

Train Your Dog: The Benefits of Treats

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Is a food reward always necessary?

To answer that question you must first decide if your dog is food-motivated. If he is, and you want him to have some obedience training (sit, stay, and come), then get yourself a bag of [dog treats](#) and start learning the best ways to train.

Positive reinforcement is a way to increase or maintain a behavior by giving the dog some type of stimulus. This could be a treat, a toy, or a pat on the head as a reward for good behavior. Positive reinforcement can be used to maintain existing good behavior as well as in initial training.

Furthermore, positive reinforcement (e.g., a treat) has been shown to increase correct behavior when given intermittently once a dog has associated the reward with the behavior.

When you are beginning to train a dog to come, rewards should be consistent, so that the dog associates the treat with correct behavior.

Once you have trained the dog to come to you, if you vary the delivery of the reward either by giving a treat for instance every third time, or randomly, it will actually increase the probability that your dog will come to you consistently. This is termed partial reinforcement and dramatically decreases the likelihood that your dog will forget the correct behavior when you really need him to respond, even if he doesn't smell a treat in your hand.

As with many behavioral patterns, it is not known precisely why this works - just that it does - consistently.

When you use treats to help in training your dog, choose a small treat. Whether it's [crunchy](#), [meaty](#), or [sweet](#) is completely up to you and your dog. Just be sure that your dog likes the treat and can quickly consume it. If he has to work at eating the treat, he may be distracted from the task you want him to perform.

Recommended Training Treats

Dingo
Training
Treats

Hill's® Science Diet®
Soft & Chewy Training
Treats

Nootie No-Grainers
Soft Chew Treats

Stewart Freeze-Dried
Liver Pro-Treats