

A
Karen Pryor



Clicker
Book

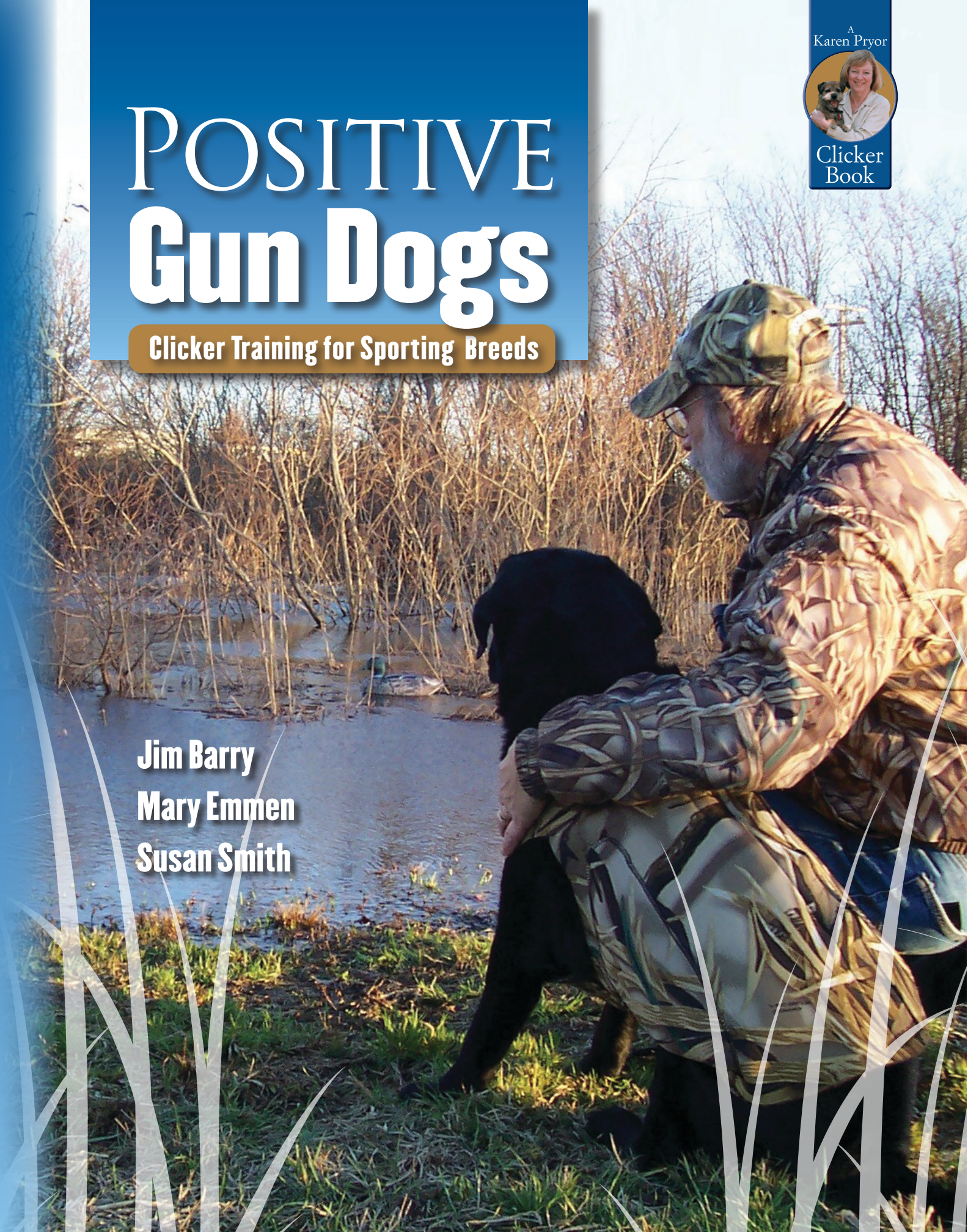
POSITIVE Gun Dogs

Clicker Training for Sporting Breeds

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Chapter 1

Basic Learning Theory

A basic understanding of learning theory is essential if you want to be an effective and efficient dog trainer, and have fun in the process. Most dog training today is based on tradition and lore that has been passed down from trainer to trainer in a sort of informal apprenticeship system (see box: A Brief History of Dog Training). If you were to ask the average gun dog trainer to explain learning theory, he or she would not be able to do so and might even scoff at the idea of needing to understand such a thing. Despite their lack of familiarity with learning theory, though, these trainers are applying the laws of learning—whether they know it or not—when they train their dog and the dog learns the behavior. Many trainers are also probably not aware that they may be wasting valuable time and energy on techniques that do not teach the dog anything and may actually be impeding the learning process. We are in no way suggesting that these trainers have nothing to offer—on the contrary, they have a great deal of knowledge and experience to pass on. However, we can't help but wonder how much greater they'd be if they knew their learning theory!

One problem with traditional models of training is that they defy what's known as “Morgan's Canon of Parsimony.” At the end of the nineteenth century, Lloyd Morgan addressed the problem of attributing complex reasons to simple behaviors. Pamela Reid quotes Morgan's Canon in her book *Excel-erated Learning* (James & Kenneth Publishers, 1996): “In no case is an animal activity to be interpreted in terms of higher psychological processes, if it can be fairly interpreted in terms of processes which stand lower in the scale of psychological evolution and development.”

Too often we assume there are complex causes motivating our dogs when, in fact, the dog simply

does not understand what we want her to do. Let's say we've taught our dog to retrieve a dummy in the backyard. We've worked diligently and done some fairly advanced work such as blind retrieves. We then take the dog to the field and ask our dog to do a very simple retrieve from only about 2 or 3 yards away. Our dog does not retrieve the dummy. We might attribute our dog's inaction to stubbornness, but in reality what's happening is that the behavior we have trained our dog to do has not been generalized to situations outside the backyard. The dog simply doesn't understand what she's supposed to do.

