



RAISING A PUPPY - THE FORCE FREE WAY TO A HAPPY, CONFIDENT PUP AND A GREAT RELATIONSHIP

Prevent & Manage

Prevent what you can wherever possible and manage the pup's environment so that he has little or no opportunity to go wrong. This means puppy proof the house, move books from the lower shelves on the bookshelves - (I had to relocate the bottles in the wine rack in the kitchen when my pup was younger!!), put bins behind cupboard doors, use stair gates and close doors to prevent access to areas where the pup may chew precious furnishings, pick up all Persian rugs temporarily and more importantly put things away such as shoes, children's toys etc.

Any time your dog engages in an unwanted behaviour, take a step back and ask yourself how you could have prevented it.

Reinforce

Reinforce your pup for offering behaviours that are agreeable. This can be anything or can even be the absence of an unwanted behaviour. The best way to do this is to have a pot of small yummy treats, such as hot dog sausage, liver, cheese etc, say 30 in number and set yourself a challenge to catch your dog doing something that you would like him to repeat 30 times during the day. It could be lying in his bed, choosing to keep front feet on the floor when a visitor comes in, coming in from the garden, chewing his chew toy, the possibilities are endless (think I nicked that from an advert). To start with you may struggle to find 30 opportunities but because dogs do what works for them you will soon need more treats in that pot because your dog is going to be throwing these behaviours at you left, right and centre. These are behaviours that you haven't asked for by the way and this is by far the easiest way for a dog to learn.

Teach

Teach your dog what you would like him to do. The obvious ones are to walk nicely on a lead, come when called, sit, lie down, stay. There are lots of ways to teach your dog but it is important that whatever method you choose it is easy to understand and fair to the dog. Think back to how you learned in school. I bet your favourite subject was the one where the teacher made it fun and enjoyable to learn and motivated you with praise and rewards for good work. I tend to do pretty much all of my dogs' training during play so lots of fetch and tug games used as rewards and the dog is having a ton of fun whilst learning.

Interrupt

Interrupt unwanted behaviour. I know from experience that it is not always possible to prevent all unwanted behaviours when you have a puppy.

It is very difficult not to get cross when your pup chews your favourite CD or expensive shoes it is human nature. However in terms of your relationship with your dog and insuring that it doesn't continue into adulthood you really do have to take a deep breath and try not to scowl, the damage is done nothing will undo it now.

So you teach your dog a positive interrupter. This can be a word or a noise, anything you like, as long as it doesn't frighten or startle your pup. My pup's positive interrupter is "Moss" said in a happy voice. I can use his name because I have never said it crossly or to tell him off. You could use a "Yay!!" or a kissy noise for example. All you do is use food treats, you can move to a toy later, and say the word as you give him a treat. Repeat a few hundred times. Yes really. :) Now watch his response to that word next time you say it when he is doing something you would like to interrupt. Once interrupted redirect him onto something more productive.

If you interrupt unwanted behaviours in a way that frightens your dog he will simply learn that these behaviours are dangerous to do when you are present and will seek opportunities to engage in them when your back is turned. And yes the dog could learn to engage in the behaviours in order to be positively interrupted BUT he will only do it when you are watching, no point when you are not, so now you can interrupt before the damage is done and meanwhile teach the dog a more rewarding behaviour instead.

Think of your relationship with you puppy as a bank account, every positive interaction is a deposit, every time you punish you make a withdrawal. As soon as your account goes overdrawn then things will just go from bad to worse but keep a nice healthy bank balance and you and your pup will soon end up as millionaires in the relationship stakes.