



Behavior & Training FACT SHEET with FAQs

What is the best way to approach training my dog?

The best way to train any dog is to make sure you are not creating any serious issues by using fear, pain or startle.

What about using prong or choke collars?

These devices inflict pain and can lead to throat, neck, back and eyesight damage, as well as behavioral issues. These are not advised nor acceptable!

What about shock collars?

These electronic devices can cause irreversible behavioral damage to a dog in the form of extreme overly generalized fear, aggression and anxiety. Dogs generalize fear very easily! Don't risk it!

My dog reacts to people, dogs, cars, skateboards, bikes, etc...is my dog aggressive?

*Maybe. The question would be has your dog bitten or attacked a person, dog or objects that cause reactivity? **If so, yes, your dog might be deemed aggressive.** If not... ALL dogs react at sudden environmental change. Many times barrier frustration is what dogs are displaying in the moment as they are frustrated they cannot get to, or get away from, whatever has them vexed. Create distance and use food or reassurance to reward your dog for disengaging.*

*Note - Many dogs are labeled aggressive when they have not bitten anyone or another dog. If your dog has bona fide aggression by way of a bite history, contact a board certified veterinary behaviorist and a dog trainer that does not employ the use of fear, pain or startle techniques since these will only make the fear and aggression worse. If your dog has **bitten** a dog or a human **use the Dunbar Bite Scale** to determine the level of the bite prior to seeking the board certified veterinary behaviorist and dog trainer. Link for Dunbar: <http://www.dogstardaily.com/radio/404-bite-scale-and-how-evaluate-aggression>*

How do dogs learn and take information in?

*Dogs learn through association and consequence. ALL information is taken in largely through scent. Information passes a part of the brain called the Amygdala, which regulates fear and stress. By using methods that are free of fear, pain and startle we **can** ensure that our dog **stays** sound.*

Can a dog be fully trained in just a few days?

Dog behavior is mostly influenced by the environment. For example, your dog sits and waits at the back door easily since the distractions are few. However, the front door, where the distractions are higher, the dog is more prone to breaking the sit/stay behavior. The environment is different so the dog's behavior is different; even though the training context is almost identical. The next factors in training are the human's mechanics and timing in the dog's daily life. For example, the human in the above instance asks the dog to sit and wait farther back from the front door and ensures they practice this at all doors so the dog begins to generalize the training.

Dogs do not generalize well, unless it is fear. Dogs are master discriminators and need some training in ALL contexts, especially new or hectic environments. There are no real "quick fixes" other than adopting a "train as you go" approach. Dog training is a lifetime of events.

My dog is fearful?

*Fear is a natural part of all living creatures. Without it we would not survive. If your dog has been experiencing inordinate fear and or aggression seek out a Board Certified Veterinary Behaviorist and a dog trainer who specializes in fearful dogs that uses **non-confrontational methods**.*

I have a brand new puppy!

A dog's critical development period ends around week 21 of its life. Take your puppy to an off leash puppy class that is designed to address dog play, basic training, socialization, bite inhibition and handling. This helps you build a solid foundation.



We are thinking of adopting an older dog from a shelter but we do not want to inherit any problems or behavior issues.

The good news is you have just as many chances to “inherit” behavior issues or training challenges with ANY dog you take into your life no matter the age or the breed/mix. ALL dog behavior is based on the environment and the context. There is no truth to the myth that “shelter dogs” have issues.

Shelters and rescues are filled with amazing dogs that simply need a home with dedicated people willing to help the dog live a great life. In addition there are dogs of ALL ages in shelters all over the United States that need a home today!

My dog seems “stubborn” and tunes out.

Dogs are distracted by pretty much anything. Do not take it personally. Dogs do not possess the same intellectual morality as humans. They see the world as safe, unsafe or neutral. Behavior increases or decreases due to reinforcements. For example, a dog that sits and waits at the door and has the door opened as a reward will show an increase of sitting and waiting. A dog that is allowed to door-dash will door-dash.

Always consider the environment, your mechanics, timing of rewards, and kind consequences. Think like a referee and be kind and consistent. Stay out of your dog’s head and start training or managing the situations since this will lead to less stress and more success. All behavior is contextual.

Example: You leave the dog home and the dog destroys your pillows. Dogs like to chew and dissect things since it relieves stress. Having the dog in a dog-proofed room with appropriate dog toys to chew on solves the problem.

Example: You ask your dog to “leave it” when they see a distraction (bird, squirrel, etc.) but the dog ignores you and keeps pulling on leash. The last time you did this, and the dog disengaged from the distraction, you were farther away from the object so it was less distracting to the dog.

Example: A dog goes to the bathroom whenever the humans are not around. Since the dog has a history of being punished for going to the bathroom in the house, the dog does this as a matter of safety; not spite. In addition, many dogs will go in the same spots simply due to them not being clean enough. The dog is assuredly not doing this out of spite.

Example: A dog is tuned out from the dog handler. The dog handler is using a prong collar and harsh verbal reprimands. The dog is fearful, stressed out, and shutting down. The handler “thinks” the dog is being “stubborn.” Dogs tune out and shut down when they are met with too much stress, fear, and/or pain.

We have tried “everything” and our dog is still very challenging! Help!

Perhaps simplifying matters is what is needed. It is true that dogs can be trained rather quickly and with little effort once humans know the secrets of reinforcements and issuing kind consistent consequences. Dogs do well with sequences that predict safety and reinforcement of some kind.

*Seek out a positive, reward-based dog trainer that has experience and a deep love and understanding of your type of dog/breed! Many times it is a matter of decreasing training methods that have not worked and learning methods that work properly. Remember, the environment, your mechanics, timing of rewards, and kind consequences are what build a dog’s history. The goal is **to have a sound dog** that is reasonably well mannered. Nothing, and no one, is perfect. Use kindness consistently and you should see an increase in success and a decrease in stress.*

Drayton Michaels, CTC of Pit Bull Guru compiled the feedback in this FAQ. Drayton is a professional dog trainer, behavior consultant and behavior technician. You can read all about his dog training and pit bull advocacy endeavors at www.pitbullguru.com. This packet has been prepared for Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc. and can be shared far and wide for the betterment of dogs. Please do not remove the logos affiliated with this FAQ if you intend to share. 8/3/12 DSF