



BARK U Education Sheet Training Basics: Tips, Tricks, and How Behavior Works

Understanding Behavior



At its core, **behavior = consequence**. Dogs do what works for them. If a behavior leads to a positive outcome, your dog will repeat it. This applies to both good and bad behaviors.

The key to training is to reward the behaviors you like so your dog understands what's expected and wants to repeat them.

What Counts as a Reward?

Rewards are anything your dog enjoys, such as:

- Treats or food
- Toys (balls, tug ropes, etc.)
- Playtime or fetch
- Walks, car rides, or outdoor adventures
- Attention, petting, or verbal praise

Pro Tip: Keep a family list of what your dog loves and add to it as you discover new motivators. Use these rewards to reinforce good behavior!

Why We Use Food as a Reward (at First):

Food is a **primary reinforcer**, meaning it's biologically necessary and universally motivating. It's not bribing—it's teaching! Here's the difference:

- **Bribery:** Showing the treat before the behavior.
- **Reinforcement:** Giving the treat after the behavior.

When we reinforce, dogs learn to perform behaviors for the reward, not because they see it first.

What if My Dog Isn't "Food Motivated"?



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Here are some common reasons and solutions:

1. **Low-Value Treats:** Experiment with tastier options like cheese, hot dogs, or freeze-dried liver.
2. **Satiation:** Avoid free-feeding. Use structured meal times to make food more appealing.
3. **Stress/Excitement:** Overexcited or anxious dogs may not accept food. Focus on calming exercises before training.
4. **Medical Issues:** A sudden loss of appetite could signal illness—consult your vet if this happens.

Beyond Food: Life Rewards

Not every reward has to be edible! Here are three types of life rewards:

Food: Think of special treats like stuffed KONGs or bones.

Attention: Praise, petting, or playtime with you.

Access: Letting your dog through a door, into the car, or to greet a favorite person.

Tools for Addressing Unwanted Behavior

1. **Ignore It:** If your dog is barking, jumping, or seeking attention inappropriately, ignore the behavior. Reward them only when they offer something appropriate, like sitting calmly.
2. **Manage the Environment:** Prevent bad behaviors by removing temptations. Examples:
 - Use trash cans with lids.
 - Spray furniture with a deterrent like Bitter Apple.
3. **Redirect:** Offer an alternative behavior. Examples:
 - Hand them a chew toy instead of letting them nip.
 - Call them to you if they're about to bark at the door.

Using a Marker to Reinforce Good Behavior

A marker is a word or sound (like "Yes!" or "Good!") that lets your dog know they've done something right and a reward is coming. Pair it consistently with treats or praise to make it meaningful.



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Teaching Polite Manners

By adding these advanced games to your weekly routine, you'll give your dog a healthy mental workout. Dogs should "say please" by offering behaviors like "sit" before getting something they want.

Example:

- Ask your dog to sit before giving them a toy or opening the door.
- If they comply, reward and release with a word like "Okay!"
- If they don't, remove the toy or delay the action for a moment and try again.

Final Thoughts

Training is a partnership between you and your dog. Be patient, consistent, and reward generously in the beginning. Over time, rewards will become less frequent as your dog learns to work for praise, play, and the joy of making you happy!



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