Where dogs WANT to learn!

Glossary of Terms Used in Dog Training

Abuse: injury of dogs by maltreatment. Denying a dog freedom from hunger, thirst, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, fear and distress and the opportunity for normal social activity and behaviour.

Anthropomorphism: attributing human characteristics and motivations (e.g. spitefulness) to dogs.

Aversive: any event, or change in the environment - however mild - that a dog finds unpleasant.

Behaviour: *any* action that a dog is physically capable of such as sleeping, sitting, barking or herding sheep.

Behaviour chain: a series of individual behaviors performed in sequence, such as retrieving a ball.

> **Backchaining:** the last behaviour is taught first so the dog is always going from something to new to something it already knows how to do. In **Forward Chaining** behaviours are taught in sequence.

Bribe: when a dog is shown a reward to get it to offer behaviour. Useful for first teaching the behaviour but the lure, usually food, should only be used for a few repetitions and then quickly phased out.

Bridge: the period between the "*That's right*!" marker and the arrival of the reward.

Canine Language: the way dogs communicate with each other, and with us, mainly via silent body language.

Calming Signals: body language signals, such as yawning or head turning, which are used to avoid conflict.

Cheerleading: verbal encouragement, as by 'cheerleaders' at a football game. Most dogs soon learn to tune out to their owner's chatter (commands), which are totally ineffective & counter productive unless adequate motivation is provided.

Clicker: a small plastic box with a metal tongue that makes a clicking sound. The clicker identifies, accurately and unemotionally, what precisely a dog is doing right. The 'click' forms one end of the **bridge.**

Clicker training: training with the use of a 'clicker', which the dog has been taught to associate with good news. For the method to succeed the association must first be properly **conditioned.**

Classical conditioning: learning by association and anticipation (as per Pavlov's salivating dogs).

Commands: words used to tell a dog what to do in order to avoid a correction. In **traditional training**, a word comes first and is followed by guidance and/or correction, action, praise and repetition. Contrast **cue.**

Conditioning/conditioned: learning/learnt. The opposite of **unconditioned** behaviour, where there is no need for learning as the behaviour happens anyway – as with sex, food and water.

Correction: indicating a mistake, with either a verbal reprimand or pulling and releasing a check chain.

Counter-conditioning: an attempt to lessen or eliminate an undesired behaviour by teaching an opposite (desirable) behaviour. There are two approaches, both frequently used in **modern** training.

> **Classical:** often used to change an emotional reaction, such as fear of a particular object. The dog is given a food treat each time the object appears or is shown.
> **Operant:** the dog only gets a treat if displaying a desired behavior in presence of the feared object.

Crate: a portable kennel, made of wire or plastic, which is a secure and safe place for the dog. One of the kindest things to do for any dog is to provide and then train it to enjoy going into its own private room or den.

Criterion/Criteria: a standard (s) used to judge whether a performance is satisfactory.

Cruelty: an intentional act that can be reasonably expected to cause physical or psychological damage.

Cue: the verbal or hand signal that tells a dog what to do for a reward; it is best taught *after* the dog knows the **behaviour.** Used in **clicker training**, contrast with traditional training's '**commands**'.

Desensitization: exposing a animal gradually to a frightening stimulus - such as a tape of a thunderstorm - with slowly increasing intensity that produces no fearful response. Used extensively in positive reinforcement training and behaviour modification. Contrast '**flooding**'.

Drive: the instinct that motivates a particular type of behaviour. 'Prey' drive refers to hunting and feeding; 'defense' drive has to do with self-preservation; 'pack drive', the ideal mode for training purposes, is group behaviour.

Ethology: the scientific study of animal behavior.

Extinction: undesired behaviours, such as begging for food, will often disappear - or extinguish - if ignored.

Extinction burst: before the behaviour disappears it will actually increase in intensity – making some people give up!

Fading: making the hand signal cue smaller and smaller so that eventually it almost unnoticeable.

Flooding: exposing an animal to large doses of a frightening stimulus in the hope it will get used to it. A sink or swim technique often used in **traditional training**, e.g. placing a timid dog in a large class.

Going back to kindergarten: going back several steps in the training process to where a dog was successful, usually required where the owner has tried to go too fast and the dog doesn't understand.

Handler: the person who is in charge of the dog at training, not always the owner.