Let's think about this scenario in terms of Morgan's Canon of Parsimony. Stubbornness, which we might originally think is what's behind the dog's behavior, involves a lot more than the dog just not knowing what to do. Stubbornness implies resistance, malice, forethought, and a whole host of other complex processes, whereas not being trained is very simple. We, as trainers, need to get away from the belief that our dogs are deliberately defying us. In general, dogs will perform the trained behavior if they know what is expected of them and how to do it, and the motivation is sufficient.

Increasing numbers of animal trainers are beginning to put learning theory to good use. Many trainers working with wild animals in zoos and animal parks have been using these techniques for years; only within the last two decades have trainers of domestic animals such as dogs and horses begun to use these methods seriously. There are some exceptions, such as the Baileys (Bob and Marion), who have trained many hundreds of animals for commercial and military use over the last 50-plus years using the principles of operant conditioning.

A Brief History of Dog Training

Why bother with learning theory? The answer is that learning theory helps to dispel the myths that have plagued dog training and have led to the abuse of dogs when trying to change their behavior. A little history may help to demonstrate the value of learning theory as it relates to dog training. The following is condensed from Mary Burch and Jon Bailey's *How Dogs Learn* (MacMillan, 1999).

People have been training dogs for thousands of years, but the modern history of dog training begins with our own sporting breeds. In the nineteenth century, British sportsmen exhibited their well-trained sporting dogs; this practice spread to the United States. Training for obedience began in America in the 1930s. Dog training first became a profession after World War II, when returning soldiers taught others how they had trained war dogs. Not surprisingly, the methods used tended to be harsh. Two trainers in particular, Konrad Most and William Koehler, advocated the use of choke collars and other punishment devices. Their approaches had been effective for protection dogs, and Koehler's fame as principal animal trainer for Walt Disney helped popularize his techniques.

During the 1960s, several books suggested gentler methods, but it was not until the 1980s that learning theory became an integral part of dog training. Dr. Ian Dunbar, a veterinary behaviorist, began teaching seminars in which he applied learning theory to help resolve problem behaviors. In 1984, Karen Pryor, a marine mammal trainer, published her groundbreaking book *Don't Shoot the Dog*, which forged an important link between science and training. In 1994, Dunbar and his colleagues founded the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), an organization dedicated to promoting dog-friendly training through education.

