

Teaching Tricks to the Dogs!

Objective: Teach your team to teach the dogs tricks!

Content: Let your staff have a little fun (and maybe bring in a little extra revenue) by teaching dogs tricks! Anyone on your team can learn to teach the dogs cute things like shake, play dead or peek-a boo! Utilize this activity to demonstrate how to use positive reinforcement to teach the pets in your care some tricks!

***Tip to Owners/Managers:** This is a fantastic Lunch & Learn to delegate to a team member (or two!) to plan and present. They will need time to prep so work appropriate time into their schedules.*

Prior to Lunch & Learn Session:

- In preparation for leading the group discussion, the leader should review the supporting document section to determine how the information will be presented.
- This lunch and learn can be made simple by just teaching the team basic proper use of a clicker or can be more complex by instructing the team on how to actually teach a trick. Consider the experience level of your team as you decide.
- Gather a few of the rewards/clickers and treats referenced in the supporting documents.
- Practice teaching clicker training or teaching a trick a few times with a few dogs so you get comfortable with the technique.
- Plan to have a few well behaved, easily trainable dogs to practice with.
- Print the supporting documents so that the team can follow along as you present the information.
- Have a white board or other way to document notes

During Lunch & Learn Session:

- Let the team know that today is about learning but it is also about having fun!
- Present the Dog Training Made Easy for Non-Dog Trainers information. Have the team follow along with the handout.
- Work with a dog to demonstrate the technique a few times.
- Divide the group into a few small teams. Bring in the dogs and have each team work with one of the dogs to begin to teach proper clicker training or a trick. *Tip: One person from the group should work directly with the dog while the others verbally contribute. Make sure that positive rewards are being used.*
- The leader should walk around the room and offer input and advice to each group.
- Discuss how you can incorporate teaching tricks into your center to engage with the pet parents more or even increase revenue.

Supporting Education Articles/Tools: The information below provides additional guidance on the topic and should be reviewed prior to and during the meeting:

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Dog Training Made Easy for Non-Dog Trainers

Series 1: Getting Started

HOW DOES POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT WORK?

- Fear free
- Bottom line in teaching a dog anything is to reward the dog when he does the behavior that you want
- If a dog's behavior is followed by something that he likes, that behavior will continue … even if it is undesired behavior
- Don't reinforce BAD or undesired behavior – if a dog jumps on you and you pet it, if it likes being pet you increase the chance of it jumping again
- Training isn't based on good or bad behavior, it is based on what happens AFTER that behavior
- Reward the behavior you want – if the dog sits and it likes tasty treats, give him treats!
- If dog claws the door to go out and you let it out, you've reward the (possibly undesirable behavior) of clawing
- Don't reinforce the behavior if you don't want it to continue. Reinforce the behavior you DO want or like, by giving the dog a reward that he wants or likes
- To stop bad behavior, figure out what the dog's payout is
- Set your dog up for success so good behavior outweighs what you don't want

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Series 1: Getting Started

WHAT MAKES A GOOD REWARD?

- Depends on the individual dog
  - Frisbees
  - Balls
  - Toys
  - Sticks
  - Food / treat
  - Game – hide & seek, chase
  - Access to furniture
  - Being pet
  - Dog Park
- Give the reward to the dog at the appropriate time
- Vary rewards used

  (1) High value rewards when behavior is new or difficult

  (2) Less valuable rewards as the dog starts learning or becomes more proficient

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Series 1: Getting Started

USING A CLICKER OR OTHER MARKER

- Remember – the clicker by itself is not valuable to most dogs
- Pair the clicker with food
- Click then treat!
- Reward the dog instantly with the sound of the click
- Start by having the dog associate the click with immediate reward of food
- At the beginning, it doesn't matter what the dog is doing, just help him associate the click with food. Repeat several times per session
- The sound of the clicker should freeze frame what the dog is doing and that is the behavior you are rewarding
- Don't like the clicker? Use marker words instead!

  i) Yes

  ii) Good

  iii) Will mark the behavior just like the clicker does

  iv) Snapple bottle cap makes a similar noise

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