



Trainers Workshops

Module 2

How Dogs Learn

I. How do dogs learn ?

Dogs learn mostly from body language, scents and sounds.

A dog can pick up your scent (smell a person or another dog) from over 30 meters away.

They can determine from that whiff of scent if you or your dog is:

- friendly
- stressed
- aroused (excited)
- imbalanced (drunk / stoned / unwell (sick))
- scared (fearful of dogs / or running from the police)
- If you have food or not - this is why weaning doggies of treat rewards are important - whether that treat is in your hand or in your pocket.

Dogs do what they do because their behaviors are instrumental in getting what they desire– period.

- Animals perform voluntary behaviors that are instrumental in achieving their immediate goals.
- Voluntary behaviors that achieve immediate goals are repeated.
- Voluntary behaviors that fail to achieve immediate goals are discontinued.

The Nose - About 90% of the dog is controlled by the nose

Scent is the first of the five senses to develop and usually the last to leave the dog before passing on.

The primary function of the nose is to detect pheromones, which then provides both sexes with information as to the availability of the opposite sex for breeding. Additionally the Organ is apparently able to detect other, normally undetectable, odors – odors that may enhance the newborn's ability to find its own dam, for example. Search and rescue dog

handlers notice that many of their dogs lick the air, as if to give additional input into their “scents-ability.”

Animals enhance the sex-detection ability of the nose with what is called the “flehmen” reaction or “flared face.” When exposed to the urine of an animal in heat, a male will typically throw back his head and raise or curl his upper lip – both of these help to open the entry slits into Jacobson’s Organ, the sense of smell receptor. This receptor is not receptive to ordinary odors, it responds to a range of substances that have large molecules, but often no detectable odor.

A dog's brain is also specialized for identifying scents. The percentage of the dog's brain that is devoted to analyzing smells is actually 40 times larger than that of a human! It's been estimated that dogs can identify smells somewhere between 1,000 to 10,000 times better than nasally challenged humans can.¹

Table: Scent-Detecting Cells in People and Dog Breeds

Survival

Species	Number of Scent Receptors
Humans	5 million
Dachshund	125 million
Fox Terrier	147 million
Beagle	225 million
German Shepherd	225 million
Bloodhound	300 million

- They can learn from other dogs - social learning
- They can learn from humans - this is called - conditioning
- Dogs only vocalize though when absolutely necessary - so according to them us humans talk ALOT!!!!

¹ expert from : <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/understanding-a-dogs-sense-of-smell.html>

Body language - that's how the dog learns and how we can benefit from that understanding.

- Body language is covered more in depth in DTA - Module 2

Consistent human behavior towards a dog will result in a consistent response from the dog.

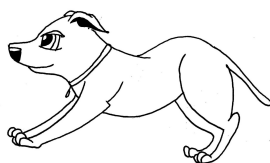
IE -

Scenario 1 - giving the same hand signal to your dog to sit every day for 1 week will result in a faster understanding

Scenario 2 - giving three different hand signals to your dog for sit a few times a day for 1 week may result in an inconsistent ideal / wanted behavior.

Be clear and over exaggerate when first teaching body language / hand-signal cues to a dog.

Nervous dog treatment - When you work with a dog that is nervous or skittish - quietly working with them may be the best route to go. Adding too much vocalization into what you are trying to teach them - could be overwhelming to them.



1. B) How dogs think and What do dogs think about?

Dogs think with the end goal in mind. They have needs that require attention.

Those needs include:

- Food & Water
- Shelter
- Play or Hunt or Herd
- Socialization
- Reproduction

If their needs are not met on a regular basis - the dog will take it upon itself to fulfill those needs on its own.

This is when destructive behaviors begins according to humans. Dogs just are fulfilling a need to chew, play and release energy.

Simply locking the dog up to eliminate the opportunity to fulfill their needs, doesn't make the desire or need to go away.

Frustration may then occur and frequently that can be perceived by humans as aggression.

Every dog requires some sort of stimulation - if we provide it (the humans) it may come in the form of a walk around the park, off leash romps in the forrest or at the beach, training - basic, agility, scent work (for specific breeds), rally-o, fetching balls, frisbees or toys, and my favorite - acting for dogs (trick training)

If the human factor fails to provide adequate stimulation then the dog may find its own way to release the energy it has daily. This may come in the form of - barking, pulling on leash everywhere it goes, digging in the garden, destructive chewing, jumping up on everyone and everything, aggression towards people or other dogs.

Most dogs require at least an hour of stimulation every day. Exercise is very important in keeping dogs happy and well behaved in our human lives. Mental stimulation for some more active - working type dogs may also be required for an hour or more each day.

Breeds that may require mental and physical stimulation

- border collie
- visla
- german shepherd
- german short haired pointer
- portuguese water dogs
- corgi
- labrador retriever
- golden retriever
- jack russel terrier
- wheaton terrier
- boston terrier

A essential goal with training is that the human is providing the stimulation - rather than your dog being a self sufficient animal resolving to providing the stimuli as they see fit - which may not be appropriate to the human in their lives.