Bob Bailey told us in a personal communication that his colleague Kellar Breland used positive training methods on two field dogs in the 1940s, but that he was unable to interest gun dog trainers in his techniques. He—and later Bob—turned his attention to commercial animal training, where he had great success. In the 1950s and 1960s, the training of gun dogs in the United States became systematic, and a number of professional gun dog trainers set up shop. Prominent among these was Rex Carr, who developed the basic drills used by most retriever trainers today. In addition, the invention of the electronic collar, which can deliver a shock to a dog at a distance from the trainer, provided a new tool that gun dog trainers could use in their programs. Trainers were quick to institute these devices in their training programs, and almost all professional gun dog trainers in the United States now use them.

While the training of pet dogs and dogs that compete in obedience, agility, and other sports has relied increasingly on learning theory, the training of gun dogs has remained largely the domain of professional trainers who rely on tradition and electronic collars. We would argue that the success achieved by most gun dog trainers has come not because they understand how dogs learn, but in spite of their lack of systematic understanding. And the popularity of their aversive-based methods has led to the continuation of myths that get in the way of effective training for hunting dogs—such as that pointing dogs should never be trained to sit, or that dogs must be punished in order to learn to retrieve in difficult conditions. It is our hope that sound scientific methods can eventually replace these myths.

Learning theory is based on proven science, with laws governing its principles. All types of learning can be understood through principles of learning theory. According to these principles, there are certain laws of nature that apply to all physically and mentally healthy animals. Further, all animals, from the lowliest cockroach to the most sophisticated human, learn in the same way. Once you've read this book and understand some basic learning theory, you will not only know how to train your dog, but also your spouse and your boss! Just to clarify, when we talk about animals as a group, we are including humans in that group; humans learn the same way dogs do.

Some excellent books are available that explain learning theory in a clear and easy-to-understand manner. We've already mentioned two of our favorites. One is *Excel-erated Learning*, by Pamela J. Reid, Ph.D. Reid's book is a must for any serious dog trainer. The book is written specifically for dog trainers, is organized in a way that allows it to be used as a reference book, and is extremely easy to read and understand. (See Appendix I for more information.) Another helpful book is *How Dogs Learn*, by Mary R. Burch, Ph.D. and Jon S. Bailey, Ph.D. Because there are already so many good sources of information about learning theory, we will not go into great detail on the subject. However, in this chapter, we provide an overview of the basic principles you should know before getting started with training your dog; more sophisticated learning concepts are addressed throughout the book.

What Is Learning?

Learning is a change in behavior, based on experience, that continues over time. The behavior change doesn't necessarily happen immediately; it may not be demonstrated until there is a need. This is called latent learning—the learning has occurred, but the behavior has not yet demonstrably changed. Learning may also be latent when a dog is not physically able to perform the behavior; for instance, a puppy may learn that she is supposed to eliminate outdoors, but may not be physically mature enough to control herself.

How Animals Learn

The ability to learn is genetic; learning itself is not genetic. Essentially, animals learn through experience. The ability to learn and adapt is what allows us to survive in this dangerous world. The psychologist named Edward L. Thorndike boiled it all down in his very simple Law of Effect: “The principle that, in any given situation, the probability of a behavior occurring is a function of the consequences that behavior has had in that situation in the past. An abbreviated form says that behavior is a function of its consequences” (Behavior Analysis Glossary, University of South Florida, www.coedu.usf.edu/abaglossary/glossarymain.asp?AID=5&ID=2194).

Operant Conditioning

Thorndike's statement brings us to the foundation of training, which is called the four quadrants of operant conditioning. According to learning theory, an action can have two types of consequences: reinforcement or punishment. These consequences can occur in two different ways: they can be added or taken away. A reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behavior. A punishment decreases the likelihood of a behavior. The paradigm is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Although the quadrant may look complicated at first glance, it is really quite simple. The main things to remember when trying to determine which quadrant is at work on the dog are:

- “Positive” and “negative” are used the same way here as they are in mathematics: When you use positive reinforcement or positive punishment, you are adding something. When you use negative reinforcement or negative punishment, you are removing something.
- Reinforcement leads to a behavior increase; punishment leads to a behavior decrease.
- You, the trainer, do not determine whether something is reinforcing or punishing—the dog does! You may consider something reinforcing, but if the behavior does not increase, then it is not reinforcing to the dog. If the behavior decreases, it is actually punishing to the dog. We can make educated guesses as to what might be reinforcing or punishing, but the proof is in the behavior.

