first be reinforced for turning its head slightly to one side, then turning the head a bit more to get a reinforcement, then a slight shoulder movement with the head turn and so on until the dog is stepping in a circular motion to earn the reinforcement. There is a wonderful game called 101 things to do with a box; the dog can be reinforced for nose touching the box on the corner, nosing the bottom, for pushing or rolling the box, for standing with one paw in the box - two three and four paws in the box, sitting in the box, retrieving the box and so on. The dog is reinforced for quickly and creatively finding new behaviors to offer. This is a great way for a trainer to hone timing and shaping skills and to produce a dog who quickly gets down to offering behavior when you want to teach something new. See recommended books & videos to learn more. **Approximation:** A simple aspect of or a single small step toward a goal behavior. Each step is considered progress toward forming the ultimate behavior.

#### **Targeting**

A target is a contact point or destination. When a dog has learned that targets are contact points (a body part like a nose or paw, touches the target) then one or more targets can give the dog information on her course, position and destination. Dogs can be taught behaviors like up, on, off, over, under, in, through and around with the use of targets. Default targets are

## Training Basics

targets that the dog automatically go to when they are present in the environment. Default targets are usually removed, faded away, as the dog learns the goal behavior. **FADING THE TARGET:** Targets are temporary criteria. They are used to get a behavior started and then must be removed early in the behavior so the dog can learn to perform the behavior without dependency on the prop.

### Types of Targets:

**Hand** - the index and middle fingers are extended while the other fingers are folded into the palm - forming a boy scout like salute or the letter "H" in sign language. Other hand targets are a closed fist, a fist with the thumb up, or an open bladed hand. This is a close-to-handler target - usually used as a return-to-handler signal.

**Pawn** - this default target is any solid object, used remotely, the dog can recognize and contact, but is usually a placard, or small tile. This target is used to send or work the dog away from the handler.

**Wand** - also called a target stick, this default target is hand held, and acts like an extension of the handler's arm, allowing canine contact or following instruction close to the handler.

**Labeled** - these are not default targets, these are targets that the dog has learned to recognize by a word or signal. This kind of target is a person, place or thing - like ball, car, crate, a person's name

## **Criteria**

Criteria are all the aspects or characteristics that form a particular behavior and may include how far, how fast, how long, how to do it, when to do it, where to do it. According to Karen Pryor, *Temporary Criteria are criteria that are stepping stones to a final behavior that won't, in their current form, be present in the final behavior. Temporary criteria should be trained only to about 80 percent reliability before "making it harder." If a temporary criterion is reinforced for too long, the animal may be reluctant to change its behavior.*

Criteria for reliable behavior will include:

### **Cue**

The cue is a stimulus (word, signal or thing) used to elicit a known behavior from the dog. The complete behavior is usually established first and then a cue is attached to the behavior. You say the cue, *sit*, and your dog immediately plops her rump on the floor. You put your hand on a door knob and the dog sits in response to the hand on the door knob. Cues are a kind of vocabulary, a language between you and your dog. The greater the vocabulary the greater the depth of communication and understanding, thus fostering a healthy, meaningful, relationship. *Conditions for cue clarity:* The cue always elicit the correct behavior. The cue always elicit the behavior immediately. The dog does not offer the behavior absent the cue. The dog does not offer the behavior for a different cue.

### **Duration**

The duration of a behavior is the amount of time the dog performs the behavior. Letting the dog decide the duration of the behavior makes the task unclear to your dog. Teaching your dog that the behavior lasts until she hears your release signal or another action cue will help define the behavior to the dog.

### **Intensity**

Intensity refers to the amount of physical and emotional energy exerted in the performance of a behavior and includes degrees of strength, speed, drive or force. Distractions can also have intensity levels and are expressed by the dog's degree of interest/response to them.