Heeling: an advanced formal obedience exercise where a dog must always be strictly *'at heel'*.

Humane: an action performed with respect for a dog's feelings.

Jackpot: an extra big and unexpected treat for an especially good performance or a learning breakthrough.

Learning theory: an understanding of how dogs learn, including **operant** and **classical** conditioning.

Learned helplessness: develops when an animal is subjected to continuous punishments that cannot be avoided or controlled & so gives up & passively accepts whatever happens. Dogs become withdrawn, fearful & depressed.

Left side walking: the dog walks informally on the owner's left side on a loose lead, suitable for most pet owners; it is the first step to shaping the more disciplined *'heeling'* required in obedience competitions.

Lumping: attempting to get a whole behaviour, consisting of several parts, all at once. Contrast **splitting.**

Lure: an object of attraction – such as food – that is placed to prompt a dog to do something. When the action is performed correctly the lure can become the reward. Should only be used a few times to teach a new behaviour, otherwise the dog will not concentrate on anything but the food!

Management: Preventing opportunities for a **behaviour** to occur. Used as a temporary measure until training can take place, or as a permanent solution if training attempts fail –e.g. until a dog can greet visitors by sitting quietly at the front door, it should be tethered out of immediate reach and rewarded *by the visitor* only when it has all feet on the ground.

Motivation: the force, internal or external, which makes a dog want to perform a particular behaviour.

Neglect: failure to provide a dog's basic requirements of food, water, shelter, veterinary care, daily exercise and social interaction. See **abuse.**

Operant conditioning: a scientific term to describe learning by good or bad consequences. If the consequence, what happens immediately after a behaviour, is pleasant (**reinforcement**) then the behaviour is likely to be repeated and will strengthen. If the consequence is unpleasant **(punishment)** then the behaviour is less likely to be repeated and will weaken or stop.

Praise: approval of a dog's recent behaviour by means of animated voice. Informs the dog of a general behaviour after the event, rather than a specific part of the behaviour during the event. See **clicker.**

Proofing: getting a dog to do a learned behaviour in a variety of places - with increasing distractions.

Primary reinforcer: something the dog needs (essential for survival) & naturally likes, such as sex, food and water.

Punishment: something intended to makes a behaviour *less likely* to happen again in the future.

    Positive Punishment: *addition of something unpleasant* (e.g. a correction) when a dog makes a mistake.   (P+)

    Negative Punishment: *removal of something pleasant (*e.g. attention) when a dog makes a mistake.   (P-)

Reinforcement: a reward that reinforces (strengthens) a behaviour and makes it *more likely* to happen again.

    Positive reinforcement: *addition of a desired reward* (e.g. food, praise) when a dog does something right.   (R+)

Negative reinforcement: *the removal of punishment* (e.g. the electric shock ceases, the check chain goes slack) when a dog moves into the right position.   (R-)

Release Word: a word, such as *'free'* or *'OK'* that tells a dog when s/he may stop doing the current behaviour.

Repertoire: the number of behaviours that a dog can do – e.g. a repertoire of 100 different tricks.

Repetitions: repeating a behaviour many times is the secret to success. Practice makes perfect!

Secondary reinforcer: something a dog learns to like, e.g. praise & patting. Contrast with **primary reinforcer**

Shaping: developing a new behavior by reinforcing responses that come gradually closer & closer to the final desired end result, in a series of successive approximations - as in a lump of clay slowly becoming a fine vase. Once the end result is reached, only that behaviour is reinforced.

Splitting: breaking a whole behaviour into several parts and teaching one at a time. Contrast **lumping.**

Stimulus: anything in the five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch or smell) that stimulates an action.

    Unconditioned Stimulus: anything that your dog responds to automatically - such as food.

    Conditioned stimulus: something your dog learns to respond to – such as hand or voice signals.

Targeting: a method in which a dog is trained to move towards and touch a 'target', any object such as a hand or stick. Used extensively by most clicker trainers to speed up the learning process.

Traditional training: uses **positive punishment** (frequently) and **negative reinforcement** (frequently).

    Modern training: uses **negative punishment** (occasionally) and **positive reinforcement** (frequently).

Verbal marker: a word such as '*Yes*!' that marks the instant the correct behaviour happened. It is not as fast or accurate as a 'click' from a clicker - but it is always with you!