

Golden Retriever Discipline Training

Teach your golden retriever puppy the basics of discipline, reward and punishment.

Excerpts from Comprehensive Owner's Guide: Golden Retrievers

KEEP THE "PUPPY" IN YOUR PUPPY

Before we discuss the roles of discipline in training, let us take a time-out for a discussion of fun and play in your puppy's schedule. As canines, Golden Retrievers are social animals and thrive on play and interaction with their masters (and other dogs, too). Exercising and playing with your Golden Retriever puppy help to burn some of his gundog fuel and gives the dog focus. Trying to obedience-train a Golden who is hyper and wound-up is practically impossible. Further, a play-deprived Golden can become destructive as he tries to find ways to release his pent-up energy.

Outline a schedule of activities for your blossoming Golden pup that includes canine-human games as well as safe doggy exercises. The word "retriever" is not in the Golden's name for nothing! Puppy catch is a great way of occupying the Golden, who is content to fetch a ball or flying disk for hours (if you have the time!). The author doesn't advise games of chasing because it can imprint on the Golden that it is okay to run away from his master. Likewise, tug-of-war is not advised as this dominance game can give the puppy the impression that he can climb to the top of the heap and become "top dog." The role of top dog is always reserved for his master and trainer.

All work and no play makes your Golden an unhappy, unfocused pup. Make time for play in your schedule and soon your Golden Retriever and you will be bonding and sharing quality time during training sessions as well.

ROLES OF DISCIPLINE, REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Discipline, training one to act in accordance with rules, brings order to life. It is as simple as that. Without discipline, particularly in a group society, chaos reigns supreme and the group will eventually perish. Humans and canines are social animals and need some form of discipline in order to function effectively. They must procure food, protect their home base and their young and reproduce to keep the species going.

If there were no discipline in the lives of social animals, they would eventually die from starvation and/or predation by other stronger animals.

In the case of domestic canines, dogs need discipline in their lives in order to understand how their pack (you and other family members) functions and how they must act in order to survive.

A large humane society in a highly populated area in the US recently surveyed dog owners regarding their satisfaction with their relationships with their dogs. People who had trained their dogs were 75% more satisfied with their pets than those who had never trained their dogs. Dr. Edward Thorndike, a noted psychologist, established Thorndike's Theory of Learning, which states that a behavior that results in a pleasant event tends to be repeated. Likewise, a behavior that results in an unpleasant event tends not to be repeated. It is this theory on which training methods are based today. For example, if you manipulate a dog to perform a specific behavior and reward him for doing it, he is likely to do it again because he enjoyed the end result.

Occasionally, punishment, a penalty inflicted for an offense, is necessary. The best type of punishment often comes from an outside source. For example, a child is told not to touch the stove because he may get burned. He disobeys and touches the stove. In doing so, he receives a burn. From that time on, he respects the heat of the stove and avoids contact with it. Therefore, a behavior that results in an unpleasant event tends not to be repeated.

A good example of a dog learning the hard way is the dog who chases the house cat. He is told many times to leave the cat alone, yet he persists in teasing the cat. Then, one day he begins chasing the cat but the cat turns and swipes a claw across the dog's face, leaving him with a painful gash on his nose. The final result is that the dog stops chasing the cat.

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