



## Positive Reinforcement Training

At CAHS, we highly recommend using positive training methods to train your dog. These methods have been scientifically proven to help dogs learn better.

Positive reinforcement does not mean letting your dog do whatever it wants. It simply means that when a dog does a behavior that is good, you provide a reward to make the dog more likely to repeat that action. When the dog does a behavior that isn't a great choice, you provide a better option for the dog or remove the reward.

### Negative Methods Can Backfire

Punitive or corrective training methods rarely work because it never teaches your dog the correct behavior. It only temporarily "stuns" the current, undesired behavior leaving nothing in the void. The unwanted behavior usually returns, and the punishments continue or escalate. This teaches your dog nothing other than avoidance, and often damaging the relationship in the process, eventually leading to fearful behaviors like growling, snapping, or even biting.

### Examples of Rewards

- Treats
- Your attention
- Toys
- Continuing on a walk
- Verbal praise

### Timing of Rewards

Sometimes people unintentionally reward undesirable behaviors. For example, if you let your dog out when they are scratching at the door, the unwanted behavior is reinforced. Instead, praise and treat your dog before they scratch at the door. Alternatively, you could wait until they stops scratching, and then open the door as a reward for having paws on the floor.

- Clicker training can help with the timing of rewards.
- A clicker can help bridge the communication barrier between humans and dogs which can make the process of training go quicker.
- For more information on clicker training visit: <https://clickertraining.com/15tips>.

### Power of Providing Choices

Science tells us that dogs learn best when they are empowered to make a decision, versus having a decision made for them. When a dog is showing an undesirable behavior, you can offer up an alternative choice and reward the dog for the better decision.

For example, let's say your dog starts chewing on your favorite pair of shoes. If you just say "No" and take the shoes from the dog's mouth, your dog has no choices. The dog learns is that when he needs to chew (which is a natural, healthy behavior), he should do it behind your back. Now the problem is worse, as they're actively hiding the behavior from you!

Instead, you can show your dog a nice Kong with peanut butter, a rope toy, a Nylabone, etc. As soon as they show interest, you can use praise and attention as the reward. The dog made the choice to chew on the new item, teaching the dog which items are appropriate to use.

### **Professional Trainers**

Sometimes a behavior is too serious, dangerous, or frustrating to work on without professional help. When choosing a trainer, you want to make sure that they truly use positive, force-free methods. Some trainers will claim they are positive reinforcement trainers, but will use shock or vibration collars elicit fear and cause mistrust. Other trainers will focus too much on outdated, harsh dominance-based methods. Below is a list of trainers that we have worked with before, and rely on positive reinforcement training methods.

#### **Tao of the Hound** – Lansing, MI

Karen Ryder

(517)589-5436

[taoofthehound@gmail.com](mailto:taoofthehound@gmail.com)

- Specializes in fearful and aggressive dogs

#### **Canine Training Center** – Lansing, MI

Carol Hein-Creger

(517)857-2884

#### **Arrow Dog Training** – Lansing, MI

Dawn Archer Pizzoferrato

(517)449-9968

- Specializes in clicker training and Canine Good Citizen

#### **Royal K-9** – Grand Ledge, MI

Lenny Shaffer

(734)385-6646

- Specializes in separation anxiety

#### **Brenda Aloff** – Midland, MI

[dogbiz@brendaaloff.com](mailto:dogbiz@brendaaloff.com) (preferred)

(989)631-8217

- Experience with aggression cases

#### **A Pleasant Dog** – Grand Rapids, MI

(616)264-2532

**CAHS offers a free Behavior Helpline. Call or e-mail the Behavior Department for more information!**

**(517) 626-6060 ext. 141**  
**[behavior@AdoptLansing.org](mailto:behavior@AdoptLansing.org)**