



Perception: Define the behavior obstacle as specifically as possible. Answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why to break down the behavior into smaller parts. Imagine that you are trying to describe exactly what happened in a movie scene.

Helpful: "when a stranger (who) enters my home (where), my dog barks and lunges (what) because he feels threatened (why)".

Not helpful: "my dog is aggressive towards strangers".

Actions: Decide on the actions you will take to overcome the dog's behavior obstacle. The actions will make up your Training Plan. Your actions should directly address the who, what, when, where, and why of your perceptions. Not only do you need to choose the right actions, but you also need to execute them well. Only take action when you are able to commit yourself 100% to the moment. When you are unable to commit yourself to the moment, you need to take steps to manage the situation and put the dog in a position where he can't practice the behavior.

the Will:
You need the discipline to carry out the Training Plan in order to overcome the behavior obstacle. You need the patience to understand there will be setbacks, and the fortitude to learn from them and move forward. Some things, such as breed traits and past history, are completely out of your control. The will keeps you focused only on what you can control and committed to the actions that will cause the behavior change you are looking for.

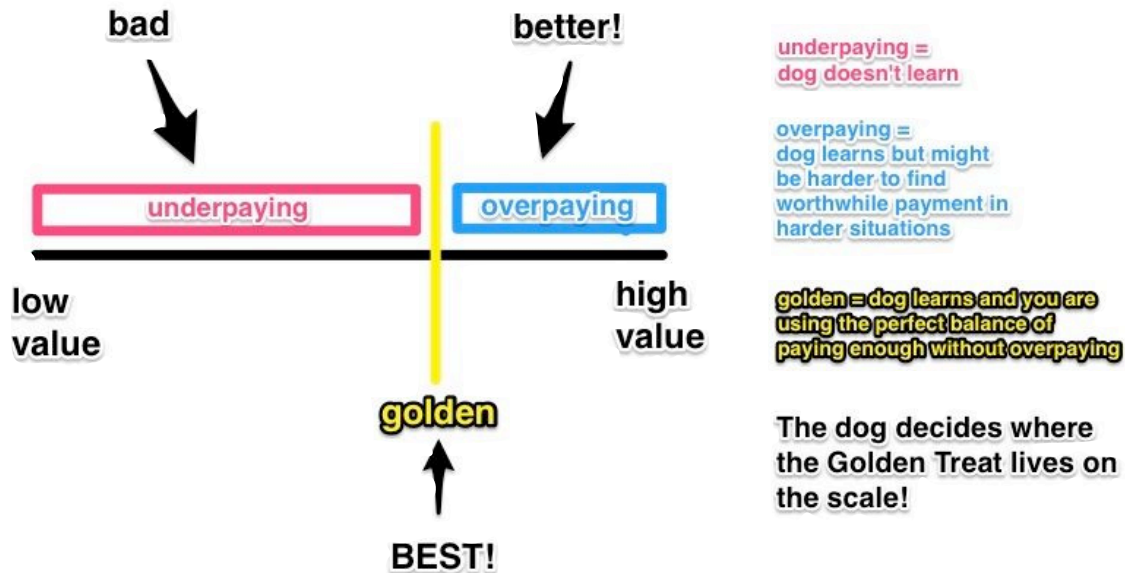
Treat Value

Every treat lies on a scale ranging from extremely low value to extremely high value.

The Golden Treat is the least valuable treat on the scale that the dog is *excited* about getting. Using any treat *less* valuable than the Golden Treat means you are underpaying the dog. Using any treat *more* valuable than the Golden Treat means you are overpaying.

The Golden Treat is the ideal treat to use in any given situation.

It's much better to overpay than underpay! If you underpay your dog won't learn anything. If you overpay your dog will learn, but it might be harder to teach the dog in more distracting environments.



How to find the Golden Treat:

At home: Gather 3 different types of treats. Put them on a counter or somewhere *off* of your body, preferably out of sight of the dog.

- 1. Low Value:** Dry Kibble
- 2. Medium Value:** Moist treats (eg. Mini-Zukes)
- 3. High Value:** Chopped up cheese, hot dog, freeze dried liver

Step 1. Ask your dog what he/she finds rewarding.