1.1 Operant Conditioning Quadrants

Action Stimulus	Add	Remove
Desired	Positive Reinforcement (R+)	Negative Punishment (P-)
Undesired	Negative Reinforcement (R-)	Positive Punishment (P+)

Following are examples of the four quadrants (these examples assume you get the results you are hoping for):

- R+: You give your dog the “sit” cue, your dog sits, and you give her a treat. (Giving the treat should make the sit-on-cue happen more often.)
- R-: You give your dog the “sit” cue, your dog doesn’t sit so you give a leash pop, your dog sits, and you release the leash. (The R- is the release of the leash and should make the sit-on-cue happen more often.)
- P+: You give your dog the “down” cue, your dog doesn’t down, so you step on the leash, forcing the dog into a down. (The P+ is the physical force that requires the dog to “down” and should decrease the dog’s standing or sitting behavior.)
- P-: Your dog jumps on you so you put her in her crate for 30 seconds then release her. (You cannot have P- without R+, so in this example the removal of a stimulating environment is the P- and should decrease the jumping behavior; the R+ is being allowed out of the crate into a more stimulating environment.)

You can think of an aversive as something the dog will avoid. Using an aversive is: the onset of a stimulus decreases one behavior, and the termination of the same stimulus increases another behavior.

Positive reinforcement trainers try to use primarily the R+/P- quadrants of the model. We feel that these quadrants do the least harm and promote active

learning and problem-solving in dogs. (Some trainers who are primarily positive in their approach may use P+ or R- as a last resort, but they do so rarely.)

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning (also called instrumental conditioning or Skinnerian conditioning after scientist B.F. Skinner, who systematized it in the lab) means that the animal realizes that its behavior has consequences and chooses to act according to the consequences. In operant conditioning, animals have control over their response to an event.

The sequence of events (in scientific terms, the contingency) in operant conditioning is: when A happens *and I do B*, then C will happen. For example, when I hear thunder, if I roll up my car windows, the inside of my car will not get soaked if it starts raining. I could opt not to roll up my windows and, in that case, I’ve made the choice to take the chance that either it won’t rain or the inside of my car will be soaked. For the most part, we use operant conditioning techniques when training a dog. We address these techniques in more detail throughout the book, particularly in Chapter 2.

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning means that an association is made between two events. The first event reliably predicts the second event. Some common examples are: a flash of lightning reliably predicts a clap of thunder; the ringing of the doorbell reliably predicts a visitor. There are other, more subtle associations as well: a particular song evokes a memory of an important time or event; the smell of a certain perfume evokes the memory of a particular person. Generally, with a classically conditioned behavior, the animal has no control over its response to the event, and the response is usually physiological in some way—perhaps the heart beats faster, or the pupils dilate.

The principles of classical conditioning were established by the Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov while he was studying the digestive system of dogs. He noticed that when the person who fed the dogs appeared, the dogs began salivating. Pavlov then began investigating this phenomenon, which led to our understanding

of what we call classical conditioning (sometimes called Pavlovian conditioning or associative learning). The contingency in classical conditioning is that Event A predicts Event B. (There is no intervening behavior choice as there is in operant conditioning; classical conditioning is involuntary.)

Although there are many ways classical conditioning can be useful when working with problem behaviors such as fear and aggression, the importance of classical conditioning for dog trainers is that we can take a neutral stimulus and, by associating it with something the dog wants (usually food, but not necessarily), give it meaning. A popular way to do this is to use a clicker, a small plastic box with a metal tab that makes a clicking sound when pushed. If we repeatedly pair the sound of the clicker with food, the click becomes meaningful to the dog, telling him food is coming. We can then use the clicker—which has become a conditioned (or secondary) reinforcer—to signal a reinforcer to the dog when we cannot immediately deliver a primary reinforcer, such as food. We discuss developing and maintaining this association much more thoroughly in Chapter 2, which deals with using clicker training techniques as a basis for gun dog training.

