

DOGTALK PUPPY COURSE

PUPPY COURSE THEORY



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alone

Come

We are already halfway the puppy course

We are already at halfway through the puppy course, the third lesson is already over! Time flies and the pups grow so fast. You probably cannot imagine a life without your pup anymore.

And have you already noticed that the pups perceive more and more? They see more, they hear more and they smell more. Slowly their world is getting bigger. So there is a possibility that they suddenly find things scary again, we call this an anxiety phase. Please support them if this is the case.

*Have you already thought about how you can solve it if no one is able to stay home with the dog? Dogs from the age of 6 to 7 months are welcome to join our dog walking service. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns or if you would like to know more about our dog walking service. The best way to reach us is via e-mail:
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Positive reinforcement

The basis of our training is positive reinforcement. That does not mean that you always have to have treats with you, but that we encourage the puppy to make the right choices within the limits we give him. We choose to work with this technique because it contributes more to the welfare of the dog compared to other training techniques, and also to the bond between dog and owner.

How does it work exactly?

New behaviour can be learned by means of operant conditioning. Behaviour is learned with operant conditioning because the behaviour has an effect that can be both positive and negative: because the puppy shows behaviour x, situation y is the result.

Something is an “empowerer” if it increases behaviour. The term reward is also used often, but a reward is not the same as an empowerer. You can often see this when people pat their dog’s head as a reward. A lot of dogs do not like this at all and for them it will certainly not be an empower; they will not repeat certain behaviour in order to get patted on their head again. It is also the other way around, something that is not meant as a reward can work as an empower. Grumbling and complaining at your dog when he is nagging for attention is an example of this. The grumbling is certainly not meant as a reward, but it can work as an empowerer because the result of the nagging is the he does get attention from his owner.

Behaviour can have both pleasant consequences and unpleasant consequences. Something is a punishment if the consequences of behaviour cause the behaviour to decrease. The difference between empowerment and punishment is whether the behaviour increases or decreases.

When training animals – and therefore also dogs – food is often used as a positive reinforcer. Primary reinforcers provide basic life needs, and number one is food. Food is a good way to train animals, but games can also be a good reinforcer. Another example of an empowerer is to give praise or attention, this is something we call social reinforcement. Belonging to a group is important for survival and praise can act as an empowerer in social animals such as dogs.

What works as an empowerer, however, differs from dog to dog. Something is only an empowerment by definition if it causes behaviour to increase, which means it is the dog that determines what an empower is. In the handout of the second lesson we have already talked extensively about the various ways of rewarding.

How do you apply this in practice?

You reward desired behaviour, so that this behaviour will be repeated. It is that simple! Why do we choose to use an empowerer as much as possible and not to correct the dog? When we correct, we make sure that the dog does not do something anymore, but we do not explain to him what behaviour we would like to see. Besides that a correction also causes a bad feeling; the dog can become anxious and can experience a lot of stress. A dog then only knows what he is not allowed to do, but not what he is allowed to do. That is the big difference; by using empowerment we teach the dog to show the desired behaviour, then the dog knows what to do and feels more secure. In addition to that the empowerment naturally contributes to build a bond. After all, it is much more pleasant for the dog to be trained on a basis of attention, trust and cooperation, then on fear and punishment.



“What is a reward for your puppy?”

Biting behaviour – what and why?

If there is one thing that every puppy owner talks about it is biting – those sharp teeth that easily sink into your skin and clothes. Teeth that get stuck easily when they bite and which makes children and also many adults sometimes a bit scared of puppies.

A short explanation about the origin of the teeth and the development. A puppy is born toothless. First milk teeth will come through and in a later stage this milk teeth will be exchanged for the final or adult teeth. The first teeth that break through, the canines and incisors, when they are around three to six weeks old. The molars break through when they are between five and six weeks old. These milk teeth are really razor sharp. They exchanging these teeth around the age of three months. By the time the dog is seven months old, all milk teeth have been replaced by the adult ones. These 'big dog' teeth are less pointy and therefore feel very different on your skin.