Grab 3 or 4 pieces of Low value dry kibble and show it to the dog (put kibble in front of dog's nose with a closed fist).

How much does your dog want the kibble? Does he/she A) nose at your fist for more than 5 seconds or B) turn his/her head and pay attention to something else?

If the answer is A, you have probably found "The Golden Treat" that your dog will work for at home *right now*. Go to Step 2.

If the answer is B, repeat Step 1 using the Medium Value moist treats.

Step 2. Start working on any behavior (could be "Down", "Stay", Obstacle-type work, etc).

If the dog easily gives up in under 5 seconds and turns away, you may be asking the dog for something too hard or there may be too much distraction.

The treat is no longer golden in that environment. The dog is saying "that kibble is great for the easy stuff, but just not worth it for a harder job". You will likely need to go back to Step 1.

Repeat exercise in different locations. *Make sure the treats are out of sight when you are not using them.* Do not just carry three plastic baggies full of different treats in one hand. Put them in a pouch behind your back or at your side and test them one by one, in order of value.

Which treat will grab your dog's attention on walks? What about in class?

Notes:

Dogs might get bored of certain treats within a session. I might not be able to stomach another slice of pizza but I'll happily find room for ice cream. Try to always keep some "ice cream" in your back pocket. Also, try not to overwork the dog. Take lots of breaks. Think "training bursts" instead of "training sessions", especially in hard environments.

If your dog loses interest in the Golden Treat in Step 2, it could be that what you are asking is too hard (remember to make things harder in *tiny* steps using the Rule of 3). See if you can make it easier.

Maybe you can't find a Golden Treat within an environment. That means the environment is too distracting or too hard. Work in a slightly less distracting, but comparable, place. For example, if you can't find a Golden Treat at the park, find one in a new neighborhood first. You may also need to just wait out the initial excitement of a new place.

Sometimes the Golden Treat might not be food. It might be water. It might be smelling something. It might be a fun sprint. But remember, the dog decides. Not you. Sorry to crush your ego!

Being excited about taking the treat is different than just taking the treat. If the dog is taking the treat but not excited, then you are underpaying!

OR HOW DOG TRAINING IS EXACTLY LIKE ORDERING A DRINK AT A BAR

I'm standing at a bar and want to order a round of drinks. What do I need to do before I order?

Get the bartender's attention!

But the bar is busy and other customers are also competing for the bartender's attention. One is a cute girl. Another seems to be the bartender's friend. I don't have these advantages. How can I get the bartender's attention on me and away from them?

I need him to notice me!

I lean a little further forward over the bar. I hold my wallet out in plain view. I politely signal for him just as he is passing near.

It worked! I have the bartender's attention. The bartender impatiently points at me and asks what I want. I've momentarily forgotten the order and hesitate. The bartender moves on to another customer.

Crap. Now I have to get his attention again. Once I get it, how can I keep it this time?

I need to give the order clearly and quickly. It might also be wise to tip him well so that he might notice me sooner and be more patient taking my order next time.

Giving useful, clear information and tipping generously establishes me to the bartender as someone worth paying attention to -- even when competing with the allure of serving cute girls and old friends.

Replace "bartender" with "dog", "order a round of drinks" with "ask your dog to do something", and "customer" with "distraction" and you've got dog training.

I'm standing with my dog Benny in a park. I want Benny to "Sit" reliably when I ask him to. He already "Sits" reliably at home, but usually ignores me at the park. What do I need to do before I ask Benny to Sit?

Get Benny's attention!

But the park is busy and interesting sights, sounds, and smells are also competing for Benny's attention. There is the smell of dog pee over here. A squirrel is over there. People are talking behind us.

How can I get Benny's attention on me and away from these interesting things?

I need him to notice me!

I get myself in his peripheral vision. I make a "strange" noise.

It worked! I have Benny's attention. Benny looks at me to see if I'm worth his attention. I say "Sit" but Bill has already turned his attention back to the pee smell.

Crap. Now I have to get his attention again. Once I get it, how can I keep it this time?

I need to ask for the Sit more clearly and quickly. It might also be wise to give him a generous amount of treats so that he might notice me sooner and be more patient listening to my "Sit" request next time.