The Link Between Classical and Operant Conditioning

Although we discuss classical and operant conditioning as if they were two separate things, they both happen at the same time. You cannot learn something operantly without also creating a classical association and vice versa. What we, as trainers, need to know is that classically learned behaviors will always trump operantly learned behaviors if push comes to shove. As Bob Bailey says in his training classes, “Pavlov is always sitting on your shoulder.”

Extinction

Extinction is an important element of learning. Extinction occurs when a behavior is neither reinforced nor punished, and so it eventually goes away, or extinguishes. It is important to remember that animals do what works. If an animal continues to perform certain behaviors, there is undoubtedly a payoff somewhere. An excellent way to deal with certain undesirable behaviors is simply to extin-

guish them. Behaviors such as pawing for attention, barking to be let in, counter surfing, and so on, are excellent candidates for extinction. A caution for the gun dog arena: do not try to extinguish an undesired behavior, such as chasing animals or birds, that is inherently reinforcing. Because this behavior brings its own reinforcement, it will not extinguish. Another caveat is that “extinction” is a behavioral term and does not mean that the behavior is gone forever; under the right circumstances, it will reappear.

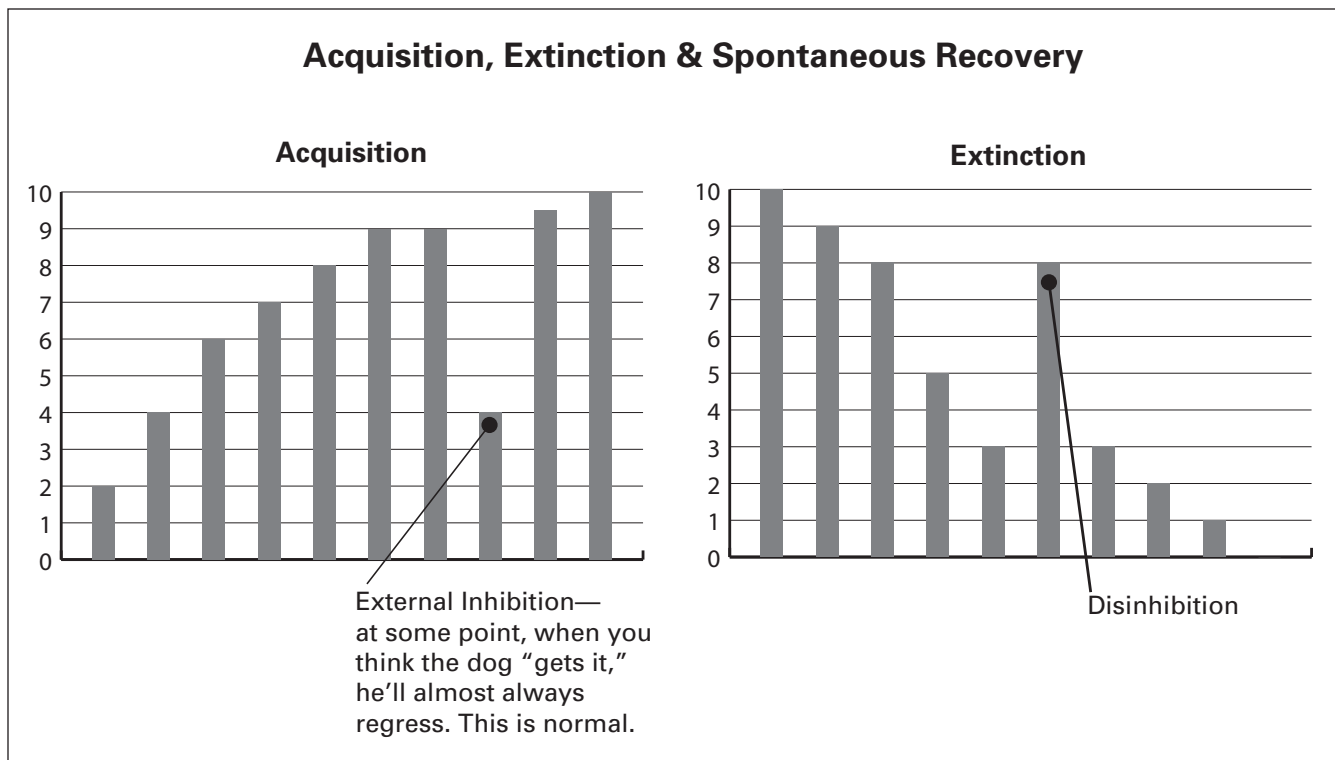
External Inhibition and Disinhibition

Figure 1.2, which is adapted from Jean Donaldson’s course at the San Francisco SPCA Academy for dog trainers, shows normal learning patterns. Two of these areas are vital to dog trainers: the external inhibition and disinhibition patterns.

External inhibition happens when an animal shows a steady increase in learning (understanding) a behavior, then suddenly seems to have forgotten everything it learned. This is normal and happens all the time; humans refer to it as a block. When this happens, it’s best to end the session, give the dog a break from training, and try again the next day or the day after. When you start your new training session, the dog should be back to normal and may even be ahead of the game. Instead of getting frustrated, realize that this happens when the learning is coming together in the dog’s head and is starting to make sense.

The opposite of external inhibition is disinhibition. Disinhibition occurs during extinction and is also called “spontaneous recovery.” Spontaneous recovery takes the form of a renewed effort to make what has previously worked work again. Suppose you’ve made up your mind to ignore your dog when she scratches on the door to be let in. This tactic appears to be working well; it has been quite some time since your dog has scratched on the door. Then, all of a sudden, she scratches on the door! This is spontaneous recovery. Don’t get upset, give in, or punish the dog. Just ignore the behavior; if it is not reinforced, it will go away.

1.2 Normal Learning Patterns



Four Stages of Learning

There are four stages of learning. When training a new behavior, you must address each of these stages before you can consider the behavior trained. The four stages are:

- **Acquisition:** The process of learning the new behavior
- **Fluency:** Perfecting the behavior and having the behavior become automatic
- **Generalization:** The process of learning to perform the behavior under a different condition or in a different environment
- **Maintenance:** Practicing the behavior on an ongoing basis to ensure the behavior continues

Discrimination and Generalization

Although all animals learn in the same ways, each species has its peculiarities. One of the biggest differences between dogs and humans is in their abilities to discriminate and generalize.

Discrimination means being able to tell the difference between situations. The better you are at discriminating, the more subtle the differences you can discriminate. Dogs are excellent discriminators, whereas humans are not as good. Dogs know who will let them jump up on them and who won't; they know that it's okay to get on the couch when Mom is home but not to get on the couch when Dad is home; they know that Dad is more likely to play rough games than Mom; they know that when your finger twitches on the trigger, there will be a bird to retrieve. In training, they know when you have food in your hand and when you don't, when you're using a dummy or a live bird, and they undoubtedly know when you're serious about training and when you're not really in the mood!

Generalization means that you can take a concept from one situation to another and still understand it. Humans are excellent generalizers. But because dogs are such good discriminators, they are not great generalizers. They can discriminate between one set of circumstances and another but, if there are differences, then they do not usually relate the behavior learned in one set of circumstances to a new one. This is why it is so important to start at the beginning again when you add something new to a behavior. For instance, you train your dog to roll over in your living room, then you take her to your father-in-law's house to show her off, and she acts like she's never heard the cue before! And, in fact, she does not understand what you want—you must retrain the behavior in the new location. Once you have trained the behavior in enough different situations, she'll realize that the cue prompts the physical act, regardless of the circumstances.

Another common generalization issue is with housetraining. Your dog is well housetrained in your house, but you take her to a friend's house and she promptly eliminates. She has not learned that it is being inside a building that is the cue for not eliminating and must be taught this in a variety of settings before it will click for her.

Discrimination and generalization are crucial concepts for dog trainers to understand. When a trainer does not grasp these concepts, he or she may become frustrated and embarrassed and treat the dog harshly—blaming the dog when the real problem is a lack of training.

These concepts are particularly important for gun dog trainers, who must realize that there are profound differences between training in the yard and in the field. There are also differences between training and testing, between structured competitions and hunting, and between waterfowl and upland game hunting. Each situation must be thoroughly trained. Trying to overcome the dog's inability to generalize by resorting to forceful methods is likely to be less effective than systematic training, and can be abusive as well.

Habituation

Habituation allows us to ignore unimportant stimuli in the environment. If we had to pay attention to every noise, every smell, and every movement that took place, we would be in sensory overload! Habituation is the means by which we filter out what is not relevant to our well-being. We learn to ignore things that happen continuously or on a regular basis, but pay attention to things that happen only occasionally. For instance, we may not notice the noises our refrigerator makes because we are used to hearing them, but when we go to a house we've never been to before, we notice the refrigerator noises. That's because we have habituated to our refrigerator's noises but not to an unfamiliar refrigerator's noises.

Habituation is of particular relevance to gun dog trainers. When our dogs first go out into the field, they are on sensory overload. They are not yet used to the sights, sounds, and smells, and genetically they are particularly attuned to them.

The environment in which we train is called the stimulus package. There are ways to deal with the stimulus package, which are addressed in Chapter 2.

Sensitization and Desensitization

Sensitization occurs when an animal is exposed to something and becomes increasingly sensitive to it. An example is the vacuum cleaner. Dogs often become sensitized to the vacuum cleaner's combination of noise and movement, and can become quite aroused and even aggressive when they are exposed to one.

Desensitization is the opposite of sensitization and is usually accomplished through gradual, low-level exposure to the item the dog is sensitized to. The key to desensitization is to keep the dog at a comfort level at all times; if you go too fast, you risk sensitizing the dog, rather than desensitizing her.

Flooding

Flooding is repeatedly exposing the dog to something she is sensitized to, keeping her above her comfort level until she habituates to it. This is not recommended because it can easily backfire and sensitize the dog even more. Sometimes trainers use this technique to acclimate dogs to loud noises such as gunshots. This can be very dangerous, and we strongly recommend desensitization instead.

Overshadowing and Blocking

Overshadowing occurs when you give two cues at the same time and the dog hones in on the more prominent cue. So, let's say you are training your dog to heel and, in so doing, you give your verbal cue and the dog heels. What you don't realize is that when you give the verbal cue, you also move your left foot because you are ready to take a step. If the dog is cueing into the foot movement rather than the verbal cue, when you move your left foot without giving your cue, the dog believes she is supposed to heel. Because you really want her to stay in the sit position, you think she is breaking her sit-stay. Conversely, one day you may give the verbal "heel" cue without moving your foot and your dog will not heel.

Blocking occurs when a new cue gives the dog no new information. In training, this usually happens when we're trying to change an existing cue or add a new cue. For instance, if you trained your dog to sit using a lure, your dog probably has a hand signal cue for "sit" that mimics the movement of the hand holding the lure. Now you want to add a verbal cue. If you say "sit" at the same time that you give the hand signal, you are blocking the verbal cue, because the verbal cue gives the dog no new or important information. We'll discuss the proper way to add a new cue in Chapter 4.

Conditioned Emotional Response

A conditioned emotional response (CER) is a classically conditioned response to a specific circumstance. Animals develop CERs all the time and to almost everything they encounter. Here are some of the obvious things to which our dogs have developed CERs: leashes, other dogs, particular car

routes, the electric can opener, and the sound of the refrigerator door opening. Most CERs are not of major importance one way or the other; however, others can be problematic. Be aware that you can change CERs through classical conditioning if they are a problem.

You can also create a CER, which is exactly what you are doing when you first expose your dog to birds. All good bird dog trainers do their best to create a good CER between the dog and the bird; the last thing we want is for the dog to dislike birds! If, for some reason, your dog has developed an unpleasant CER to birds, you can reverse this by pairing the bird with good things such as food or play.

Premack Principle

The Premack Principle (named for psychologist David Premack) states that in order to get a lower probability behavior (something the dog is unlikely to do), use a higher probability behavior (something the dog is likely to do). In other words, use something the dog wants to do to get her to do something she doesn't want to do. For instance, she must sit politely at the door before she can go out, she must be steady before she can retrieve the bird, and so on. This is an important principle when dealing with animals (including human animals) living in a social situation. We must train impulse control in our dogs and children from an early age; Premack is the ideal solution for impulse control. In order to get what you want, you must be polite and patient! We mention Premack frequently throughout this book because it is such an important tool in training.