Why are the teeth so sharp?

- The teeth will break through around the time that the mother will stop nursing the pups. The pups then slowly switch to more solid foods. The teeth are therefore necessary to process the food but they also have another purpose. It hurts the mother dog if the puppies drink milk while they have teeth, which will cause her to stop the nursing earlier by walking away or allowing them to nurse less often.
- The second reason is that the pups learn through how to use their adult teeth. The puppy learns in different ways what it means to bite with his teeth. In the litter the pups have learned how hard they can bite a brother or sister before they get a reaction, if they bite too hard, they will get a growl or snarl. "If you cannot play in a fun way then it is better not play".

They will also test their teeth in your home; puppies discover the world with their mouths and will therefore bite into anything and everything. The main lesson they have to learn with these sharp teeth is with how much power they can bite and are allowed to bite.

These sharp teeth can cause scratches, but that in combination with the fact they do not have a fully grown jaw and muscles yet, they are not be able to inflict serious injuries (they cannot bite your finger off). Despite the not yet fully grown muscles, being bitten by a puppy is not pleasant. The person or other animal that gets bitten, will react when the pup bites too hard. Which means biting has a consequence.

What if there is no consequence? In that case, most puppies respond by continuing to bite even harder or even longer. Pups really test the limits with biting. They have to learn what is allowed and what is not allowed.

The consequence that follows on biting is therefore important, as pups learn from it. A brother or sister will walk away from him when he or she is bitten too hard. A puppy also looks for clear limits when they play with people.

You can explain these limits to your pup by stopping the game and walking away if you get bitten too hard. You can combine this with saying 'ouch' if you like. When you apply this consistently, your puppy will learn about the consequences if he bites too hard.

Do not play rough games with your puppy before your puppy has learned a good biting limit. If your puppy does not have a good biting limit yet, these kinds of games will lead to disappointment on both sides. You will have painful and perhaps even bloody arms and/or hands and the puppy because you might get angry at him or hurt him as a kind of 'payback' that he hurt you.

Rough games like wrestling are fun to play with adult dogs, when they have a good understanding of the biting limit. They will then not bite too hard so that the game is fun for both sides and will remain fun. Please play with toys that are long or large enough so that your pup does not immediately touch your hands, for example a big plush animal or a long braid of fleece material. That way you can play nicely without having to think about the biting limit.

Tugging/pulling is fine in this phase because it is only tugging on toys. By using large or long toys you can avoid that the puppies teeth will come in contact with your hands and it will teach him not to bite you but only the toy during playing.

Please do not allow children to play with your puppy without supervision. Children can not properly indicate when something is too rough. When it gets too rough, it will be quite sudden for the puppy and then he is already overexcited. A pup in that state of excitement will no longer be able to remember or learn the biting limit. The child could end up in tears and the puppy will most likely be blamed, even though the puppy is also a baby and still has to learn a lot. Go for success and teach your puppy a good biting limit without getting into situations where it can very quickly harm the learning process.



"Stop before it gets too wild, that is not fun!"

Crazy 5 minutes

It can happen that pups have a moment in the day that they go completely wild. Some just run around and play – and that's fine – but for other pups it is very different, they can become too wild and bite trousers or hands without responding to anything you say. This often happens around the same time of the day and is most likely somewhere between 4 o'clock in the afternoon and 7 o'clock in the evening. That big time span is related to the different daily rhythms that people have.

If your puppy does not respond to you at the end of the afternoon the cause will most likely be fatigue. The day is pretty long for a puppy and they have already done a lot. Not all puppies sleep enough during the day and the house will be busy from around 3 o'clock in the afternoon – children come home, the work day is over etc. And then there's the puppy who runs around like a little piranha. What can you do? You should bring the puppy to his bed, because often there are just too much stimuli at these moments. Your biting limit training will not really make any difference when your puppy is over his limit of stimuli processing and fatigue. Therefore it is time for bed: in a puppy pen, crate or kitchen with a nicely filled KONG or other chew toy. That way the puppy can bite into something as a reaction to the sudden busy situation, but often you will see that the puppy will fall asleep within a few minutes. That means rest for the puppy and rest for you.