Giving useful, clear information and treating generously establishes me to Benny as someone worth paying attention to -- even when competing with the unquestionable allure of dog pee and squirrel chasing.

Maybe this is easier said than done. I can teach you some tricks. But I'll give you the main secret right here:

APPRECIATE YOUR DOG'S ATTENTION AND NEVER TAKE IT FOR GRANTED.

Thank your dog sincerely for simply giving and maintaining attention. Treat generously to reinforce your appreciation. Establish yourself as someone *worth* paying attention to no matter how exciting the rest of the world might be.

The Lure:

A lure is a desirable item that you hold in your hand to guide your dog's head through space. We use the lure when training new behaviors, such as sit and down. The “golden treat” is generally a good lure for teaching dogs.

The Reward:

A Reward is something you use to congratulate your dog for doing the correct thing. When teaching a new behavior, food and treats make excellent rewards. Over time, it is best to also use praise and play as rewards. These are called Life Rewards. A reward can be anything that your dog wants. The important thing is that he wants it!

Jackpot:

A Jackpot is 5-10 treats delivered one after another, coupled with very excited praise. We use jackpot to reward the very best examples of a behavior, or to train particularly difficult behaviors.

How to Lure:

When training a new behavior it is important that the dog is focused on the lure. You must use something of high value to the dog. For some dogs that may be their regular kibble, for others it might need to be bits of hot dog. Whatever you use, your dog must find it more desirable than anything else in the environment.

Treat the lure and your dog's nose like a magnet. If your dog removes his nose from the lure, your job is to get the lure back on the nose as soon as possible. As you are moving your dog's nose through space, move slowly, let your dog sniff and maybe even lick the treat. Your goal is to keep the dog's nose on the lure. Pretend you are on a tightrope. Rather than looking across to the other side of the rope, you need to focus on each step one at a time.

How to Reward:

When first training a new behavior, you will treat 100% of the time for correct responses. **Be sincerely appreciative!** Say “thank you” or “good!” as soon as you get the behavior, and quickly give a treat in order to keep the dog in the position you asked for. For example, if you are asking for a “Down”, get the treat down to his head before he has a chance to get back up! As your dog begins to improve his new skill, you will begin varying the rewards. The best responses will get lots of treats (jackpots!) and playtime and lots of thank you's all at once!

The Rule of 3:

Anytime you get 3 good repetitions of a behavior in a row, you must increase the difficulty by just a little bit. Remember, when you teach 1+1, you don't go straight to long division. Go from A to B, not A to Z.

See back side of page for Step by Step to Teaching & Improving a Skill!

Training a New Behavior Using Lure/Reward & The Rule of Three

Step 1

Lure Behavior with Treat.

Dog Does Behavior.

Reward with Treat and say Thank You.

Repeat. After 3x consecutively getting it right, move on to Step 2.

Step 2

Have treats in both hands.

Lure Behavior with Treat.

Dog Does Behavior.

Reward with Treat coming from NON-luring hand and say Thank You.

Repeat. After 3x consecutively getting it right, move on to Step 3..

Step 3 (Teaching the Hand-Signal)

Hold treats only in NON-luring hand.

Lure Behavior without Treat.

Reward with treat from non-luring hand and say Thank You.

After 3x consecutively getting it right, move on to Step 3.

If dog does not get it right, go back to Step 2.

Step 4

Hold treats only in NON-luring hand.

Using an open hand, recreate the luring motion.

Reward with treat from non-luring hand and say Thank You.

After 3x consecutively getting it right, move on to Step 5.

Step 5

Say the Behavior Name one time, in normal tone of voice. Ex: "Sit".

Wait 1 Mississippi.

Using an open hand, recreate the luring motion, but attempt to make it more subtle (for example, if teaching "Down", don't go all the way down with the hand.

Reward with treat from non-luring hand and say Thank You.

At this stage you will want to begin getting more and more subtle with your hand signals until your dog is responding the verbal cue.

Tip: Make your dog think that you have a treat in the luring hand, even if you don't!

Tip: If you are holding treats in your non-luring hand, keep the hand behind your back.