

The Official

Ahimsa Dog Training Manual

A Practical, Force-Free Guide
to Problem Solving & Manners



Grisha Stewart, MA, CPDT-KA, KPACTP

author of *Behavior Adjustment Training:*

BAT for Aggression, Frustration, and Fear in Dogs

Ahimsa \uh-HIM-sah \ n. a Buddhist doctrine of non-violence. Also a fun, modern, scientific approach to training your dog!

Dog lovers: Learn to solve and prevent a variety of problems, including barking, fear, puppy socialization, housetraining, separation anxiety, and pulling on leash.

Pro trainers: Get more ways to teach skills and solve problems. Save time on write-ups by using this book as an in-home reference for your clients.

Breeders: Send your puppies home with this book to start them off on the right paw.

Of the thousands of dog training books out there, it's rare finding one that has something new to say or presents the science of positive training in a unique and meaningful way. Clear, concise, informative and extremely user-friendly, this book deserves a prominent place on every trainer's bookshelf.

—Paul Owens, best-selling author of
The Dog Whisperer; A Compassionate, Nonviolent Approach to Dog Training

From puppyhood to learning theory, Grisha has done what she does best: take complicated subjects and make them easy to follow and simple to understand.

—Nan Arthur, CDBC, CPDT-KSA, KPACTP/Faculty, author of
Chill Out Fido! How to Calm Your Dog

If there's something you want your dog to do, or stop doing, there's a good chance this book addresses it.

—Debbie Jacobs, CPDT-KA, CAP2, author of
A Guide to Living with and Training a Fearful Dog

Grisha Stewart is the founder of Ahimsa Dog Training in Seattle, which has over a dozen people on staff and has won many awards, including Best of Seattle and Best of Western Washington. Grisha is a popular international speaker, dog trainer, and former mathematician with a passion for dog training.

AHIMSA DOG TRAINING, LLC
Seattle, WA, USA
www.DoggieZen.com



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Published by Ahimsa Dog Training, LLC
Seattle, WA

Praise for *The Official Ahimsa Dog Training Manual*:

🐾 From puppyhood to learning theory, Grisha has done what she does best: take complicated subjects and make them easy to follow and simple to understand. For pet parents, this book is a nice foundation book to take their puppies and dogs toward being a “Canine good citizen,” and helps problem-solve some of the most common issues that are presented to trainers and behavior experts regularly.

Beyond the basic manners instructions, this guide also touches on fear and reactivity; offering help to the average person so they can begin teaching skills that will lay the building blocks toward a happier and more relaxed dog.

Finally, this is a great guide for rescues to give to adopters, and for trainers to hand to their clients; all with the goal of helping dogs live in peace and harmony with their humans, and visa versa.

The *Ahimsa Dog Training Manual* is a must for any pet parent’s bookshelf and a bonus for trainers to get, yet another publication by Grisha.

Nan Arthur, CDBC, CPDT-KSA, KPACTP/Faculty, author of *Chill Out Fido! How to Calm Your Dog*

🐾 Of the thousands of dog training books out there, it's rare finding one that has something new to say or presents the science of positive training in a unique and meaningful way. Grisha's new booklet, the *Ahimsa Dog Training Manual*, does just that. Clear, concise, informative and extremely user-friendly, this book deserves a prominent place on every trainer's bookshelf.

Paul Owens, Best-selling author of *The Dog Whisperer: A Compassionate, Nonviolent Approach to Dog Training* and *The Puppy Whisperer: A Compassionate, Nonviolent Guide to Early Training and Care*.



🐾 This book is a great resource for anyone interesting in understanding, or increasing their understanding of low stress, force-free handling and training techniques. Pet owners will find it a useful primer for developing a positive and trusting relationship with their dog. If there's something you want your dog to do, or stop doing, there's a good chance that this book addresses it.

Debbie Jacobs, CPDT-KA, CAP2, author of *A Guide to Living With and Training a Fearful Dog*

🐾 This is it! This is the easy-to-read, concise handbook that every responsible dog owner will want to read. This manual spells out practical, step-by-step training solutions while educating the reader on the science behind the theory. Grisha is the leading authority on Behavior Adjustment Training (BAT), and shares her unique method to bring about change in a positive, force-free, and fear-free environment. She shows us a new way to teach loose-leash walking; one that is free from frustration and maps a clear strategy for us to follow. The dog world is grateful to Grisha for taking time out of her busy schedule to give us this wonderful resource.