### **Proximity / Distance**

Proximity refers to your dog's position relative to you or to a target. A proximity change can be any movement by you, around, toward or away from your dog. Another type of proximity

## Training Basics

change would be your dog moving around, toward, or away from you or a target. Most dogs are sensitive to proximity changes and will move toward or away from you if you change position. Build "stay" behavior by reinforcing small or gradual changes in your proximity.

### **Generalizing a behavior to different context**

Generalizing is when your dog appears to understand that a particular cue means the same thing in all environments and under all conditions. A dog who responds to the cue to sit in the house will need to learn to recognize the sit cue when outside, down the block, at the shopping mall, in a dog park or in the training class. Generalizing a behavior, like sit, to new environments and many different situations can be a challenge because it takes time and patience. You don't learn a new language in just a few weeks, so be kind and help your dog learn to generalize a cued behavior by rehearsing often and in new places. Take her to different places and reward her for recognizing your cue in new settings, under different distractions and distraction levels.

### **Distractions**

A distraction is generally anything that draws your dog's attention away from you. Distractions can be a curiosity, drawing your dog in, or something that provokes fear, causing your dog to move away, shut down, panic or aggress.

Distractions have different values to different dogs. How much influence a distraction has over your dog depends on your dog's perception, prior experience & training and things like the intensity, proximity and duration of the distraction. Your dog will need to learn how to feel safe, demonstrate self control, and minimize the distraction value when she is with you. Teaching your dog to pay attention and feel safe takes time and practice in many different places and situations.

## **Operant Conditioning, Principles of**

The use of **Reinforcement, Punishment, and Extinction** to effect behavior.

According to Karen Pryor, [www.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com), operant conditioning is; *The process of changing an animal's response to a certain stimulus by manipulating the consequences that immediately follow the response. The five principles of operant conditioning were developed by B. F. Skinner. Clicker training is a subset of operant conditioning, using only positive reinforcement, extinction, and, to a lesser extent, negative punishment.*

### **Extinction**

Extinction is the loss or weakening of a behavior due to lack of reinforcement or punishment. If you ignore a behavior offered by your dog it tends to fade away. If your dog cannot reach his toy under the sofa, he may try different ways to get it, but eventually, when his effort does not get what he wanted, he will give up and walk away.

### **Punishment**

Punishment, the unpleasant consequence, is something the dog does not want and tends to suppress or decrease the frequency of a behavior. The problem with using punishment is that if used inappropriately the dog may; never learn what you wanted her to do or how to avoid the punishment, become emotionally disabled, suffer a physical injury, learn to fear her trainer, loose interest in learning, or produce panic or rage that is expressed by aggressing. Professional Trainers sparingly apply the minimum and achieve the maximum desired result. The use of pain, force or threats that cause fear or panic, is not a humane way to teach any animal and is an unacceptable degree of punishment. An acceptable kind of punishment (negative punishment) might include, turning your back and walking away with the toys and treats if the dog refuses to stop barking at you, halting the agility run when the dog ignores your lead to run her own course, holding the crate door closed until the crated dog can offer a calm stay while you open the door, asking your dog's best human friend to walk away until the dog can offer well mannered greeting, and so on.

## Training Basics

### Reinforcement

Reinforcement is anything the DOG wants and is willing to work to get. When applied, reinforcement tends to increase the likelihood that a particular behavior will be repeated. Simply put, if a dog likes the consequences of a particular behavior she will repeat it and the behavior will become stronger - occur more often. The term "positive" in positive reinforcement means reinforcement was ADDED (not taken away) to strengthen the behavior. I give my dog a cookie when she sits on cue and I have added or introduced the desired consequence to the learning moment.

#### **Reinforcement Value and Hierarchy**

The value of a reinforcer is dependent upon the dog's perception of the reinforcement. The dog's perception can be influenced by temperament traits, innate drives, health and prior learning. Value is recognized by the duration and amount of effort a dog puts forth to get the resource (Reinforcer). A dog who is highly social with people may perceive affection and praise as a very valuable resource and may be easily motivated to focus on people and learning in exchange for social contact alone. Another dog who is persistent at sniffing or hunting may find social contact pales in comparison to the opportunity to put his nose to the ground, but willingly postpones hunting for a chance to earn a meaty food treat controlled by his owner.

