

Don't risk punishing!

Punishment, coercion, domination does not work

if you want to teach cooperation, good manners, tricks, obedience behavior and have a loyal companion.

Punishment generates evasion, aversion, defiance or aggression. Yes, it may stop a "bad" behavior (temporarily), but it doesn't teach good behavior. Your dog will choose one of two ways to react to punishment:

- He will stop acting or avoid (sometimes this is what you want) but this often becomes what is called learned helplessness (cringing, eye averting, slinking, unresponsive dogs)
- He will retaliate. Aggression as growling will become snarling will become biting.

So how to get the dog not to bite, chew, jump up, pee on the floor?

Management and positive reinforcement

Management means never putting your puppy/dog in a position where he can make a mistake. And positive reinforcement means immediately following any "good" behavior with something that the dog will work for (food, play, praise, etc.). We each want a dog that chooses good behavior, that listens to us, and that lives with us as a friend. How could punishment create such a dog?

Studies demonstrate that learning is strongest and best retained when the learner has figured it out for himself. We know this is true for us, and behavioral science has shown that it's true for all animals. Positive reinforcement creates learners who "think" or puzzle out what they can do to get reinforced. So they quickly learn, that if I sit this human will give me a cookie. Reinforcement can be given for a good behavior and equally valuable for training an important reinforcement can be withheld for a "bad" behavior. If your puppy bites too hard, don't punish. Instead remove the reinforcement - your hand! The puppy is playing which is fun (reinforcing). When he bites which he likes to do, you say "ouch!" and remove the reinforcement briefly (your hand). When he stops biting in surprise you return the reinforcement your hand and attention. In this case you remove a reinforcer and then give a reinforcer. The puppy chooses gentle play because that's the only way he'll get to play.

Dogs do what works! What does this mean to the dog? What works means that your dog believes that what he just did got him what he wanted. The dog freely chooses a good behavior because he wants the reinforcement. Isn't this how we all want to live? Its fun, its humane, it's a creative challenge to figure out how to set your dog up for success and to steer him away from failure. There is no good dog switch hidden somewhere under your dog's fur coat. But the friend your good dog can be is worth the challenge of learning the skills of management and positive reinforcement.