

How to train a dog

Contributed by Ram Janspur
Saturday, 17 June 2006
Last Updated Friday, 30 June 2006

There are probably thousands of books on how to train a dog, and all of them will tell you more or less the same things. Training a dog is a pretty simple affair, once you understand its principals...

The very first lesson that any expert in how to train a dog will tell you is to start young. The old adage "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" isn't exactly true, but it certainly is much easier to teach a young dog new tricks than an old one.

If your dog is fully grown, you'd do best to take it to an expert who knows more about how to train a dog. But, unless you want him to perform the most spectacular and complex of tricks, anyone can train a puppy.

The basic principals of how to train a dog are conditioning — specifically, negative and positive reinforcement. Sometimes these can be quite cruel, but you need to persist in them.

Anyone who knows anything about how to train a dog will tell you: if your feedback is not immediate and consistent, your dog will never be successfully trained. So, for example, if you want to housebreak your dog, you must, whenever it pees in the house, immediately stick its nose in it, and say "bad dog."

This will teach the dog to associate peeing in the house with the unpleasant sensation of being shouted at, and having its nose stuck in its pee. You then immediately lead the dog to the back door, and show it where in the yard it is to pee.

If you see the dog about to pee in the house, you should grab it by the collar and drag it outside. Soon, the dog will begin to understand. It will know that it is not supposed to pee inside, and is supposed to go outside to do its business.

The next step in how to train a dog is to give it positive reinforcement when it figures this out. Perhaps, when it begins to make it out the door before going to the bathroom, you can pet it and say "good dog." Then, feed it a biscuit.

It is easy to figure out how to train a dog to do some tricks, such as begging and rolling over, through the use of positive reinforcement alone, which is much more pleasant for both you and your dog.