Reinforcement can be eye contact, praise, affection, access to odors, access to other animals, access to outdoor exploration, access to toys, play, food, water, comfort (warmth, coolness, soft sofas) and other pleasurable activities like swimming, tug games, sniffing, digging, barking, chasing and fetching. Each of these has a quality, quantity, intensity and a duration to create value to your dog.

Reinforcement values change with your dog's desire for them. Certainly food has less value if your dog is ill or full. Affection has value only when your dog desires it. The type and intensity of the affection may affect its value too. Some dogs love a rap on the rump and others prefer a soft slow stroke over the neck and shoulders. The trainer's job is to study the dog, to recognize her likes & dislikes, what she finds important and desirable, when and where. Recognizing what the dog wants allows the trainer to control and use the reinforcers as consequences to desired behavior. If your dog wants to go outside to chase or explore, you control the access to that environment (only you can open the door), you can exchange that resource for something you want.

#### **Timing and Reinforcement**

Correct timing speeds learning. To be an effective teaching tool, reinforcement must be delivered within a second or two of the dog's behavior for the dog to be able to recognize the relationship between his behavior and the reinforcement.

*When a subject is trying to learn, the informational context of a reinforcement becomes even more important than the reinforcement itself. In coaching athletes, or training dancers, it is the instructor's shouted "yes" or "good!", marking a movement as it occurs, that truly gives the needed information--not the debriefing later in the dressing room.*

*Karen Pryor, Don't Shoot the Dog!*

Like, taking a photograph of someone in motion, timing makes all the difference in the results. If the shutter is released too soon or too late you don't capture the award winning expression you wanted. Timing is not too difficult when a slow behavior is performed right in front of you - the dog sits and you pop a treat into her mouth or pat her on the shoulder. The dog quickly learns that a rump on the floor will cause a human to spill food. However, what if you want your dog to lift her paw to a certain height off the floor and wave at you. In this case, timing is critical to getting the correct message or information to the dog so the dog can figure out what you want. If you rely only on your closeness you still might miss the important learning moment. By the time you recognize the exact paw height and reach over to pop a treat into her mouth the dog may have lowered her paw and your quickest effort has only served to pair the reinforcement with a lower paw height. To help get that magical "snapshot" at the precise moment so the dog might understand what

## Training Basics

aspect of her behavior is causing the reinforcement, behaviorists created what is called a Conditioned Reinforcer.

### **Delivery of Reinforcement:**

The *place* where the dog receives the food reinforcement also serves as information in a shaping plan. It motivates the dog to move to the spot where the reinforcement was last delivered in anticipation of a future reinforcement. This can help expedite learning if you want the dog to learn a particular location is important, such as in heeling. Delivering food in a precise location next to the handler's leg will increase the likelihood the dog will remain or move to that location in anticipation of the reinforcement. The handler then marks and treats the dog for this assumption. If the handler wanted to teach the dog a sequence of moves the dog might get the Mark at the correct position and then get fed the treat at the next location in the sequence. Like when teaching the dog to go around a cone, the dog is marked for moving into the first quarter of the circle around the cone and then the treat is placed at the second quarter, or half way around the cone. The dog may then offer to move half way around the cone on the second trial where the handler would mark the success at the halfway point and deliver the reinforcement at the three quarter mark and so on until the dog offers a complete circle around the marker.

### **Rate of Reinforcement:**

Rate of reinforcement is how often the dog is able to earn a reinforcer. Keeping the opportunity to earn a reinforcer, (Rate), high in the beginning of a new behavior tends to keep the dog focused on learning and rehearsing. A high rate of reinforcement is especially important when the dog has low innate persistence, minimal interest in the behavior at hand, there is significant competition for the dog's attention or the trainer has changed criteria or degree of difficulty.