Kyra Sundance, renowned Stunt Dog Performer, author of *101 Dog Tricks*

🐾 "When Fido arrives at the intersection of Good Dog Street and Bad Dog Alley, which way will he go?" asks Grisha Stewart in her book, *The Official Ahimsa Dog Training Manual*. Grisha's book can help you manage Fido's environment and train him to make good choices. She offers a variety of force-free ways to train common behaviors, and her writing is always engaging and as friendly as her methods. Your dog will definitely enjoy your training sessions based on this book.

Teoti Anderson, CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, author of *Puppy Care and Training* and *Your Outta Control Puppy: How to Turn Your Precocious Pup Into a Perfect Pet* and Past President of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers

🐾 GREAT resource for puppy buyers! It gives the basics for everything a dog needs to learn in easy-to-understand terms. Breeders should use it in their puppy packet! Can I get them in bulk?

Michel Berner, Vizsla breeder

Sample



Communication & Learning Go Both Ways

Science is simply common sense at its best.

—Thomas Huxley

When you start to train your dog, you might be just trying to teach your dog to listen to you, but good training is more than simply teaching your dog to pay attention, it's also about paying attention to your dog's needs, what makes her stressed, and when she is having trouble understanding what you want her to do. Your dog is already paying attention to everything around her, including you. Learning about body language will help you understand your dog and allow you to communicate more clearly with your own body language. After we discuss the natural communication between you and your dog, we will explain how your dog learns to do what you want, using the science of learning.

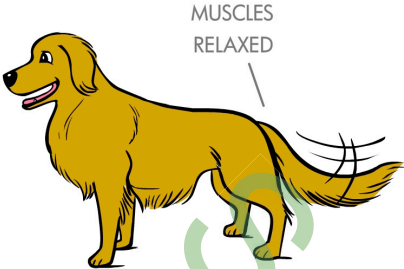
Understanding Your Dog's Communication

I'm sure that one major reason that you are reading this book is to learn how to teach your dog to pay attention and respond to you in a reliable way. I could start the book with that, but there's a foundation that I'd like to lay down before you begin trying to influence your dog's behavior. I'd first like you to look at what your dog's ears, eyes, tail, and other body parts are doing and learn to interpret those movements as body language with meaning. Your training will go a lot more smoothly if you can understand more about what your dog is saying to you along the way.

First, let's talk about your dog's tail. Contrary to popular belief, *a wagging tail does not necessarily mean that your dog is happy*. A wagging tail means that a dog is excited, that there is adrenaline coursing through the dog's veins. A wagging tail goes with both happy and unhappy emotions. The good news is that you can usually interpret what's going on using the type of wag, the height of the tail, and the rest of the dog's body language. For example, if the wag extends through the whole body, so that the dog's

hind end is wagging back and forth, that's a pretty good sign. If the body is stiff and the tail is wagging, that's usually a bad sign, i.e., the dog is basically saying "back off." The dog's tail is part of the spine and the tighter the muscles in the back, around spine, the higher the tail goes. Tight muscles are a sign of stress or conflict.

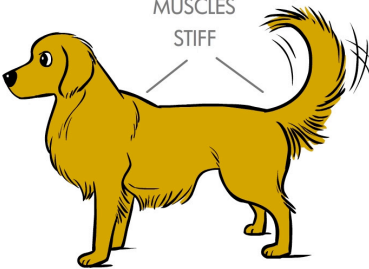
WAGGING TAILS



MUSCLES RELAXED

RELAXED/FRIENDLY


Tail at medium height
wagging back and forth or in a circle
Body is loose, hind area wagging



