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TEACHING YOUR DOG SOMETHING NEW

3 ways to teach.

To teach your dog to do something specific on command, you get your dog to do that particular behavior, then reward it. The tricky part is getting your dog to do the behavior. There are 3 ways to do this:

Luring.
Shaping.
Capturing.

Luring.

Luring means showing the dog what you want and then rewarding that. The most common way to lure is to put a piece of food right on your dog's nose (close enough that he can lick it) and move the food in the direction you want him to go. Where the nose goes, the rest of the dog follows.

If, for example, you put a treat right by your dog's nose and slowly lift your hand up and toward his back end, your dog's nose will go up and his bottom will go down. Release the treat to reward that body position and you are halfway to having trained your dog to sit on command.

Shaping.

Shaping means rewarding approximations of a behavior, and then building on that until you get the behavior you want. It is like learning to dance. You don't start by dancing the Viennese Waltz; first, you learn the basic steps, then you practice correct body position, and so on.

Shaping is the dog-training equivalent of this training method. Say you want to teach your dog the down command. First you would reward the dog when his head goes down toward the ground. Next, for bending one front elbow. Then for bending both front elbows. Finally, you would reward a full down.

Capturing.

This is the organic way to train dogs. Basically, you wait for the behavior to occur naturally and then reward it. Say your dog is getting up from a snooze and does a yoga-like doggie stretch. If you get your treats ready in time and reward that stretch every time you see it, you will soon have a nice bow you can then put on command.

What to use when?

Luring, shaping, and capturing are all fine training methods, and you can mix and match depending on your personal preference. Lure if you want the behavior to happen fast. Shape if you want to give your dog a brainteaser that will wear him out. Or use capturing if you want to sit back and train from the couch.