### **Reinforcement Schedule:**

Reinforcement can be placed on a schedule like one treat for one behavior, this is called a continuous reinforcement schedule or one treat for every X number (two, three, four) of behaviors, this is a fixed ratio schedule. A fixed interval schedule would be the dog receives a treat after a specific amount of time, like every minute or every three minutes. Random or variable schedule of reinforcement (VSR) would be treats that are given out after varying numbers of repetitions or varying amounts of time. A Variable Schedule is the most commonly used schedule of reinforcement after a dog learns the behavior and it tends to keep a behavior strong and reliable. Like the random pay out on a slot machine that feeds the gambling addict, it is the anticipation of a pay out that is more intoxicating and exciting to the brain than the assured outcome of an action.

### **Jackpot**

A jackpot is a large reinforcement pay out to the dog for excellent behavior or a giant leap in learning, a breakthrough. "Extras for Excellence" Generally a jackpot is a handful of treats doled out one at a time or tossed and scattered so the dog eats one at a time.

## **Training Tools**

### **Conditioned Reinforcer: (aka The Bridge)**

A conditioned reinforcer is a teaching tool, it is a *learned* audible or visual marker that instantly communicates information to the dog that she has succeeded, performed correctly, and she will receive a reinforcement. The conditioned reinforcer signals the forthcoming of a reinforcer so you don't have to be right on top of the dog with the reinforcement. It allows you to grab the exact behavior, which gives the dog a clue to what you liked, and because the dog knows it means reinforcement is coming the dog receives a Feel-Good moment. The feel-good moment bridges the lag time before the actual reinforcement (food) is delivered to the dog. Remember back in school when learned about the dogs who salivated at the sound of a bell, in Dr. Pavlov's experiments. A bell was rung just before the dogs were fed. Over time the dogs LEARNED that the bell predicted a meal and they salivated in anticipation. The bell became a

## Training Basics

conditioned reinforcer - it became information that something good was due. Today, we use devices and sounds to create the same effect. The dog hears a click sound and because she has learned that the sound is a promise of a reinforcer, she can also learn there is a relationship between her behavior and making the human click the clicker. Dogs who have been trained with a conditioned reinforcer are keen observers and they readily offer behavior in hopes of performing something that will cause their handler to mark it with a click or a yes. To the dog the game is how do I make my owner mark my behavior so I can get something I want. This signal, or marker, helps the trainer isolate exact moments in time, like the paw lift, so the dog learns faster. What is so great about using a conditioned reinforcer is that learning is driven by the dog, the dog finds the game irresistible, offers to work and becomes more creative and confident about trying to learn. When you have a dog who experiments and willingly offers a variety of behavior you can get behaviors you want started faster and learned quicker.

### **Mark & Treat**

The signal given when the dog has completed the desired behavior is called the mark. A behavior marker is also known as a conditioned reinforcer. The signal can be anything the dog can perceive; a beep, a click, a bell ring, an utterance, a simple one syllable word like "yes", a beam of light, a flash card or flag. The mark signal is usually followed by reinforcement - thus the term "Mark & Treat." The Conditioned Reinforcer can also be thought of as an approval signal, since it means you approve of the dog's behavior and agree to deliver reinforcement for that behavior.

To make your approval signal a useful marker and something that the dog will listen for:

Begin, by saying "yes" or click your clicker, and toss your dog something she really likes, i.e. food or a special toy. Repeat a few times at random intervals and she will quickly learn the signal is something important to listen for if she wants what you are offering. Test to see if the dog is listening for your approval signal. Announce the signal and watch to see if your dog looks to you for the reward. If not, wait an hour or more and repeat pairing the signal with something the dog wants - try using better treats like a piece of steak or garlic chicken to make the Marker important and valuable to the dog. After the dog has learned the importance of the Marker it can then be used as a signal to tell the dog she got something right. A well timed Approval Signal instantly marks an action and gives your dog the information she needs to understand exactly what behavior you are seeking.

