

DOG WHISPERER

Problem and Motivation

A dog owner can feel at lost when trying to train and improve the behavior of his dog. The dog owner is usually unable to identify positive changes, thus seeking help from external sources to track the improvements of their pet behavior. To understand the difficulty of training the dog we must understand that the process of training a dog is a dynamic interaction between the dog and his owner where not only the behavior of the dog requires training, but also the communication between the dog and their owner, and ultimately their relationship. Improving the communication with the dog requires improving both the dog listening skills, and the owner understanding of the dog behavior. Effective communication between the dog and their owner leads to satisfactory relationships based in mutual trust and understanding. Improving the dog behavior is therefore dependent upon improving both the communication with the dog, and the owner-dog relationship. However, it is very challenging to become a self-taught expert in dog communication without seeking help from literature and/or other professionals or experts. In figure 1 we can see all the elements involved in dog's behavior training. The dog is attentive and listening to the owner. The dog and owner are able to identify the proper response, thus building trust and improving their relation. Finally the owner is able to influence the dog's behavior.



Figure 1. The picture depicts the necessary interaction between a dog and his owner to properly modify and influence behavior changes.

Analysis of Problem

We can illustrate the problem of trying to improve and influence the behavior of a dog through an easy example. Assume an imaginary scenario where Charlie has recently acquired a new four legged friend. The name of Charlie's friend is Bailey, a 7 months old golden retriever. Bailey is Charlie's first dog, and Bailey has never received training before. Charlie is very frustrated because Bailey continues to urinate inside his house. Charlie walks Bailey every day but he cannot see any positive changes. To aid in Bailey's training, Charlie recruits the aid of a professional dog trainer. The dog trainer asks Charlie what is Bailey's gender, and Bailey's daily schedule. The professional understands that house training a female dog differs from house training a male dog. The dog trainer also knows that Bailey's daily schedule will dictate when is best to walk Bailey. Ultimately the dog trainer recommends a series of exercises to improve the communication between Charlie and Bailey. He also recommends a new schedule for Bailey that will aid the house training process. As we can see in this case, Charlie was not able to modify Bailey's behavior without seeking the aid of a professional. Other dog owners are not so fortunate and require self-learning through literature, often misleading in how to best approach each situation. However, the process of improving and influencing the behavior of a dog can be generalized by collecting information pertaining to the dog breed, gender, and type of behavior requiring modification, and by tracking different signs and overtime changes in the dog that may not be noticeable for an inexperienced dog owner. Ultimately there are many simple exercises with easy to track results and progress that can be used to improve the dog-owner communication and relationship. Figure 2 below shows a simple exercise frequently used to influence dog behavior. In this case, the dog is taught self-control. Opposite to his instinct, the dog must wait for the owner's release. He will always receive the treat after showing trust and patience.



Figure 2. A simple exercise of self-control between a dog and the trainer. The dog is waiting for the release command before he can obtain the treat.