

"Why can't I just *praise* my dog?"

To use or not to use treats during training...is that the question?

The training methods that we employ at Trained Dog Happy Dog are based on Positive Reinforcement.

Reinforce means making something stronger, so in dog training terms, we want to make a behavior stronger or more frequent, by using a positive reward. The trick is that positive is from the point of view of the trainee, not the trainer.

So although most of us would like to think that our dogs should obey us just because they want our praise, reality is that because we live with our dogs 24/7 and we: pet, talk-to, hug, kiss, love and even pamper, just because, most dogs will not consider praise alone as a reinforcement strong enough to teach a new skill, make good behavior permanent or change bad behavior.

What does your dog consider as positive, what are the things he LIKES? Petting, verbal praise, belly rubs, toys, going for walks, chasing squirrels, food and treats are all good things from your dog's perspective.

But for training, we want something practical that can be delivered the instant your dog performs a desired behavior so that he can associate that that good or positive thing with the behavior you actually want to reinforce.

So a small bite-size soft treat (so that he can swallow it fast), that your dog really craves will become a very powerful incentive for your dog to perform. As your dog matures and your training progresses, you will be able to spread out the treats and use them to reward new behaviors, difficult behaviors, if your dog performs in spite of distractions and "behavior chains": a string of several commands performed one after another.

Trained Dog Happy Dog  
Lilianne Merida