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# PAWZ AND READ

## How to Establish Meaningful Communication II

I remember in my younger days playing a game with my friends called Hot and Cold. The game was simple, I would close my eyes and the other players would try to direct me to an object. When I heard the word 'hot' I knew to keep heading in the direction I was heading. On the other hand, when I would hear the word 'cold', I would stop and change directions. This is the simple principle that I use to help my dogs navigate in our human world.

If you haven't read my previous article on How to Establish Meaningful Communication I, then please take time to read that article first. It will help you understand how to put value to a particular word and associate an action to that word. You can follow my training tips in the Blog section of our website at Pawscienda.com.

In my previous article, we established the marker word for approved behavior which is 'yes' and the word for unapproved behavior is 'no'. In this article these two words 'yes' and 'no' will be used as reinforced marker words. The 'yes' comes with a negative consequence. You will need to have these marker words established before you are ready to move forward.

We are now ready to teach marker words that give your dog valuable information to continue on to win and receive their reward or to stop what they are doing and change directions. The two words I will use for this segment of communication will be 'good' and 'huh-uh'. 'Good' will be used to encourage the dog to continue with what they are currently doing. Once they have completed the task, we will give the 'yes' marker and a reward. The word 'huh-uh' is to communicate that they are headed in the wrong direction and that they will need to stop and look to you for directions. For the purpose of this exercise, we will use the sit-stay method to teach the marker words 'good' and 'huh-uh'. These words will be used as non-reinforced words. That means that there will be no reward or consequence immediately following.

To begin, start by giving the sit-stay command, you can begin to teach these marker words along with teaching the obedience commands of sit and stay. Once the dog is in the sit position give the stay command. As you back away and your dog is still in the sit position without moving, say 'good' in a calm voice. You will want to predetermine an acceptable length for the stay according to your dog's ability. If your dog remains in the sit position you can step back up to your dog and give the 'yes' marker word and reward your dog. Remember to start with shorter achievable stay periods so that your dog can enjoy success. This will help the dog to relate the 'good' marker word with the impending 'yes' and reward. As long as the dog continues to succeed, gradually increase the time that you are requiring them to stay.

As the time period is extended your dog will most likely lose focus and break from the sit-stay. The moment they begin to move give them the 'huh-uh' marker and step back up to your dog and repeat the sit-stay command. Repeat this process each time your dog breaks from the sit-stay when not asked to do so. Your dog should begin to return to the sit-stay position as soon as they hear the 'huh-uh' marker word. This is the beginning of associating the marker word 'huh-uh' with unapproved behavior. Once the dog returns to the sit-stay, say 'good', step back up to the dog then say 'yes' and reward. Continue this exercise for several days.

Now that you have taught your dog the positive non-reinforcing markers that lead to the success of accessing the reward it is time to introduce the negative reinforcer word. We will do this in order to establish the relationship with the non-reinforcer word to the reinforcer word. For this step, we will put the dog in a sit-stay for an extended time and step away from the dog. When your dog loses focus and breaks the sit-stay, give the 'huh-uh' marker word and if your dog doesn't promptly return to sit, use the 'no' marker word and step back up to your dog with the leash. Then you will give the leash a quick leash 'pop'. Usually this is done in an upward angle and off to the side of the muzzle. Give the sit-stay command, once the dog is back in the sit-stay, then step away and increase your distance from your dog gradually. This will most likely cause your dog to break from the sit-stay and provide with opportunities to use your marker words. We want to have a high standard with response time when you say 'huh-uh', if your dog doesn't promptly return to the sit-stay, say 'no', return to your dog and give the leash pop. The leash pop is the negative reinforcement and provides a negative value or consequence that is associated with the word 'no'.

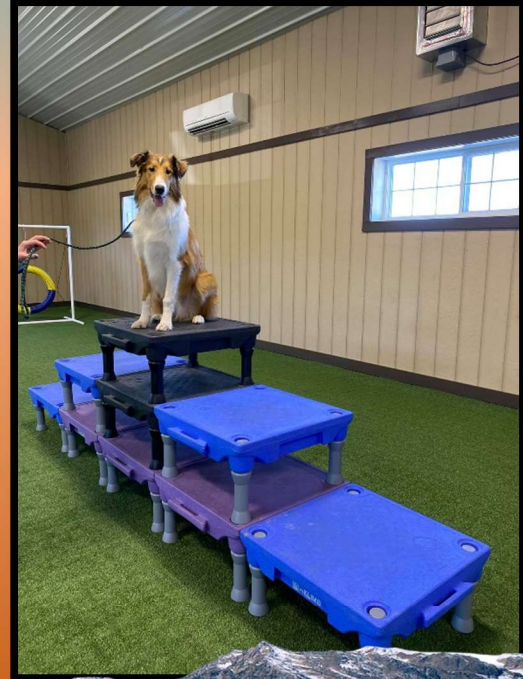
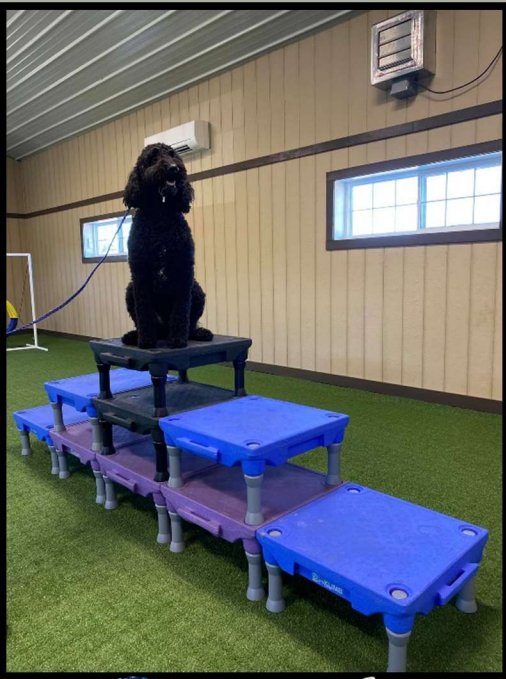
As you continue this process you should experience a higher level of competency. You are establishing clear expectations through meaningful communication by consistently providing a path to success and a reward or a consequence for a lack of effort. Remember to do these steps in the proper sequence. Timing is one of the most critical pieces. The use of the marker word must be done the instant that the correct behavior occurs. Same is also true for unapproved behavior followed by a consequence. As your dog demonstrates a clear understanding of these marker words in the sit-stay, you can start using these principles with loose leash walking and down-stay. Your goal is to be able to communicate to your dog which behaviors are approved and which are unapproved behaviors. This will help you and your dog learn how to better communicate with each other. Using these methods to establish clear and meaningful communication is the cornerstone of building a lasting relationship with your dog.

Happy Tails,

Jeff Stoneman



# Mountain Climbing!



*DOGGIE Daycamp DOG OF THE MONTH!*



*Olive*

# GROOMING DOG OF THE MONTH



Charlie

## March DayCamp Party Dates

**March 17<sup>th</sup> – St. Patty's Day Party**

**March 24<sup>th</sup> - March Birthday Party**

