

Instructive Reprimands

By Fawn Pierre

Unlike us, puppies do not understand right and wrong. Instead it is safe or dangerous, works vs. doesn't work, feels good vs. doesn't feel good, and I like it or I don't like it -- get the picture? In order to teach your puppy what you do and do not like it is necessary to implement a verbal action system that communicates exactly when he has committed a foul and more importantly, when he is getting it right!

A time out let's your puppy know that what he is doing will not work. It is the loss of what your puppy wants most now. In most cases, the reward is some form of attention from you. Dogs often demand (and receive) attention for the following behaviors:

Mouthing or Nipping
Jumping-up or Pawing
'Gimme-gimme' Barking
Whining, Crying or Begging
Mounting Behavior

Time Out's must only be done for a short period of time—10 seconds, and repeatedly—you will have to repeat the time out as many as three to ten times in a row. Never do one time out for minutes at a time. Your puppy will not understand!

The important factor of a "time out" is marking the behavior you don't like, followed by the immediate removal of the thing your puppy does like (you, a ball, dinner, eye contact), and again, repeated, calm and consistent repetitions.

The Setup!

First, you have to call or 'mark' the time-out as soon as the unwanted behavior starts. The word you pick will be your marker word ... wrong, too bad, time or oops! Pick one and say it without any harshness.

When time-out has been called "Too Bad!" you will need to take your attention away from your dog. You can do this by turning your back and completely ignoring your dog or separating yourself from your dog. Here are some options:

- walk away from your pup
- put your pup in another room
- go into another room yourself
- put your pup in the exercise pen

- leash your pup to a specific spot..

The best option is one that will provide sufficient control. For example: if turning your back and ignoring your dog doesn't stop the behavior you will need to separate yourself from your dog (if putting the pup in another room is the best option ... keep a drag-line on the pup, so you grab the line instead of the dog).

Repeated and consistent time outs are important so that your puppy can piece together exactly what it is he is doing that is stopping the fun!

Examples of when and how to use a time out:

If you are playing with your puppy and he jumps up or nicks your fingers to get at the toy then you must give him the immediate consequence -put the toy away (underneath your shirt, on a shelf out of reach.) If you have a piece of food in your hand and he lunges for it, immediately make the food disappear or pull your hand back from the pup's mouth, wait a 1/2 second and try again until your puppy is taking the food gently. Most likely he will try taking it harder or faster or maybe slower but harder! Your puppy jumps up on you and you turn and walk away as you close the door between you and your puppy! The combinations are endless as he is not sure what your criterion is for getting that darn treat!

step-by-step instructions:

Make sure that you correctly identify and mark the inappropriate behavior:

1. You catch your puppy doing something you don't like:
2. Tell him "Wrong!" or "Enough", or "TOO BAD". Make sure you say the word AT THE MOMENT OF THE UNWANTED BEHAVIOR, not before, not after. This is called "marking" the behavior and you need to mark the moment in time that your pup committed the foul. The marker word must pinpoint the behavior and should be followed by a dramatic, but calm verbal bridge of displeasure -- "Ok, that's it! I'm/ you're outta here DOODLE HEAD! You have crossed the line!". Repeat your make believe horror until you can exit the room or have arrived with your pup to the time out location.
3. Penalty phase of 10 seconds -- no more than 10 or 20 seconds--tops!
4. After the penalty phase is over, resume where you left off without a grudge. Go back to her and in your most happy, wiggly-giggly voice and engage her in the behavior that got her into the time out are in the first place. The important thing here is that your puppy learns exactly what the behavior is that her human finds unacceptable and that there is an immediate consequence for that behavior.

5. Repeat several times or until you notice a marked difference in her behavior.

More importantly, don't neglect your puppy's good behavior—playing properly with you and his TOYS, settling down, greeting you with all four paws on the ground, remaining quite in the crate...Praise him EFFUSIVELY for these things most of the time and instructively reprimand unacceptable behavior.

Every waking moment your puppy is learning what works and what does not work in his WORLD. If left to his own devices your puppy will make his OWN choices, and most likely they will be behaviors you don't like. Boo hoo, NO FAIR!

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