

Down Dog Studio

Dog Training Techniques

Shaping

Shaping is when you break down a behavior into very small steps, and reward your dog for those small steps that move towards the desired end result.

With shaping, your dog is able to make progress at their own pace. Shaping does not always have to have a concrete end goal. You can also use it to work with your dog to develop new tricks. Shaping allows your dog to be creative and offer behaviors!

An example would be shaping your dog to sit in a box. We would set the box on the floor and be ready to click/mark any movement towards the box. Looking at or stepping towards the box earns a click! Then we would slowly raise our criteria for clicking - we might withhold the click until our dog touches the box with a nose or paw. Slowly working towards the dog putting a paw or 2 in the box!

Shaping is an advanced dog training technique that requires excellent timing and observational skills. If you do it incorrectly, your dog will get frustrated and confused. It's crucial that you reward tiny steps towards the end goal, and reward at frequent intervals, while giving your dog enough time to use their brain. Shaping sessions should be kept short. You will need to learn to understand your dog's body language so they are always excited to work, rather than frustrated.

Luring

Luring is when you guide your dog by holding a treat in front of their nose. The most effective way to use luring is to use the food lure to guide the dog into the desired position for the first few attempts, then transition to using the luring motion without a treat - you are turning it into a hand signal. Once your dog is following the hand signal then add a verbal cue.

Examples are using a treat lure to lure your dog into a sit or a down.

It's important to fade out the food lure as soon as you can, or the dog will only perform the behavior when they see a treat. As far as your dog is concerned the lure can be food in your hand or your hand in/on a pocket or your treat bag.



You need to empty your hands as soon as possible! If your dog is stuck only performing a behavior with a food lure you can start by putting treats in both hands. Prompt the behavior with the treat in the cueing hand. When the dog successfully completes the behavior, Click/mark! and treat from the other hand. This last part is important. Get your dog used to food coming from somewhere other than the lure hand. After several repetitions, you should be able to begin fading the lure.

Targeting

Targeting is similar to luring but you aren't using a treat to prompt the behavior. Instead you teach your dog to touch or follow a target of some sort with his nose or paw. Then you move that target to put your dog in a clickable position.

Capturing

Capturing is when you teach your dog to perform a natural behavior on cue. You simply wait for your dog to perform the behavior without any prompting or guidance from you, and click/treat and reward them immediately afterwards.

An example - your dog always stretches when they wake up from a nap. Be ready when they wake up and have a few treats on hand and wait. As soon as they stretch, click or use a verbal marker & then give them a treat.

When you consistently reward a behavior, your dog will perform it more often. When you notice your dog is doing the behavior in front of you to get the treat, you can add in a cue.

Capturing only works with behaviors that your dog does on their own. You can "capture" your dog when they sit, yawn, stretch, scratch, tilt their head, bark or sneeze. It's best to start with a super simple, common behavior.

