

Beth Bradley
Dog Trainer/Behaviorist
(201) 247-8472

Motivation

Motivation to do something comes about for 2 reasons:

1. The desire to get something (Reward)
2. The desire to avoid something (Punishment)

Reward:

The most important step of training is to be 100% confident that your dog understands what you want from him. If your dog is confused or stressed, he is almost certainly going to make mistakes and that is not disobedience. In order to do this you must acknowledge or mark good behavior; this reassures the dog and does not leave him wondering if he is doing a good job. You can acknowledge his good behavior with praise and a reward of some type, food or ball or toys.

Your dog's reward should be his most favorite thing, not your most favorite food or toy. And the desired reward object is always ten times greater in value to the dog than any correction your dog will give him for disobedience. A pat on the head and a good boy is just not going to be persuasive enough for your dog to obey. Not only should the reward object be greater in value to your dog than the correction used but don't be stingy with the amount of treats or the amount of time you allow your dog to have in playing with the reward object. If you reward him for a job well done with a sufficient amount of treats or time with his toy, he is going to think he is well paid for his obedience.

ALWAYS PRAISE your dog. When training, you should always praise your dog. Some examples of when to praise your dog—

1. After he responds to a command
2. After a correction
3. To build confidence
4. To distract
5. To sneak the collar up high on the dog's neck.

Types of Verbal Praise

- The first type of praise is the "calm praise." In a calm voice, praise the dog and lightly stroke him on the shoulder. You will praise the dog like this if you have told him to stay, etc. Do not use this praise if your dog is frightened or growling, he will not take this praise as reassurance but as confirmation that he is behaving appropriately.
- The second type of praise is the "happy praise." Praise the dog with more enthusiasm and pet him in a quicker fashion. You can praise the dog like this if

the dog has completed an exercise perfectly, etc.

- The third type of praise is the "excited praise." You will praise your dog exuberantly, and either clap your hands or pat the dog on his shoulder. Use this praise after a training session to show the dog just how good he was or when he responds to a command that he previously was corrected for disobeying.

Punishment:

When your dog misbehaves or is disobedient, you must immediately reprimand him verbally and with some type of correction; if necessary. The correction should immediately stop the behavior. If your dog returns to this behavior, then your correction was not consequential enough. This means that, occasionally, you may have to give your dog a hard correction. When I use a hard correction, I make sure the reward for obedience makes up for the correction given by tenfold. Your correction needs to make an impression on your dog so he does not return to the behavior but the reward must make up for the correction given. This will keep your dog motivated and happy to work for you.

Too many people make the mistake and correct lightly over and over again for the same command and never get the desired response from the dog. I want a dog to know that his response to a command is not an option and that I am going to give the command once and then I'm going to correct. The only option the dog has to ponder is his desire to respond and receive a well deserving reward or disobey and receive a correction.

The level of correction depends on how sensitive the dog is to a correction and how strong his desire is to misbehave. Some dogs are very sensitive and require only a verbal correction. If a verbal correction is enough and your dog does not return to the disobedient behavior, then there is no reason to physically correct. It doesn't matter what method of compulsion you use as long as your dog responds, respects and learns from the correction; and of course, you reward him exuberantly once he does obey.

Conclusion:

It is fine to be tough on your dog and demand perfection from him but you must make sure you are not stingy with rewards and that you are rewarding your dog not only with verbal praise but with something that he loves and cherishes. The difference in your dog's attitude and obedience to commands is going to come from his desire for the reward you offer him and the type of compulsion. Only using corrections without the desired reward or an insufficient amount of reward is not going to create the picture of a dog working happily and reliably for his owner.

Beth Bradley

<http://www.dog-trainer.biz>