MUSCLES STIFF

TENSE

Tail is high and wagging fast
Body is stiff



FEARFUL

Tail is low and wagging fast
Body is cowering

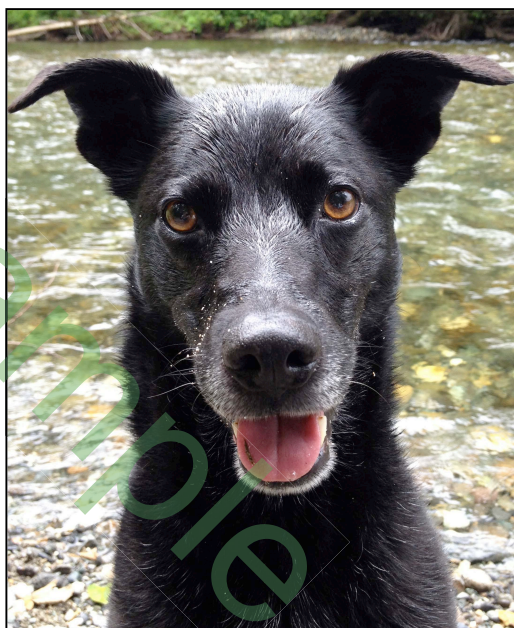
Here's an exercise. Stand with your feet firmly planted on the floor. Imagine that someone has threatened your children. Take in a deep breath that makes your chest puff out. What happens to your tailbone? Your spine arches a little and your tailbone moves out. If you had a tail, it would've just gotten higher. Now imagine that you were a timid person and someone was about to strike you. Turn your head and crouch to avoid the blow.



Your tailbone tucks, doesn't it? It's the same for dogs. A tail that is high in a flag is a sign that the dog is on the verge of fighting. A tucked tail is a sign of fear and such a dog may also fight if she is cornered. Now imagine that you've just won the lottery and do a happy dance. Really, do it right now if you can do so without looking goofy. What happens to your spine? Your spine is loose and your whole body wiggles. That's joy!

Calm, Happy Dog: Loose joints, soft or wiggly body, ears at middle/neutral position, dog moving at a 'normal' dog pace, 'soft' eyes looking at you but not staring hard, tail wagging in a circle at a moderate

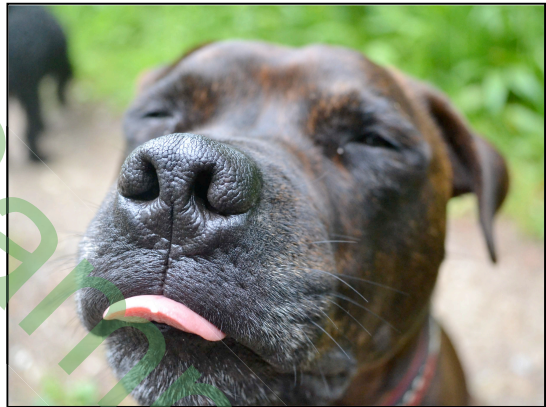
pace, relaxed down, sleeping, leaning into petting, taking treats easily without snatching, mouth soft and open, breath rate or panting matches the temperature and level of exercise the dog is doing, dog walks in curved lines and body is slightly curved when approaching other dogs or people. The black dog here, Peanut, was showing calm attention to me while I took his picture on a camping trip. In the photo, his mouth is open, he is looking at me, his



ears are mid-height for him, the pupils are not overly dilated (reflective), he is sitting on cue. The muscles in his face are standing out a tiny bit, but that matches the level of exercise.

Signs of Stress or Conflict: During your training sessions, you should notice that your dog is having a good time, rather than showing the signs of stress that follow. If you do see signs of stress, take a break and think about what aspect of your training is causing stress. Maybe you are accidentally using punishment when you really should be using reinforcement, maybe your body language is causing stress, or perhaps you are asking too much for your dog's skill level.

- Tight muscles
- Yawning
- Ears pinned back like the boxer shown here, (“let me get away”)
- Ears tipped forward (“I really need that ball” or “I’m going to get that guy before he gets me”)
- Sniffing around distractedly (“this training is confusing and stressful”)
- Dog walking in slow motion
- Dry panting that doesn’t match the temperature
- Scanning for danger—head turning quickly to look in all directions at once
- Suddenly moving faster during wrestling (arousal level increasing)
- Turning away to avoid touch (“let me get away”)
- Tongue flicking out quickly like the boxer in the picture (“I’m a bit uncomfortable”)
- Snatching treats quickly (“I’m only still here because I like the treats”)
- No appetite for treats (“I’m so stressed that I can’t even eat”)
- Tail high in a flag (“go away”)
- Tail tucked (“let me get away”)
- Body crouched down (“let me get away”)
- Body extra tall and squarely facing something (“go away”)
- Dog avoids you or instantly rolls on his back when you approach or reach for him (“please don’t attack me”)
- Urination during greeting (“please don’t attack me”)
- Stink-eye—head turned away but eyes staring at you or another animal (“this is mine!”)
- Stiff/freezing (especially with a hard stare)
- Barking
- Baring teeth



