



Dog Training *Tips*

by Cat Saunders



Forgotten Tips and Things to Remember when Training your Dog

Whether you're training your dog at home or getting professional help, getting things right from the start is the key to creating the best and most successful training relationship with your dog.

I have written this ebook to help get you on the right path with your dog and I have highlighted some of the most important things that dog owners often overlook, don't consider or forget when training their dog.

Go from a good dog owner to the best owner with the following tips from The K9 Company.

Correct Socialisation

Having a well socialised dog is an important factor in all situations, but have you considered what is polite vs rude when it comes to socialisation and your dog's behaviour?

A good way I like to look at how to socialise a dog is to look at how we are socialised as people and I often give the following examples.

Example 1

When walking down a busy street, we don't run up to everyone, get inside their personal space and get overly excited to see them, nor should we be rude and or express ourselves aggressively.

We may acknowledge them, smile and even say hello, but that is usually as far as a social interaction goes in public spaces and new, unfamiliar people. It is from here where we can develop friendships and relationships.

The same goes for a well socialised dog. I use the term "neutrally" socialised, where your dog can be in a public place be polite say hello and not be an unwanted nuisance to others.

EXAMPLE 2

As children we are put in situations that apply social pressure where we learn to overcome perceived “scary” social interactions.

A common scenario of this would be when a young child is encouraged by a parent to order their ice-cream by themselves. This can be and is a stressful situation for most children, yet it teaches the child how to interact with others and overcome their initial fear of the social interaction.

I use examples of human social interaction as I find people can relate better when they can draw on a personal experience and/or understanding.

So when it comes to socialising your dog, there are important factors that should be taken into consideration. If you let your dog run up and jump on every dog and person it sees, your dog is getting extremely high value, external rewards away from you, which may cause difficulty in training as your dog may see everything else as more fun than you.

Of course we all want our dogs to be friendly and enjoy the company of other people and dogs, but make sure they get these rewards for displaying polite and nice behaviours immediately prior to and leading up to their social interaction.



It is also important to remember to be aware of what your dog's perception is, when you stop the fun they are having socialising. If you don't offer your dog high incentive to return to you, inadvertently you are teaching your dog that you hold no positive value and in fact most likely you are *punishing your dog for coming to you. Often I see dog's avoiding their owners in order to continue their social interaction, particularly in areas such as in the dog park.

*Punishment:

In *operant conditioning*, **punishment** is any change in a human or animal's surroundings that occurs after a given behaviour or response which reduces the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again in the future. As with *reinforcement*, it is the behaviour, not the animal that is punished. Whether a change is or is not punishing is only known by its effect on the rate of the behaviour.

* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punishment_\(psychology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punishment_(psychology))

When to start socialising your dog

For those that have had dogs before and can remember, we were always told to keep our puppy's at home until they are fully vaccinated. But as with all things science and research has come a long way, especially in the past few years.

The first 16 weeks of your puppy's life is what is called the CRITICAL PERIOD for socialisation. So the earlier the better for your pup to start with positive socialisation. Care should be taken when choosing the environments and dogs you choose to take your puppy, whilst their immune system is still developing.

If your dog is older than the 16 weeks, the same rules apply in regards to "the sooner the better" to start building positive neutral socialisation.

Tip to Remember:

The more your dog has the opportunity to display behaviours and confirm their perspective (good or bad) in social activities, the more it is being reinforced and the more likely your dog will continue to display those behaviours.



My four dogs- Otto, Sami, Zooka & Tank

Distraction and Critical Distance

Distractions and critical distance is really important to include and implement into the training of your dog.

The term distractions is fairly self explanatory, yet can vary from dog to dog. Some dogs are distracted by cars, others by birds then the next may be distracted by a leaf blowing by in the wind.

It's important to identify what it is that your dog currently finds as a distraction in each and every situation, and then work at your dogs Critical Distance;

This is the distance where your dog is aware of the “distraction” but is still able to pay attend to you and not be totally sidetracked. This distance will vary given different environments and the level of distraction/s.

You will need to find the exact point where your dog can make the choice to pay attention to you, ignore the distraction, so you have the opportunity to reinforce the behaviours you are wanting.



In this picture Zooka is paying full attention to me during a group obedience class

Increasing Distraction and Reducing Critical Distance

Only when your dog displays the behaviours you have been working on easily and reliably, should you start to decrease the distance at which you are working/walking with your dog.

Tip to Remember:

Remember it is known at the Critical Distance as it is CRITICAL for getting results in your training with your dog.

So if your dog is extremely and overly excited to greet other people or dogs, find the distance where your dog can reach success with what you are trying to teach and that you are also rewarding and reinforce their engagement with you, this will help with all areas and facets of your training.

If you teach your dog that you are the most rewarding thing in their world, and use a balanced approach to your training, you will never have issues recalling your dog when you ask them to come.

Check out what happened to one dog owner when the distraction and critical distance weren't considered before he let his dog off lead here.



Where to from here?

Tip to Remember

It's important to acknowledge and remember that every activity and interaction you have with your dog, is teaching them something.

It may be inadvertently that you are teaching and reinforcing them to run up to and be over the top with their greetings of others, or it may be that the more they pull on their lead, the faster they will get to their destination.

If you keep the above 2 factors in mind (Socialisation and Critical Distance) with my *Tips to remember* when you are with your dog, you are setting not only yourself up for a great relationship and experience with your dog, but your dog will have a clear understanding of how to behave politely and also have great success in any training situation.



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We are Australia's Industry Leaders, Award Winning, Dog training and Behavioural Specialists, that is Accredited by a Governing Body. We are waiting to welcome you to the future in dog training and teach you how to gain the understanding of your dog's behaviour that will enhance your relationship and how you live together.

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