### **Release Signal**

A word or signal that is used to end the behavior and release the dog from the learning situation. A click from a clicker can be the dog's release while the dog is learning a new behavior. Once a behavior is on cue, the release word can be used to release the dog. Release words help define duration to a dog, as the dog is not reinforced if she stops the behavior before hearing the release word. The dog merely learns to listen for the release word and "Stay" is automatically part of the behavior criteria. A dog who understands to wait for a release will hold or continue the behavior until she recognizes another cue or the release word. The most common release words are: "Okay," "That'll Do," "Free" and "All Done."

## **A Word About DOG TREATS!**

Dogs can and do offer and learn specific behaviors from people without food to motivate them toward learning a new behavior. Some dogs are so hard wired to please people that they do fine within the limits of praise and compulsion - just being with their owner is a high reinforcer to these dogs. However, many dogs need a better reason to pay attention and focus on a behavior that is not of interest to them. Sometimes we want dogs to behave in ways that are not natural to dogs or that are inconsistent with what the dog was bred to do. These dogs, and others, need a reinforcer that means more to them than the pleasure they get from doing what they want at the moment. A trainer who begrudges their dog a meaty treat because they don't believe dogs should get paid for

## Training Basics

behavior are the same people who feed their dog a big bowl of food twice a day for doing nothing and spend hundreds of dollars on equipment that MAKES the dog do what they want. How does that make sense? Dogs seek food naturally when left alone, they get very creative at finding it too, its highly pleasurable and thus is a great motivator. So if food is a valuable resource and a necessary resource for survival, why wouldn't you ask dogs to learn useful and polite behavior in exchange for the food that you were going to give them free for sitting there cluelessly salivating. When used appropriately, food treats help dogs focus and motivate them to work harder at learning a NEW behavior. Once the behavior is established, put on cue and is reliable in a variety of environments, the food is replaced with a lower valued reinforcer like praise and then only occasionally used. Food is not used to tease or bribe dogs. Appropriate use of food means the dog offers a behavior first, IF the trainer accepts the behavior, the trainer pays the dog for her effort toward the desired behavior. Kind of like when you go to work and get a pay check for your effort. And, I'll bet the pay check is the reason you keep working.

### Treats for Group Lessons and Training in Public

You are going to need a good amount of special food treats to help your dog focus her attention on learning behaviors in an active and noisy training environment. It is very important that your treats are nutritious and have a high value to your dog. Dry biscuits or kibble are fine around the house, but when you move to an environment rich with distractions and curiosities your dog may choose to ignore your boring offerings. Your treats, must make it worth your dog's effort to pay attention to you instead of the other wonderful sights, sounds, smells and social opportunities in the rest of the world.

Find out what kinds of food treats your dog likes - if your dog will give up a toy or another distraction for the offered treat it is a good treat for training. For a medium size dog a single treat should be about the size of a kernel of corn. Remember you are going to be feeding your dog a large amount of treats during training - so keep them small enough so they remain valuable to the dog during your training session. Make sure food reinforcement is health promoting and can replace a dog's meal. Many grocery store treats are high in sugars, grains (sugar), food coloring, preservatives and low in animal protein. Read the labels and either buy in a pet store or make your own.