- Growling
- Biting

How can you use your understanding of these behaviors? Watch your own dog interact with other people and dogs to see what is ‘normal’ for your dog and which body postures are signs of stress. A tucked tail for a curved-tail dog (Shiba Inu, Pug, Husky, etc.) looks like a neutral tail for a Golden Retriever. The height of a happy tail for an Italian Greyhound can look like a tucked tail for a German Shepherd. Watching your dog’s body when he meets others can be a powerful learning experience! How does his body change when he sees squirrels? When she meets the neighbor’s dog? When he meets your niece? When your partner pets her on the head? When he meets you on the side or chest? Use this information about your dog’s stress level to guide how you interact with your dog.



SIGNS OF STRESS

These behaviors can signal that your dog is scared, depending on the context. Hire a trainer if they are extreme.



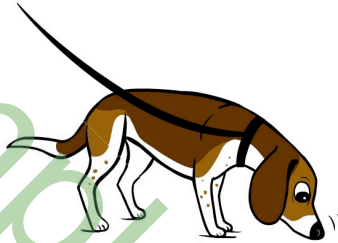
YAWNING



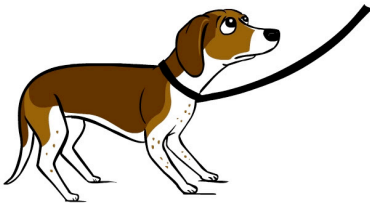
TONGUE FLICKS



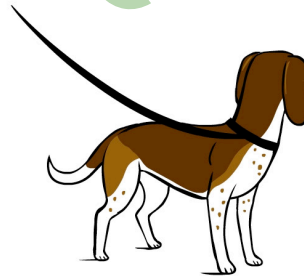
DRY PANTING



STOPPING TO SNIFF



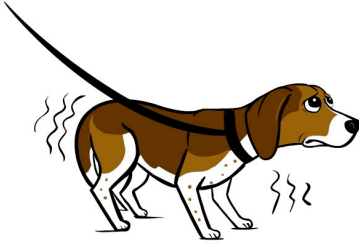
REFUSING TO GO FORWARD



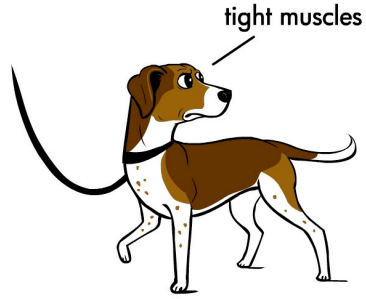
DELIBERATELY IGNORING SOMETHING/SOMEONE

Lili Chin image, reprinted from "Behavior Adjustment Training" by Grisha Stewart





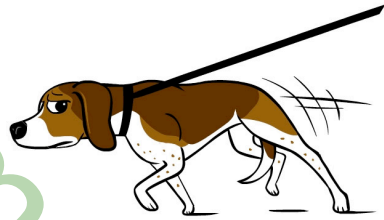
**CROUCHED, SHIVERING,
WORRIED FACE**



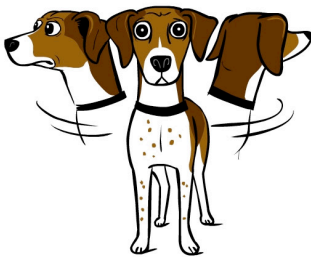
**UNABLE TO
LOOK AWAY**



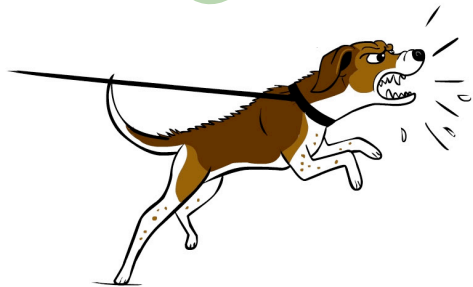
**SWEATY FEET,
DANDRUFF & SHEDDING**



FLEEING/PULLING HOME



**SCANNING AROUND
FOR DANGER**



**BARKING, GROWLING,
LUNGING, BITING**

Learning Theory

So far, your dog has tried to read your intentions by watching what you do when you are around her. Now that you know more about body language, you can use your body's movements to communicate intentionally with your dog, but the words that come out of your mouth may not have any meaning. That's where a simple application of the science of learning comes in. My goal with this section is to give you a big picture description of how dogs learn. We'll get into the details of each behavior in the chapters that follow, but knowing how your dog may have learned to do what he's currently doing may help convince you that he's not stubborn or stupid. He's just responding to the consequences that have come from you and the rest of his environment. So he's already trained—just not in the way you want him to be.

