



Giant Schnauzer Ch & OTCh Dragonair The Black Atlan in lead
Ch Quay's Alyce of Tanglewood CDX in right wheel
Ch Dragonair The Black Cat CD in left wheel
Robin in right basket
Adam in left basket
Sue driving

THE SUE AILSBY COLLECTION

Inside the Training Levels

**Compiled by Lynn Shrove
with Sue Ailsby**

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A NOTE FROM LYNN

Where did it all begin?

I don't know when I first discovered Sue Ailsby's Training Levels. Or how. But life hasn't been the same since. There is an old saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." I was ready.

After ten years of training service dogs and trainers of Service Dogs, I found myself adrift... no longer involved and searching for something more, something different. Shayla, my Service Dog, had been lovingly but traditionally trained. At APDT conferences I had heard hints of gentle, correction free methodology and saw my first incarnations of shaping. But it was pieces of this and parts of that. Then I attended my first Clicker Expo! That opened the door for me, yet as much as I listened, watched and read, nowhere could I find answers to all my questions in one place.

Then I came across the Levels. I read for days, beginning to end. I copied and cut and pasted and printed out my very own copy. Highlighter in hand, I read again and again. Answers to everything! In logical order. So easily understood. Who was this woman with the wonderful way with words and such depth of understanding?

I called my best friend, another trainer with years of experience who was also 'seeking'. And together we entered the world of Scuba and Sue, of clickers and rewards, the Levels and the most powerful "one liners" ever read.

The two of us attended our first seminar and then a second and then a third. We became Levels "groupies". We began at Level One, explaining to our traditionally trained, middle-aged dogs how to volunteer behaviors,

*to never again fear they were doing something wrong, to be In the Game
and the fun of teamwork and training.*

*It was a difficult road for Shayla and me. Shayla had IBD
(Inflammatory Bowel Disease) and was not food driven. So we went
slowly, learning this new way of communicating together. The bond was
there. We had been a working team for quite a while. We stumbled and
we soared.*

*We met Sue and Scuba and, eventually, little Stitch. We found the
Training Levels list. And we haven't looked back since.*

Lynn Shrove

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ANECDOTAL

A Crateful of Teeth

OK, OK, remember, this was PRE-clicker, my moment of being hit by the lightning bolt, after I had given up "obedience training" but before I had any idea of what was going to replace it.

I am, in Canada, the grandma of Giant Schnauzers, and am frequently called upon to answer questions and help people out with Giant problems. Some friends were getting a divorce, and the tension in the household had driven their 15-mo homebred puppy bitch quite out of her mind. They called to tell me that they had taken her to a show but couldn't show her because she was in the crate and no one could get her out (a pro handler later told me he had looked in the crate from quite a ways back, and "there was nothing in that crate but BIG TEETH and LOTS OF THEM"). They put the crate on a plane, and I picked it up at the airport and deposited it in my living room.

They were right, there was a lot of movin' and shakin' going on in there, and none of it friendly. I couldn't think of anything else to do, so I opened the crate door and sat quickly down on the couch (see, I've been a Couch Trainer for a LOOOOOONG time!) with a broom to fend her off if necessary. She sat in the crate and snarled and snapped for a very long time, and when she finally slowed down a little, (sheer luck, I had NO idea what I was doing), I whispered "yes" and tossed a

bit of hot dog in the crate, which caused another round of snarling and snapping and teeth hanging out all over the place. It took her three hours to actually pick up the first piece, and another hour to cross the 10' between the crate and my lap. For the rest of the day, I just kept her with me with a leash, saying "yes" when she did something reasonable and ignoring her or walking away when she was less than reasonable.

By the following evening, she had settled down beautifully and seemed to believe that I was capable of controlling the universe without her worrying about it or helping. I took her and another Giant to a training building, and handed the leash to a trusted friend while I worked the other dog. The bitch was a bit leery, but seemed able to respond reasonably. I told my friend to ignore her, and offer her a bit of hot dog once in a while.

Everything was going well until someone else showed up, a dog barked, she jumped back and pulled the leash out of my friend's hand and darted out the door. Sue Ailsby, Professional Dog Trainer - motto: I can kill anything in less than 24 hours! As I ran out the door, I saw her standing in the middle of the street, up on her toenails, pupils dilated, daring someone to breath and she would be GONE - a black dog in the middle of a strange city in the middle of the night, and no one would EVER catch her. Still not having a clue what I was doing, I started saying "yes" quietly, and pretending I had a hot dog. The third time I said it, I saw her pupils constrict. The fourth time, she looked around as if she had just woken up, gave herself a little shake, and trotted over to me with a shaky little "Gosh, this is embarrassing, out in the middle of the street! Let's go back inside!".

When I got home, I was telling my surgeon husband what happened, and said "It was totally amazing - it was as if someone had shot her with a tranquilizing dart. One moment she was freaked out of her mind, the next moment she was totally relaxed!" And he replied "You really don't know what happened, do you?! You taught her a word which forced her to think about food. When she was thinking about food, she was not physically capable of producing adrenalin. When she stopped producing adrenalin, she stopped being afraid." This led to my vision of the big red button I could "install" in the dog's forehead by

pairing the "click" to the food, then when the dog was approaching a situation where it was about to be afraid, or angry, or hysterically excited, I could "reach out and push the button" and short-circuit the whole event by simply saying "yes" and making the dog think about food.

This idea of using the dog's body **FOR** me was so earth-shattering for me, I have difficulty talking about it. It led quickly to the realization that as a **J&P** trainer, I spent all my time using the dog's body **AGAINST** me - teach the dog to sit by pushing down, thus forcing the dog to push back against me. Would it not be more sensible to teach the dog to **STAND** by pushing down? **YES!** Teach the dog to come by pulling it toward me? No! Teach the dog to come by **PUSHING IT AWAY!** Understand, at this point my entire world is shattering in little pieces around me, but I'm too excited to stop. I start to shiver just thinking about this. I was a **J&P** trainer for 25 years! So what started me on *The Path* was my dear departed Spider and her teeth in that crate. She stayed with me, by the way, and showed me many other things once we started in the right direction.

Afterword: That wonderful dog became the first Giant Schnauzer in history with a sheepherding title, and placed in herding trials. She was a Group winner in conformation, and earned her **CDX**. She ran on a competitive dogsled team. A movie star tried to buy her (but failed).

The Best Laid Training Plans

Had a bit of a set-back this morning. I've been out of town with my SD for nearly three weeks, and left my poor Giant Schnauzer at home with daddy. She's telling me she feels very neglected (then nudges my arm for pets and climbs on the couch uninvited - both things *I* don't let her do, so I don't think daddy's been QUITE as mean as she tells me he was), so I decided to teach her a new trick this morning. I've been thinking about getting her to "hide her eyes" or "salute" for some time now - she's a very pawnipulative dog, and this should come pretty easily to her.

Background - this dog spent her first year going to dog shows every weekend and being a star, and was taught to totally accept any body manipulations that happen to her. I can (if I could bend down that far) lift her off the ground by the back legs, roll her over and back on a table, hang half of her off a table and she will just lie there.

Training - the common way of teaching hide your eyes is to put a bit of Scotch tape on the dog's nose and click the paw-scrape as the dog tries to get it of. So I put the tape on her nose and waited, clicker and treats in hand. She backed up. She barked. She played dead. I took the tape off.

I put a large yellow Post-It note on her nose and waited. She backed up. She whispered. She retrieved two things (not easy with a large yellow Post-It note on your nose!). I took the Post-It note off her nose.

I lifted her eyebrows and pasted a large yellow Post-It note over each of her eyes and waited, clicker and treats in hand. She backed up. She wagged her tail. She went sniffing around the room and picked up four more things and brought them proudly to me. She spun to the left. I took the large yellow Post-It notes off her eyes and gave her the treats.

I went grocery shopping.

Catching Up with Stitch's Summer

Whoof, saw my name mentioned in some regard to a dog with no life, so thought it was time to give you-all a catch-up on Stitch's summer. FYI, Stitch is my second home- schooled Portuguese Water Dog SD. She just turned 4 yo.

We've done... five or six... seminars, which involve extensive plane travel, hotels, and lying quietly on her mat for hours and hours, with brief periods of jumping up and knocking people's socks off, not to mention all the service work the rest of the day.

We did nothing special in July except train for water trials and exercise her with my recumbent tricycle.

In August we drove 800 miles to Minneapolis with a friend, her Water Dog, and my trailer to attend Water Trials. We had SUCH a good time! Stitch earned her first two water titles - Junior Water Dog, and Apprentice Water Dog. Two more to go!

The end of August we drove 3 hours to help out at a Draft Test (cart pulling). Stitch wasn't entered, as she already has her Draft Dog title, and isn't ready for Draft Dog Excellent (it's slow going because I need to walk behind the cart and turn her with voice cues only. The walking isn't my best thing.) That same weekend she was in a conformation show (bombed big time), and Rally Trials, where she finished her first Canadian Kennel Club Rally title (she has several others, but not CKC).

Then we spent 10 wonderful days in southern California. We spent 4 days working with Service Dogs at Camp Pendleton. We did service work, and introduced them to agility and rally. The rest of the time we spent - well, resting, while Stitch and her hostess-dogs wrestled, ripped and growled joyously at each other. Lynn (hostess-human) and I went to the Apple Store and the Container Store pretty much EVERY DAY, while Stitch et al thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful ocean beaches, waves, other dogs and other dogs' toys. In our spare time (between

relaxing and shopping and playing), we gave each other training challenges - getting our dogs to go up a flight of stairs backwards, shaping them to go through improvised tunnels, having them back up around a coffee table. Way fun and a great way to keep our training skills sharp.

This weekend, she's in six more conformation shows, and then we have nothing but my kid's wedding until we head to Chicago in mid-October.

Why do we do all this stuff? Lots of reasons. I think they're fun. I'm a better trainer when I keep training for new things. Stitch thinks they're fun. Stitch is a steadier and happier worker when she's well-socialized, well-exercised, and learning new things. Agility, in particular, is a very disabled-friendly sport, so get out there and play games!

Checking In

Running between out-of-town engagements, I wanted to check in.

First, thanks to all the new members who read through the Introduction and the first Level of the Training Levels - much appreciated. Please understand that this list was not set up to solve immediate problems like housebreaking, but to discuss working dogs through the Levels. We've been sidetracked lately with the vast number of immediate answers being demanded, and I'm really hoping we can get back to training **BEFORE** problems develop. The Levels were designed to lead both dog **AND** handler through developing a positive relationship, so give them a chance.

Second - let's see. I was in Medford, Oregon, had a lovely time - seems the people who go to seminars are the most fun people! And the dogs are the **BEST** dogs. And it only took the airline 17 days to find my suitcase... Then to Harrisburg, PA with the same results (that is, nice

people and dogs, not that my luggage got lost on that trip too...). Then last weekend I was in Alberta for a llama conference, speaking on the Canadian llama show system and how to train for it, and also on basic training, applying clicker training to llamas, and respecting and working with the llama's culture. So much fun to work with people who have never before had any experience with trying to look at things from the critter's point of view! I've got about a hundred unanswered emails, but they won't get answered this week.

Third, this coming weekend my nephew and I will have Scuba and Stitch back in Alberta for a Draft Dog test. Andrew and Scuba are entered in Draft Dog Excellent, Stitch and I are entered in Draft Dog, both of which take me back to the Levels. I keep thinking of Stitch as a little baby puppy, yet here she is after about 2 weeks of "serious" work once again proving that a Level 5 dog can learn pretty much anything in less than a month. Stitch has never been a dog who's terribly comfortable with things draped over her. It took her months to WANT to have a leash or her Service Dog vest put on, never mind wearing a cart! Turning a cart is a very difficult procedure, since the dog stands between two solid shafts and so can't turn normally by simply walking the front end around and swinging the back end in the other direction. In order to turn in the cart, the dog has to sidestep around each turn. Last week Stitch had no idea how to do this and could only think of ducking under or jumping over the shaft. This morning we went to the park and she ably demonstrated 360-degree turns to the left AND right - pretty much on a dime. She'll have to do a figure-8 in the test, and I'll have to be sure to move her in a straight line far enough so the cart doesn't run into the posts - WALK around the figure-8, sweet thing, don't just pivot! Anyway, at this point there's no telling whether she'll pass or not, of course, but she's certainly ready. Interestingly, she's picking up voice cues much better than Scuba ever did. I noticed this when I was walking fairly quickly and asked her to WHOA before I turned to her or slowed down at all, and she slammed on the brakes (which was rather noticeable, since she weights 38 lbs (17 kg) and the weight in the cart was 40 lbs (18 kg), plus the weight of the cart). Also I've been working a bit on getting directional cues for agility, and she's been able to generalize these to pulling the cart so that when I cue

LEFT she turns her head and moves to the left, and vice versa when I cue RIGHT. Clever little bunny.

Scuba's also ready for her first attempt at DDX. Part of it is that she has to pull the cart forward, left, right, slow, and halt with me walking behind the cart, so we've been working on that this week as she's pretty much got everything else she needs. Both dogs have a brilliant backup, which I taught while I was working on STAND in Level 2. Because she's not great on voice cues (better on hand and body signals), this walking-in-front business is harder than it really needs to be, but today she started well (HIKE), turned well (COME LEFT and COME RIGHT), and showed a definite understanding of EASY (slow down). We spent several minutes arguing about stopping. Where Stitch is screeching to a stop on the WHOA cue, Scuba enjoys pulling the cart and goes trucking merrily forward with her tail waving. Finally (welcome to the Flat Forehead School Of Dog Training) I realized that since the click ends the behaviour, all I have to do to get her to stop is to give her the click-word YES - screeeech. Duh, problem solved. Yes, it's bastardizing the click-word, but she's 10 years old and I guess we'll both survive. All in all, at this point, I'm thinking reins would be more elegant, but that's not an option and I'm convinced we'll muddle through. Besides, we've got three more days to train... Really, the thing I'm most worried about is how rough the terrain will be. She IS 10 years old and only weighs 43 lbs (19 kg), and the DDX weight is 60 lbs (27 kg) over hills, grass tufts, etc. but we've been practising up and down ditches, in mud and loose dirt, etc, and she loves to pull two kids weighing 80 lbs (36 kg) together.

And finally, I'm just about finished a long job I've been doing for a wonderful Service Dog organization, after which I'd like to rework the Levels, add photos to demonstrate things, etc. One of the things I'd like to do is eliminate the conformation stuff like "if you don't want to teach your dog to sit you can do this instead". It was a compromise when I wrote them and the longer I live with them the less I like it. Also I'd like to add a few more general living behaviours and make more of the strictly-competitive-obedience things optional. So Maureen, who's been through L7 with Bieke, and the rest of you

spread out between L1 and 7, please look over the Levels in the next couple of weeks and start thinking about improvements, if you would.

Dog Manners Are Not Optional

"He galloped up to the Sheltie to play. At first the Sheltie just glared and walked away. Then he became more aggressive, barking and charging. Next he started trying to attack."

Suzanne Clothier turns this around wonderfully. She tells a marvelous story that goes something like this:

My husband and I were sitting on a bench in the park, holding hands and talking. A guy came up to us, sat on the bench next to me, and started pawing me and trying to kiss me. I jumped up screaming in horror and disgust, and hit him with my purse. Then my husband jumped up and started yelling at ME for being so unfriendly and for hitting the guy!

This is such a wonderful story because it illustrates so brilliantly what we do in situations like this. We see the "happy-go-lucky" dog as innocent, and the innocent, polite dog as the aggressor. Your puppy was incredibly rude galloping up to a dog he didn't know without asking permission. This sort of behaviour is going to mark him as a boor and get him in fights throughout his life if he doesn't learn to stop behaving this way. The Sheltie, OTOH, was polite and tolerant. The first thing he did was glare and walk away. Did Bozo listen? No. Then the Sheltie, realizing that glaring and leaving didn't work, barked and charged. Did Bozo listen? No. Finally the Sheltie realized he had to back up his opinion with more noise and a display of teeth. Then what happened? His "husband" jumped up, declared him strange and dangerous, and took Bozo away so he couldn't actually learn the lesson.

If this progression is truly what happened as you describe it, the Sheltie sounds like a wonderful, trustworthy dog who speaks Dog very well and is more than willing to follow the rules. Especially if he is friends with a Chihuahua. The problem now is that you have a much larger idiot puppy who doesn't know how to behave in polite society and who might be large enough and strong enough to hurt the Sheltie. I'd suggest you find a trustworthy person with a larger trustworthy dog who can teach this brat some manners. Neither my Giant Schnauzer bitches nor my Portuguese Water Dog bitch would put up with his behaviour for a second.

Another example: When my llama babies are 6 months old, I take their mothers away from them and leave the babies in their own pasture with the best grass and hay for a couple of months while they are weaning. After a couple of weeks, I notice that one baby has looked around, discovered her or himself in a field full of llamas the same size as he is, and decided he is the King of the Known Universe. He gets very pushy, chest-butting the other babies and calling it "play", chasing them away from any food he decides is his, and generally just being rude and obnoxious. When I see this happening, I take that baby and put him in a pasture with my three least-tolerant old females. The first time he tries to nurse from one of them, or tries to chase them away from some hay, he finds himself running "for his life" around the pasture with the back of his head all green from spit. He isn't hurt, but by golly, he is reminded that Kings will always find someone bigger and stronger, so being bigger and stronger at any particular moment isn't reason enough to push everybody else around.

In a seminar last year, there was a Toy Poodle. This little dog was obnoxious, barking and lunging at every dog that came near. We worked on this behaviour throughout the weekend, and it was much improved by Sunday afternoon, though not completely gone. When the seminar was done, and people were packing up to go home, several of us turned our dogs loose in the large enclosed area next to the seminar grounds. My PWD, Scuba, had gone out and played a bit, and was resting nearby. I was talking to some people when, seeing the looks on their faces, I turned around. The TPoodle's mom had let it off the lead, and it was barreling straight for Scuba! There was no time for me

to do anything. The Poodle jumped at Scuba, Scuba jumped up, there was a great deal of growling and kerfuffling, with the Poodle rolling around on the ground under Scuba. Then a YIPE-YIPE-YIPE-KI-YIPE, and the Poodle went running off away from us. Scuba watched it go, then lay back down again. The Poodle's mother was great, breathing deeply (shaky breaths ;*D). Several people pointed out that the Poodle was still able to walk, and that there was no blood trail. We went back to talking, but I kept an eye on the Poodle. After a few minutes, it came walking back towards Scuba. Geez, I thought, what's it going to take to teach this thing some manners? Well, apparently that lesson had been enough, because the Poodie stopped about 10' away from Scuba, turned his butt to her, and play-bowed. Scuba stood up. She stalked a step or two towards him, and then SHE play-bowed. Then the two of them went racing off to play together.

Manners are not optional. Rude dogs get hurt, or, if they're lucky, they learn their lessons before they get hurt.

Origin of the Training Levels

Here's where the Training Levels came from.

I had a lot of competitive students in various dogsports, and they were all gung ho on the fine points of their particular sport. However, if I left them to their own devices, they couldn't let their dogs off leash in a park.

Nobody would ride with the to dog shows because their dogs would scream in the car. Their dogs would have all kinds of stupid little issues (my dog doesn't like guys with beards, my dog doesn't like ring numbers hanging over the ring, my dog doesn't like skateboards... yadda yadda yadda) that I was solving every day with pet people and pet dogs.

Then I found out I had a brain tumour. Assuming I was going to die, I figured I had to leave them something to teach these people what they needed to know about having great pets AND great competition dogs, because, IMO, there's no difference. And the more I worked on it, the less of a difference I saw.

"The amazin' thing was, I didn't die! I landed on top of a police car, and IT died!" Extra credit for recognizing the quote - and for admitting that you're old enough to recognize it ;*)

So there I was, still breathing and having this great teaching/training tool (if I do say so myself). And then I started to discover the most amazin' thing - that the Levels teach a dog to think, and to learn, and fill in the gaps in knowledge that are left by concentration on a single sport.

And another amazing thing - that once a dog has the Levels skills, going into a new sport is easy, easy, easy, because the dog DOES know all the background skills, DOES know how to relax, DOES know how to travel, DOES know how to overcome fears and aggressions, and DOES look forward to learning new things.

So, have at it.

Inspiration to Cross Over

" but the point I am trying to make is that having been there and done that (conventional training) I am seeing little things that I never noticed before."

I know that I was a very d*mn good trainer in the "old days", and have been a d*mn good trainer for 30 years. I have the scores and the credentials to prove it, and the fact that other trainers consistently listened to me and sent me dogs that they weren't getting through to.

I know also that I am ten times the trainer now that I was ten years ago, and the REASON is that clicker training is so much more... pure? So much closer to the truth. So much easier to break down into tiny pieces. Whatever it is, it took what I was bad at and eliminated it as a necessary (or even desirable) part of training, and took what I was best at - observing the state and reactions of the animal, and focussing on exactly what the point was in the first place - and showed me that these things were desperately important.

What little girl, after all, ever didn't want to just be able to talk to the animals? What little girl didn't want her dog to be a sentient hero? A phrase my grandfather once used, that I have carried with me since before I can remember, was "When we all lived in the forest and could talk to the animals..." and I have cried out in desperation at the shame of humanity in that terrible loss, and spent my life trying to find that forest once again. And, maybe because I was actively engaged in the search, I was closer to finding it than most people will ever get. But clicker training is the compass. When I'm freeshaping, the syllables start to form words, and I CAN UNDERSTAND THE WORDS. I will not get closer in this lifetime.

Level Seven Dogs

Thank you, thank you...

Scuba is retired and has gone to live with my son and daughter (in law). My son is a farmer, so is generally home most of the winter, and just had surgery on his shoulder so is home ALL the time for the next couple of months. During the fall before the surgery, Scuba would accompany him from their house in the small city to the farm. While my son puttered around preparing machinery for the winter, etc, Scuba got to run around loose on the farm, hunting mice, chasing rabbits, and generally being a very happy old dog. This yard is half a mile from the nearest road, so totally safe for an old lady. She gets at least two walks a day, and all the petting, cuddling, and leftovers she can handle. I went to visit them a couple of weeks ago. Scuba met me at the door and gave me the tour: *"this is my couch. This is my other couch. This is my blanket. This is my TV remote. This is my kitchen. This is my bed where I let Robin and Anne sleep too. These are my toys. Nice to see you, when are you leaving?"*

Stitch is blossoming now that the Fun Police have moved out. Her friend Fish comes to visit sometimes and they rip and roar around the house - Scuba never let them behave that way. Every once in a while they both stop and listen to make sure she's not going to come swooping down and make them go sit in the corner.

Stitch is almost finished Rally Excellent, so we're working hard on Rally Versatility, where she'll have to do half the behaviours on my right side.

She also has her Draft Dog title and is working on Draft Dog Excellent. The hardest part of that will be that I have to walk behind the cart rather than beside it, and tell her to turn, stop, go, and go slower. There's a backpacking part as well, where she has to carry 1/6th of her weight up and down steep hills. I thought this was going to be a problem for her as she's MUCH smaller than most dogs who do DDX, but we entered a sanctioned match last month and she trucked up and down cliffs with the weighted pack on as if it wasn't even there.

I'd like to do tracking with her, but I'm not sure I have the stamina to do it. At any rate, we're playing some scenting games around the house to get her thinking about her nose in case I feel well enough in the spring.

She earned two Water titles last summer. The next one is Working Water Dog, which involves a LOT of jumping out of and climbing into boats, which she needs a lot of practise in to be really comfortable, so we'll be working hard on that in the summer.

We've taken over a year off Agility, but will be getting back into it this winter, hoping to get back into competition in the spring.

We entered Pre-Novice obedience, to give Fish a morale boost, and got two legs - need one more for the title, so we'll finish that, and maybe enter Novice if we have time to practise. We're planning on going to the Portuguese Water Dog Club of America National Specialty next summer, and I'd like to enter Water, Obedience, Agility, Rally, and maybe conformation.

So, having said all that, I'm exhausted! Stitch also enjoys her weekly trips to the dog park, and her Service Dog work, of course.

Llama Zen

"Does anyone remember the story that Sue Ailsby tells about training stud llamas who want to go to the breeding pen? That is a superb example of Llama Zen!"

I'm sure I have a copy of it somewhere, on some puter, but can't find it. Essentially, the breeding pen is in one corner of the yard. Female goes in breeding pen. Male yards are in the other three corners of the yard. I go to the appropriate male, hold up a halter. He runs over, sticks his nose in the halter (or doesn't, in which case the female goes away and a female for another male is put in the breeding pen). Then we walk slowly and calmly (at times I feel like doing the Queen-wave to the passing cars, we feel so stately on our march) across the yard on a loose lead to the breeding pen. Any tight leash and the llad is back at his own house so fast his head is spinning (or perhaps his head is spinning from him hitting himself in the forehead while intoning "Duh - loose leash, dipstick!"). No girls today. So while many people think a stallion or a stud llama must be wrestled under control in the presence of females, I am walking to the breeding pen with a boy's head a precise 11" from my right shoulder, he's watching my shoulder, he's got himSELF totally under control - why? Because self-control is the only way to get what he wants.

I didn't mention the other two studs chanting "**Go get 'er, big guy, go on, tighten that lead, you can DO it! Yank her right over there! Go! Go! Go!**" because if Stud A (ahem) screws up, Stud B might get a turn...

Misc Issues Taking a Class

"Blair would not lie down inside the crate the entire time of class. She whined"

So your homework for this week is to teach Blair to be comfortable in your soft crate. If that crate isn't big enough and you live in the US, we found lovely popup soft crates at Wal-Mart for something ridiculous like \$15 or \$25, but only the medium sized ones. If those aren't big enough, the same crates are at Clean Run (Google it) in all sizes.

Most dogs are not comfortable in crates that belong to other dogs. For me, the popup crates have solved the problem brilliantly, since they are small enough to fit in my backpack and weigh pretty much nothing. So set one up in your living room (or wherever you spend the most time) and teach Blair to Go To Mat in the crate. Since you need Blair to help you occasionally, I wouldn't even close the crate door, just teach her to go in it and stay in it until you invite her out. