



MOTIVATORS

HOW TO KEEP YOUR DOG DRIVEN & LEARNING

WHAT YOUR DOG NEEDS?

Every dog is different in what they desire or are driven towards. In training we need the dog to be motivated to listen & work with us. For solid learning to occur & automatic behaviour to develop in the future, then your dog needs to receive something good that they desire.

It is very unrealistic to expect them to just to "want" to work with us & listen to us because they "should respect" us or because they "love" us. We need to be well prepared with some "payment" for working with us & to help them remember what they did, especially around distractions! You wouldn't turn up, motivated to go to work if your boss didn't pay you?

You need to investigate what sparks your dog's individual motivation for learning, drive & work. Then use this motivator to add as their reward for stages in their training.



What would your dog sell its soul for?

So what puts the fire in your dogs legs to want to get to work with you?

To find out what that is, start simple with your dogs favourite food & favourite toys.

Check out some awesome tips at the side of the page on how to discover your dogs ultimate, motivational reward & there are even more helpful tips on how to discover this & build interest on page 2 !



How to be prepared!

We then need to consider that like us dogs will have different motivations based on the scenarios they are in at the time or that you will be taking them into.

Example: If you go to work, the motivation that gets you out of bed to turn up everyday, is usually money. However when you go for dinner with your friends money is NOT the motivation for you to go here, instead the motivation is maybe the food or company?

What is being highlighted here is through your walks and visits with your dog, their motivators will change at different times sometimes in the same walk. So it is handy to be prepared with a variety of things just in case.

So now you have an idea of what your dog likes, write down a list 1-10 putting the very best motivator as number 1 & list to the very least motivating e.g. cooked chicken, sausage, fish treats, kibble or tug toy, squeaky ball, normal ball, physical/ verbal praise, teddy. Next to each one write which scenario this reward would work best for you. You may have a few for the same place!

Having your lists will be handy, as now it is easy to see in what environment you take them, what works best where for learning & listening and what to take with you! Your list for the park may have more high valued rewards due to there being more distractions like chicken, cheese & squeaky ball. Your in home list may have lower valued rewards due to less distractions like kibble & physical/ verbal praise.

Top Tips

To find your dogs favourite rewards!

We always select our dogs rewards based on what WE think our dog would choose. We tend to use the same food, treats & toys. Why not let your dog choose, it may surprise you what they favour! Dogs are driven by scent first & having a safe variety of choice, will help them pick the best items for them!



BUILD A TASTING TRAY!

- First get a muffin tray or a flat tray/ board.
- Put a selection of dog safe meats, vegetables and fruit.
- Here is a idea to use: Banana, Spinach, Carrot, Strawberries, Green peas, Sweetcorn, Tuna, Cheese, Chicken, sausage, Greek Yoghurt, pear.
- When you put it down for your dog, film them eating it and really look at what they go for first and what order they eat it in.
- Make sure the food you use is 100% safe for dogs to eat. Google it if you are unsure!
- Make a toy selection line up with different toys to play with, pick them up & see what they go to or interact with first.

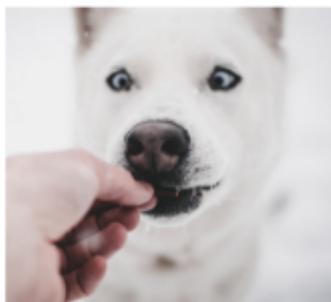


TROUBLESHOOTING

WHAT IF MY DOG JUST ISN'T INTERESTED IN ANYTHING?

Tips

- First of all make sure that your dog is in good health and free from pain or illness (this can affect drive).
- Make sure that your dog is not too full already. A way around this is to make sure that you change the way you feed their daily food amount. Simply reduce what is in the bowl and include what you use in training for their daily feed as well.
- Ensure that you are using small pieces of food so that you are not filling them up too quickly!
- Ensure your dog is comfortable and not extremely frightened or nervous. The stress system shuts off digestion and desire to play when they are overly worried. So they may not be able to eat or play if something is overwhelming them.
- If your dog has allergies or specialised diets that are not particularly motivating, why not try storing their normal food in an airtight container with something more smelly like roast chicken juice or fish juices and infuse the kibble, so the food appears more valuable through scent.
- Another tip is that your dog may find hand feeding boring in comparison to the environment. Try throwing the food onto the floor or scatter feeding it. Your dog may find it more fun chasing their food in motion and sniffing it out.
- Ensure with toys that they are driven to them enough first for example having a good play drive with them already before using in training is handy. Your dog may be driven by a ball at home but it may take a squeaky ball to get them moving to you in distractions.
- You can buy liquid scent online such as rabbit, pheasant & duck. Wear gloves and scent up a tug toy or ball to make it more valuable. Just remember to store it in an air tight container & pop it in a bag to take with you.
- You can buy different textured toys online such as Ruff E Nuff, where you can buy sheep skin or rabbit skin tug toys. Your dog may find these toys more valuable than pet shop bought ones.
- Try combining food and toys! Come play with the toy= you get your favourite food.
- Make sure you feed 3 pieces of food or bonus reward (see below) to start off with each repetition and then reduce to one food reward then phase out the food slowly. Rather than just giving them one piece of food and phasing it out too quickly.
- Try a BONUS reward! For example if the distraction is really fun and exciting your dog may not respond to just 1 piece of chicken or the exercise may be too hard to just get 1 piece of chicken. You may need to feed consecutively and continually 5 separate pieces in a row if it is particularly hard for them. I tend to feed as long as it takes to say this sentence in my head "Well done you have just won the holiday"! As a rule of thumb for each brand new exercise you do feed them 3 pieces of food then if they find it difficult reward with a BONUS!
- Make the exercise easier and make the reward easier to get, you may be moving forward too quickly too soon.
- Get creative some dogs love to perform a task like touch or paw this can also act as a reward.
- Natural rewards are great motivators, e.g. your dog may like to go sniff, go run, swim & go play on a walk. Simply put in a small exercise in first & reward them with allowing them to do one of these natural things.



Regardless of what your dog likes a combination of for motivating their drive, it does take a little trial and error first to find out what your dog likes. It is unlikely to go smoothly without this preparation and you're more likely to believe your dog is ignorant to you. It is unlikely that your dog will respond well if you just get any old dog treat and venture to train in the distracting world out there!