At Ahimsa, we use the scientific principles of learning theory as the model training. That may sound technical, but it's not. The basic idea of the theory is that *dogs only do what works for them*. By this I mean that normal animals, including *dogs and humans, repeat behaviors that are followed by reinforcement and decrease behaviors that result in punishment*. It's like survival of the fittest for behaviors, based on the consequences that each behavior brings. All behaviors that contribute to the dog's survival and happiness survive and other behaviors go extinct.

Both reinforcement and punishment can involve either giving things to the dog or taking them away, so that gives us a total of four types of consequences for changing behavior. There's a wide ethical gap between those different consequence categories because of the stress that they cause. If you remember the basic idea that your dog's behaviors are a result of consequences, you're ahead of the game. Let's look at the four ways that consequences can affect behavior.

- Four types of consequences for behavior

Let's break that down. If a dog does something, like bark, you can follow it up with four different types of consequences. I like to think of them in terms of the emotion they cause. Brain research is showing us that dogs do have emotions, even if they may not be experienced with the same level of consciousness. *Behavior is reinforced by feelings of joy or relief. Behavior is punished by causing a feeling of discomfort or loss*. If a dog barks and he feels joy or relief, he's likely to bark in a similar situation in the



future. If he barks and feels discomfort or loss, he's less likely to bark again in a similar situation. Let's look at this in more technical terms.

You can use reinforcers (stuff dogs want, ☺) or aversives (stuff dogs avoid, ☹) to train, but they don't have the same effect, even though this chart makes them look equal. If you're using artificial aversives (☹) on your dog, like choke chains, electronic collars, etc., stop now! It's better late than never. Life's too short to add more pain, especially when you can train your dog and solve problems without it! There can be unpredictable side effects of using force-based methods, like an increase in aggression.

Instead of using artificial aversives (☹) to train, I use the intelligence and creativity that makes humans 'superior' to set a dog up for success, so that I can reward with things the dog wants (☺). That means *I set up the situation so that doing what I want is the obvious choice for the dog.* I rarely use any kind of punishment, even time outs (negative punishment), but especially avoid corrections involving pain, fear or discomfort (positive punishment).

	(give) positive	(remove) negative
reinforcement	☺	☹
punishment	☹	☺

☺ = stuff dogs work to get
☹ = stuff dogs work to avoid

With my own dog, something like "ack" pops out of my mouth on rare occasions. That said, I know it's not particularly helpful to just shout at the dog, but I'm a verbal human being, and it just happens. When I do say "ack," I go through the situation again in my head to see if there was a way to handle the situation without resorting to sounding like a cave dweller. *Any time you find yourself wanting to use punishment, your job is to change the situation so that you can use reinforcement instead.* That's the intelligent way to be a "leader," rather than using brute force. We'll talk more about that in the chapter on problem solving, "Getting Rid of Problem Behaviors."

- **Reinforcement** is anything that increases motivation to do a particular behavior, i.e., makes that behavior stronger/more likely in the future.
- **Punishment** is anything that decreases motivation to do a behavior, i.e., makes a behavior weaker/less likely.

- The **Positive** column means that the dog is getting something, either something they want to happen or something they don't want to happen.
- The **Negative** column means something is taken away from the dog. They can be relieved or unhappy about that. Think subtraction or take-away.