A time out for attention-seeking behaviour

The puppy wants nothing more than to be with you and preferably get as much attention as possible. In addition to that the puppy does not know how to entertain himself. In his litter were always his brothers and sisters but at your home he does not have that entertainment and will want to play with you. The dogs way of playing is not always our way of playing, which can cause annoying attention-seeking behaviour.

The puppy may:

- Bark for attention
- Bite your clothes
- Whine for attention
- Nibble on things in your presence that are not his

All these forms of attention-seeking behaviour have something to do with the owner being present. This is also what we will use to stop this behaviour by giving him a time-out. When the puppy shows attention-seeking behaviour – which is only possible in the presence of the owner – then please do not give any attention, you can do this by putting the puppy in the hallway or by walking away for a moment. You "punish" the puppy by not giving him attention. The time out takes 30-60 seconds and is preceded by a so-called "bridge" – that is when you tell the dog what is going to happen – for example say: "too bad" or "what a shame".

It is important that after the "punishment" you ensure that the desired behaviour will be reinforced again. So right after the time out you can ask the pup something he can already do and then reward him for it. Please note that the crate and/or place where he sleeps can never be used for a time-out.

"What a
shame:
Time out!"



Being at home alone

It is difficult for the puppy to be at home alone, he is not used to this at all. But that will occur, sometimes the dog cannot come along and there will come a moment when there is no one who can stay home with the dog. Staying alone is difficult for a dog, because they always want to be around people. That is why it is a good idea to start training being alone as soon as possible.

Please do this in small steps because it is important that the puppy is comfortable with the situation and does not panic. It is a good idea to use a crate or puppy pen, that is the safe place for the dog. We have already done some crate training, so the puppy can now sit calmly in his crate if all went well. You can go out of the room for a moment – go for example to the kitchen or upstairs – and reward the puppy for staying calm when you get back and you can get him out of the crate again.

If that goes well, you can go outside for a moment. Please note that this is a long learning process, you can only go away for some minutes longer than the time before.

A young puppy cannot be alone for hours! You can make it easier for him by giving him something to nibble on in the bench, for example a nice bone or a filled KONG. The puppy will be so busy eating the food that he will not even realize what is going on and then fall asleep.

You can only train at home successfully when you take small steps. If the training goes too fast the puppy will find it scary and may even panic.



"Take small steps"

Homework assignment

In addition to all the exercises that have been done in the last lessons, you can also get started with the following two exercises. Take it slow and do not train too long – just a few minutes at a time – and stop at the moment that things go well so that the puppy finishes the training successfully. Make sure you do not train different exercises together, then the puppy will get confused and the exercises will get mixed up.

What you will need:

- Leash
- Treats

Put the puppy on a leash so he cannot walk off. Offer him a treat above his nose and you will see that the puppy will sit down. Please reward him with your voice and give the treat at that moment. Then let the puppy stand up again and repeat the exercise.

If the pup understands the exercise you can link a hand gesture and command to it. At a later stage you can lay the treat behind him and ask him to sit by using the hand gesture and the spoken command, and only then reward your dog. Please stop using treats to make him sit if the dog understands the hand gesture

"Sit"

What you will need:

- Leash
- Crate, stool or box
- Treats

Please put the crate or box on its side and walk towards it with the puppy on the leash. Then put a few treats in the box and tell the pup that he can eat them. Please let go of the leash and take a few steps away when he is eating. Once the puppy is done eating you can call him and when he comes you can say the command "come" and reward the pup. Please give the reward first and then pick up the leash quietly. The crate or box will work as a distraction, the puppy will be busy with his treats and not see where you are going. Slowly you can make this a little more difficult every time – for example take a step further, take a step in another direction or use objects as distractions. Make sure you always pay attention to safety!

"Come"