Consider the following as treats and think about how your dog would prioritize the value of each kind of food treat:

- 🍗 Cooked or dried fish, beef, chicken, turkey
- 🍗 Cooked, nitrate free, beef, turkey or salmon hot-dogs (@ Health Food Stores))
- 🍗 Hard Cheeses - all kinds, but raw milk cheese is best. (@Health Food Stores)
- 🍗 Cooked or dried organ meats like liver & baked liver cookies!
- 🍗 Dried or fresh fruits and veggies
- 🍗 Commercial dog treats that are 85-100% meat

### The Main Reasons Dogs Refuse Food Treats

- 🐾 Your dog is full. Avoid feeding meals before training class and keep your training treats small so your dog doesn't fill up quickly.
- 🐾 The treat value is not high enough to overcome the present attractions/distractions. Find better, more tantalizing treats for your dog!
- 🐾 Your dog is over stressed or afraid. It is not unusual for a dog to be stressed in a new environment or around strangers. Some dogs just need a little time to become relaxed and feel safe before they are interested in food again. If your dog is acting shy reward her (praise, touch) for behaving calm/relaxed and for showing curiosity (courage) toward things in the room. Avoid comforting the dog if she is acting nervous or afraid, she needs to see you modeling confidence, and standing between her and what she fears. Some dogs become so



## Training Basics

anxious and frustrated that they cannot concentrate on anything - they may bark and lunge at others, look wild with wide eyes and refuse food. If your dog appears to be in another world and unable to connect with your efforts to gain her attention through food, touch or voice she may need special help. Your dog may need a few private lesson or be referred to a certified behaviorist for some specialized training before she is able to join a group class.

- 🐾 Your dog is ill, sick (upset stomach) or injured. A sudden disinterest in food (when you know the dog is not full) can be information that your dog is not feeling well. Have your dog checked out by a veterinarian.

### DOG TOYS!

Please select some of your dog's favorite (high value) toys for training. For most dogs, toys are a valued resource. If your dog shows no interest in toys it may merely mean she hasn't been exposed to toys in a play environment. Dogs who spent their puppy hood in a kennel, pet store, or shelter may not have had an opportunity to play with toys or share play time with other dogs & people who offer fun with a toy. Most dogs can learn to play with toys if they are introduced to some fun toys and playful dogs/people who can show them how to have a good time.

Find out what kinds of toys your dog enjoys. Consider size, texture, weight, smell/taste, bounce factor, parts that move (legs), and noises (like squeaker) when offering toys to your dog. Some dogs are crazy for plush toys and others are crazy for balls that bounce. (Balls with high bounce factors can become a good class toy by placing the ball in a knotted tube sock.) Take your dog into a pet supply store and play with all kinds of toys - watch to see how your dog reacts to the different kinds of toys.

Here are some tips to help increase the value of a dog toy:

- 🐾 Tease the dog with the toy. Flip it around and show lots of interest and excitement for the toy. Then pretend to loose control of the toy and let it roll toward your dog. Let the dog posses the toy for a moment then offer her another toy or treat for a surrender. Tease your dog again with the special toy and put it away. (Don't give in even if she pouts and whines! You control toys and play time - not your dog!)
- 🐾 Keep toy exposure to short burst of fun. Avoid wearing out the dog or playing until the dog looses interest in the toy. Puppies can loose focus quickly or tire suddenly so stay attentive and set limits for young dogs.
- 🐾 Play hide and seek games with the toy. Tease your dog with the toy and have a family member hide it in an easy spot to find. When you release your dog go with her and encourage her to find her toy. Celebrate when she finds it and give her a treat for surrendering the toy to you. Increase the difficulty of the find as the dog become more intense/excited about the game.
- 🐾 Play fetch if your dog is a natural or trained retriever. Keep the game simple - toss, let the dog chase and offer treats for a returned toy. This is not a formal retrieve lesson. The purpose is to let the dog have fun chasing the toy. Put the toy away before the dog looses interest - generally keep it to only a few tosses.
- 🐾 Remember you make the toy come ALIVE! Get into the game - laugh, show excitement and interest in the toy. Your dog will react to your enthusiasm and joy - so let her hear it in your voice and see it in your eyes.
- 🐾 Keep the special toy(s) out of sight until training time. Then surprise your dog with a toy just as she offers you extra effort at learning a behavior.