Here are the four ways to reward and punish behavior:

- **Positive Reinforcement** (seeking JOY, PLEASURE). The dog gets something they like and that makes them more likely to repeat whatever they just did. If they sit and get a cookie, they are more likely to sit again. *Positive reinforcement is our primary method of training.*
- **Negative Reinforcement** (seeking RELIEF). Something the dog was unhappy or stressed about went away when she did a certain behavior, so that behavior is more likely to be repeated. An example of what I might do is notice that in a greeting, a puppy turns her head away from me, so I stop petting her (see info on BAT in the section on fear and aggression) to reward her head turn and honor her request for relief of social pressure. An example of what I would NOT do is to shock or “buzz” a dog with an electronic collar until she sat down. Sitting would still be rewarded, but I would not consider that to be humane training.
- **Negative Punishment** (avoiding SADNESS, LOSS). Something the dog wanted went away when she did a certain behavior, so she's less likely to repeat it next time. For example, your dog jumps up for attention and you leave the room for 15 seconds. Jumping up led to her not getting what she wanted, so it's less likely to happen again.
- **Positive Punishment** (avoiding DISCOMFORT, AVERSION, FEAR). Something unpleasant happened to the dog when she did a certain behavior, so she's less likely to repeat it next time. For example, in old-school training, if your dog jumped up, you would jerk on her leash. Jumping up led to her feeling pain, so it's less likely to happen again. She's also more likely to be stressed, so I avoid it. Corrections, such as jerking on the leash, “stim” (aka electric shock), kicking the dog, squirting with water, and pinning the dog down to achieve “calm submission” are all in this category. Shaking your finger at the dog or saying “tsst” are only in this



category if doing those things actually punish the dog's behavior—many dogs don't seem to change their behavior permanently when scolded this way, although it sometimes stops the behavior in the moment or gets your finger bitten. For some dogs, that kind of attention is actually reinforcing!

NOTE!

B.F. Skinner, father of the science of behaviorism, found that *punishment is not effective in the long run* because punished behaviors don't go away completely. You need to *reinforce something else* that you want the dog to do. For any problem behavior, there is a replacement behavior that you can reward.

- Focus on the good stuff

By controlling the food, toys, and opportunities that the dog likes, I control the dog's behavior. There's no need to shout, squirt the dog, shake her by the scruff, alpha roll her, or do anything else that doesn't fit my view of how intelligent beings should treat one another. *Since we have the option of training any dog to do anything without force, there's no reason to use barbaric, outdated methods.*



Punishment usually goes hand-in-hand with the outdated dominance theory, which urges people to get the upper hand on their dogs by doing things that range from the benign (eating before the dog) to the inconvenient (walking through all doorways first) to the dangerous (pinning the dog to the ground or lifting the dog in the air by his collar to cut off the airway). At Ahimsa Dog Training, we count on the science of animal behavior and don't need to resort to outdated methods involving force. That frees us up

to do things like teach dogs to do cool tricks, like lying down on a person's back (see the photo), which might be considered worrisome “domination” in old-school training.

Decades ago, science moved us beyond the need for dominance-based methods to help fix problems we have with our dogs. For example, the American Veterinary Society for Animal Behavior urges veterinarians to avoid recommending trainers who use dominance-based methods. Unfortunately, old-school methods have gained traction again due to popular television shows, but fortunately, people are starting to take off the rose-colored glasses and recognize that kind of training as abuse. If you still enjoy dog training TV shows that use choke chains, take a look at the color of the dog's tongue when the trainer lifts the dog into the air by the collar to put the dog into a ‘submissive’ state. The dog's tongue can actually turn blue that way, so that's not submission—the dog is just passing out. Another way to see what's really going on is to turn off the sound and watch the show in terms of the stress/happiness behaviors that I mentioned at the beginning of the book.

If a dog trainer, behaviorist, veterinarian, or friend suggests any techniques that make you uncomfortable, don't do that training with your dog. *You are your dog's advocate.* As the human, training decisions are ultimately up to you and rest entirely upon your own conscience.

If you have already done that kind of training, don't worry. You can still teach your dog using the techniques in this book. Your dog will love the change! If your dog could talk, he would probably quickly forgive your training methods used in the past and thank you for being open to learning about force-free training.

- Killing with kindness: a note on rewards

Rewards are something that we give or do to dogs in an



attempt to reinforce behavior, but a reward only works if the dog actually finds it reinforcing! For example, petting will only reinforce behavior if your dog enjoys being petted at that moment. A surprising number of dogs really don't like being petted in the way that people pet them, and there are usually times where dogs don't want any petting at all. It's kind of like having your mom hug you when dropping you off for high school—in front of that cute guy you have a crush on.

If your dog doesn't like petting, you may actually be punishing her for being good! Here are some ways you can know the difference between petting and pestering.

If you reach for your dog and she pulls away, it's not petting. It's pestering! Petting is not reinforcing at that moment.