Aversive Training

There have been many studies done on the use of aversives. Using aversive training is applying the R- and P+ half of the operant conditioning quadrant. We do not claim that aversive training does not work, because it does; however, there are many good reasons not to use aversives if you can avoid them. The biggest problem with aversive training is that you run the risk of creating a dog that suppresses *all* behavior, not just the behavior you are training her to suppress.

We will explain what happens when you use R- and P+ to train your dog, using the “sit” command as an example. Most traditional training is based on avoidance. We’ll assume the dog has been taught the basics of sit by being pushed into position. This is called placement (or, in current politically correct jargon, modeling). Suppose that we are now going to work on fluency. We give the “sit” cue and, when the dog does not sit, we give a pop on the leash, which causes the collar to tighten around the dog’s neck and the dog sits. If we look at this sequence from a learning theory viewpoint, here’s what happened: Because the dog did not respond to the “sit” command, the handler popped the leash. This created either discomfort or pain (P+), and the dog changed position to avoid the discomfort; because the dog’s choice was to sit, the discomfort ended because the trainer loosened the collar (R-). Repeated enough times, this technique will teach the dog to sit on cue. Remember, P+ means you’ve added something to decrease behavior. In this case, you’ve added the leash pop to decrease the standing behavior. R- means you remove something to increase behavior. In this case, you removed the discomfort of the collar to increase the sitting behavior.

Remember: you cannot apply a negative without also applying the corresponding positive. In other words, you cannot have R- without P+, and you cannot have P- without R+. The problem with R- and P+ is that they can suppress all behavior, not just the behavior you are targeting. If the dog does not understand why she is being punished (which she undoubtedly does not in the beginning), she will suppress all behaviors because she doesn’t know which one will cause the discomfort. This is a key difference between dogs that have been trained using aversives (such as force fetch, as described in the introduction) and those that have been trained using positive reinforcement. A positively trained dog will offer behaviors until he finds the one that will earn a reinforcement; the dog that has been trained with aversives will more frequently avoid offering behaviors out of fear of punishment.

The only exception we make to using R- and P+ in dog training is for snake avoidance training, because of safety issues. We have no doubt that a

dog could be trained to avoid snakes through R+ methods; however, the time and dedication this would take makes it highly unlikely to happen with the average dog. There are different methods out there for snake avoidance training, but they all use R-, and we feel that electronic collar training is the most reliable. If you do choose to use an electronic collar to train snake avoidance, take your dog to a person who specializes in this type of training and watch the trainer work before subjecting your dog to this highly painful and potentially damaging training. Make sure the trainer knows the principles of avoidance training and has excellent timing and criteria standards (a predetermined desired response from the dog). Snake aversion training is an unpleasant experience; we’ve observed people laughing at the dogs as they react to the shock, perhaps using laughter to mask their discomfort. If you train in an area that has poisonous snakes, you must address the dilemma of whether to use aversive training.

Shaping Through Successive Approximation

Shaping through successive approximation simply means that you are shaping a behavior by taking baby steps toward the goal behavior. By setting realistic, achievable criteria, you will make steady progress toward the goal and will reach it more quickly than if you set goals that are too difficult for your dog to attain.

Throughout this book you will see statements such as: “If your dog does not perform, you have moved ahead too quickly; go back a few steps and start again.” What this means is that you have set an unattainable goal for your dog. If your dog always achieves the goal, you are probably setting your criteria too low; if your dog frequently does not achieve the goal, you are setting your criteria too high. Aim for at least an 80:20 ratio of success to failure. Your dog should succeed 80% of the time.

Chapter 3 deals with criteria setting, record keeping, and measuring behavior. If you master these techniques, you should be well on your way to understanding how to set achievable criteria. Once you can do that, your training will move along very quickly.

Conclusion

Some of the more important learning theory principles apply to gun dog training. As we said at the beginning of this chapter, we cover actual training techniques (which, of course, follow the learning theory principles) in more detail in Chapter 4 through Chapter 8. Additional learning concepts are addressed throughout the book. We highly recommend you invest in Dr. Pamela Reid's book *Accelerated Learning*, or Mary Burch and Jon Bailey's book *How Dogs Learn*, and bone up on your learning theory—either will stand you in good stead during training.