



the future of dog trainin

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## WHAT IS POSITIVE TRAINING?

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Positive training is not a scientific term.

You will not find it in any scientific journals, and you will regularly hear it being mischaracterized by those who do not fully understand it.

When we at Positively refer to the power of positive training or you hear Victoria describe herself as a positive trainer, we are incorporating several philosophies, techniques and levels of awareness on certain misunderstood topics which cumulatively add up to the idea of positive training.

The Power of Positive Training

### The Four Pillars of Positive Training:

1. The use of *positive reinforcement*

2. Avoiding the use of *intimidation, physical punishment or fear*
3. A comprehension of the often misunderstood concept of *dominance*
4. A commitment to *understanding the canine experience* from the dog's point of view

Together, these four elements comprise the Positively concept of positive training. Without them, the philosophy is not complete and is not as powerful and effective in building relationships with your pets based on mutual trust, respect and love.

## THE 4 PILLARS OF POSITIVE TRAINING



**1.** USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT.

**2.** AVOID THE USE OF INTIMIDATION, PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OR FEAR.

**3.** UNDERSTAND THE MISCONCEPTIONS OF DOMINANCE THEORY.

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the future of dog training

### Pillar #1 – Positive Reinforcement

The use of positive reinforcement methods when teaching your dog has been universally accepted by the behavioral scientific community at large as the most effective, long-lasting, humane method of dog training.

In short, *positive reinforcement* means that if you reward a behavior you like, there is a good chance that behavior being repeated. When paired with negative punishment (the removal of something the dog wants like food, attention, toys, or human contact for a short period of time) or a vocal interrupter to redirect negative behavior onto a wanted behavior and to guide the dog to the right choice.

*right choices*, these methods are a foundational element of the core of positive training. Old-school trainers often argue that positive training shows weakness and a lack of leadership. However, it's important to remember that the most respected and successful leaders are able to effect change without being confrontational.

## Pillar #2 – Avoidance of Punitive Methods

Scientific studies have shown that the use of confrontational, punitive training techniques does not work long term, but actually exacerbates aggressive response and makes dogs even more aggressive. It is a pretty simple concept, but sometimes it can be easy to forget. Remember that fighting fire with fire usually results in someone getting burned.

So modern behavioral science weighed in *against compulsion training*, but for most people, it's easier to just let old-school training techniques continue. After all, scientific journals tell us what our instincts have already said: it is more humane to reward good behavior than to punish bad behavior. Many who promote old-school training techniques argue that the punishment involved in training, such as a quick snap of an electric shock or a swift kick to a dog's ribs, is not particularly damaging. The problem is that while the degrees of punishment may differ, everyone ultimately must make their own choice regarding whether they are willing to go through with it. But most well-adjusted people would rather avoid doing anything that involves pain or fear if they can help it, regardless of how minimal that punishment may be.

## Pillar #3 – Understanding Dominance

The misunderstanding of what dominance is and how it works within the dog world is a challenge facing our collective ability to develop truly healthy, functional relationships. One who has heard a trainer refer to the need for them to be the 'alpha,' 'top dog', or 'leader' in order to maintain balance and appropriate chemistry between dog and owner has likely heard the term 'dominance' mentioned. Just how widespread this hugely misguided misconception has become in our modern culture is remarkable.

Admittedly, in scientific terms the historical understanding of this concept has moved on significantly over the past half-century and remains quite complex. In its simplest form, however, the easiest way to understand the concept of dominance as it relates to our pet dogs is to assure you that you don't need to be concerned with it as you probably are. *Dogs are not on a course to take over the world*. They are social animals and while they do not necessarily fall into the commonly assumed hierarchy roles that we assign to them, they do have a clear social structure.



*Photo by Amber Allen | [www.goblinchild.com](http://www.goblinchild.com)*

The most important thing for a dog owner to understand is that a dog's misbehavior is often a result of an attempt at dominance over the owner. To learn more about this misunderstood aspect of dog behavior, check out my latest book, *Training Your Dog With Love and Logic*. You can visit the [Truth About Dogs website](#) here.

Truly comprehending the concept of dominance applies to the creation of a mental key to understanding positive training,

the root cause of a dog's misbehavior as dominance usually leads to a chain of events that creates stressed, unconfident, and ultimately unhappy dogs (and owners).

#### **Pillar #4 – Using the Dog's Point of View**

You cannot build a strong bond with your dog unless you truly understand how he sees the world around him, but to do this effectively you must first learn his language and appreciate his perspective.

Senses are closely linked to *emotions*, and emotions drive behavior, so it stands to reason that we are just scratching the surface when it comes to understanding the dog's experience. Using the senses to help dogs navigate through any behavioral issues they might have is a process called *sensory education*.

Meanwhile, as the more advanced species, it is obviously up to us to learn to 'talk' our four-legged friends to learn English (or any other language). Doing so will give them a better understanding of what we expect from them and make it easier to find effective positive solutions.

haviors your dog might have.

We have domesticated the dog over many thousands of years, so it is our responsibility to provide the confidence and tools they need to thrive and survive in our strange, human world.

## **Bottom Line**

There are many different terms used to describe positive training techniques: positive reinforcement, reward-based, force-free, and more. What proponents of all of these interrelated philosophies share is a shared belief that it is much safer, more effective and humane to teach a behavior than to punish it. The underlying arching concept that if you reward a behavior you like, it is more likely that that behavior will increase. Similarly, if you ignore or redirect a behavior you do not like, it is more likely that that behavior will decrease. Combine these concepts with the awareness that dogs are naturally pack animals who want to please us to achieve 'top dog' status, and therefore do not need to be controlled using punishment techniques, and you have the recipe for *positive training*.

## **Related Reading:**

- *The Truth Behind Positive Training*
- *Myths & Truths*
- *What's in a Name?*
- *Positive Method Dog Training: Why to Use It and How It Works*

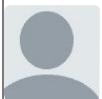
Tags: *dominance, force-free training, positive reinforcement, positive training, punishment, reward training*

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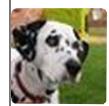
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Janet Campbell · 5 months ago

To sum it up, ignore bad behaviour, reward good behaviour. Simples! Tara here is a 14 years old dog and she has no effect WHATSOEVER! As for timeout, if you put her somewhere she doesn't want to go least scratch until you let her! I am old enough to remember Barbara Woodhouse, probably the best dog trainer ever! Victoria I am sure will know of her, she was IT in her time! I do feel sorry for the trainer in review his methods!

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