- Use the **5-second rule for petting**. Don't pet for more than 5 seconds at a time. After at most 5 seconds of petting, pull your hands away and see what your dog does. If she nuzzles your hand or looks at you, she probably enjoyed the petting. If she holds in one place or turns/moves away, you were pestering her.
- *If a dog flips over on her back, as if to get a belly rub, she may not actually want that.* She may just be afraid of you. If it's not your dog, assume that the dog doesn't actually want a belly rub. With your own dog, she might indeed want a belly rub. However, instead of the 5-second rule, use something more like the 1-second rule, i.e., stop after just barely petting her belly. In the belly rub session seen in the photo on the previous page, I stopped every second or so to make sure the dog, James, was still enjoying it. My dog, Peanut, actually prefers for me to massage his back when he goes into 'belly rub position.' I put my hand between him and the floor or bed, palm up, and move along his back, massaging the muscles on the sides of his spine. Think about it, which part of you really needs a massage, your back or your belly?
- If you want to make it more likely that your dog will enjoy petting from you, *use wiggly fingers*, i.e., massage versus patting him. Make contact with the part of the dog that is closest to you, rather than reaching over his body to touch something farther away. Crouch down and turn sideways to the dog, rather than leaning over him.

Toys and treats are excellent ways to motivate your dog. It's important to not use them as a 'bribe,' but rather to have them be a surprise. In other words, when you use treats or toys, try to have them not be obvious to the dog until after he's done what you ask. For example, have the treats in your

hand behind your back, in your pocket, in a treat pouch, or better yet, take the treats off of your body at least some of time, like up on a shelf or hidden in a tree. Try to surprise the dog with the reward after he sits or does whatever you've asked him to do.

You'll learn more about how to use treats effectively in a bit. Let's talk about which treats or toys you can actually use with your dog.

Basically, anything that is healthy to the dog can be used as a treat. You can even use some unhealthy things, but try not to give your dog too many of them. Look for natural and organic ingredients with names that you can recognize. Avoid foods that contain corn, sugar, ingredients sourced in countries with low standards for processing food, and anything with the words 'animal,' 'by-product,' or 'digest.' While we're on the subject of health, watch your dog's weight, too. Your dog should have a waist if you look at him from above, and you should be able to feel your dog's ribs easily through the fur. If not, you need to either exercise your dog more, use lower calorie treats, use regular dog food as treats, feed less dog food overall, or all of the above.

Consider more than just the health factor for treats. *Your dog will love the behaviors only as much as she loves the training treats you used*, so don't just use your regular ho hum dog food. Get treats and have your dog sample them and rate them from low to WOW.

Treat Examples:

- Dog food (kibble)
- Cheese
- Veggie hot dogs
- Freeze dried lamb lung
- Salmon strips
- Chicken
- Tug toys
- Fetch toys
- Ice cubes
- Freeze-dried or fresh veggies
- Paper towel rolls
- Food puzzles



Dogs Learn Through Experience: Puppy Socialization

Teaching your dog doesn't just involve telling her what you want her to do, and vice versa. It is also about teaching your dog that she lives in a world that is safe and predictable, and how to cope with it when it is neither of those things. If you have a puppy, socialization should be your main focus in the weeks and months to come. *Puppy socialization is low-stress exposure to various aspects of everyday life*—people, dogs, surfaces, noises, etc. As author and trainer Pat Miller has said, "The idea of puppy socialization is to *give the dog a generally optimistic view of the world*" (my emphasis).

Why should you care? For one thing, puppies who are not well-socialized often have problems with aggression or manners later in life. Un- and under-socialized dogs are not comfortable with the world they live in and are less able to cope with change than they should be. Many dogs at the shelter that look abused were actually just under-socialized as puppies.

People are often afraid of the germs that their puppy might encounter when they are out in the world, but *the major killer of dogs in the U.S. is not disease, it's behavior, which is directly correlated to puppy socialization*. For most of the dogs, that could have been changed with early socialization and puppy training.

Because of our current understanding of the importance of behavior, and because of vaccine advancements, we can start socializing puppies earlier than we used to do. Most of the new puppy vaccines can be given starting at 6 weeks old, and start being effective for relatively clean environments about 10 days later. Previous vaccines would fight with the immunization given by the mother and thus lose effectiveness, but newer vaccines have solved this problem, so we can vaccinate earlier than we could years ago. After your puppy gets his first round of shots, he is ready to be carefully exposed to the world. We still need to minimize risks for disease until the vaccinations are complete (usually 3 sets of combo shots) and keep the socialization fun for your puppy. That's the key to everything – socialization is a fun experience for your puppy.

If your veterinarian disagrees, you can tell her/him that the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior recommends starting puppy classes 7 days after your puppy's first set of shots, in most cases. You can see their position paper online at <http://avsabonline.org/resources/position->

statements (also includes positions on dominance, how to choose a trainer, and more).

Make sure that the school that you take your puppy to keeps medical and emotional risks to a minimum. For example, at Ahimsa, we have the facility professionally cleaned with a virucide the night before each puppy class, ask all puppy owners for proof of vaccination, and ask our students to avoid the dog park while they are in puppy class. We also have a special class for younger puppies, called Baby Puppy, so younger puppies do not have to start out in the main kindergarten class. If your training school doesn't have that option, the instructor should be doing something to make sure younger puppies are not bullied by older puppies. For example, young puppies can watch play time from behind a barrier at first.

Your puppy is learning and socializing right now, during every second that he's awake. People used to say that you couldn't start obedience training with a puppy until it was six months old. But they meant you couldn't properly punish a dog until that age with a choke chain, because of their growing puppy bones. *With positive training methods, you don't have to wait to begin training.* Using positive training, some dog breeders send home puppies that already know how to sit on cue. That's just one more reason to be dog-friendly—you can teach your puppy manners now! You can and should start teaching your puppy basic cues, like sit, down, etc. using the techniques in this book. But your main focus during puppyhood should not be on 'obedience' type behaviors, but rather on socialization with other puppies, dogs, humans, surfaces, sounds, and more, as well as everyday manners within your home.

Puppies are socialization sponges. Things that they experience in this time period will stick with them forever. Sources differ, but many say that the primary socialization period is up until 12 weeks. From 12-16 weeks, they are learning as well, but not as quickly as they did up to 12 weeks. Every new experience for your puppy should be positive, i.e., accompanied by treats, praise, and/or fun. Up until 6 months, you should only have your puppy in socializing environments that you have solid control over. Even after that, your puppy is still socializing. You may be surprised to learn that the full socialization period for a puppy is two years! But your dog will be your companion for 10 to 15 more years, so why not invest some time into creating an optimistic dog now?

To what sort of things should you socialize your new puppy? Everything!! Your puppy should experience a bit of cold, funny noises, strange hats, interesting textures, calm restraint (praise and release it when

it is calm), other dogs (your own dogs are not enough!) and many other things. Puppies should also learn to stop mouthing, gradually (see the section below on puppy biting). All of these topics in a good puppy socialization class, but you should start with exposing your puppy to new things now. Socialization doesn't just mean play with dogs. You can search online for "Puppy's Rule of Twelve" to find an article by Margaret Hughes with a variety of ideas.

Dog-dog interactions should be controlled and positive for your dog. You can socialize your young puppy with dogs in a positive puppy training class, a puppy playgroup, or a neighbor's yard, but not the dog park! One recent study found that dogs about 6 month of age were the target for the most aggression in the park, more than any other age group. Once your dog is old enough to go to the dog park, and you decide it's worth the risk, protect him from harm by moving along and not letting him get harassed by other dogs. If you have a small-breed dog, you should probably wait even longer than six months before going to the dog park, if ever. There are opportunities for play and socialization outside of the park, and you should take advantage of them.

Your dog is still 'socializing' even if she is not doing rough-and-tumble play, so going on walks with friends and meeting older dogs who do not play will still be very useful. Shy dogs can gain confidence around dogs who aren't trying to get them to play and dogs who tend to get overly riled up will learn manners around dogs who immediately going into play mode.

Again, make sure all experiences are safe and generally positive for your puppy. Your puppy should be able to leave or stop an interaction whenever he wants. Slow down and add distance if your puppy is scared! Please *read through the information on BAT and counterconditioning in this book*, even if your puppy has not shown any fears. Both techniques are helpful for socialization.

Now let's start talking about some of the technicalities of training. In our puppy socialization classes and adult dog classes, we use clicker training. What is it, exactly? Read on!

Thank you for reading!!

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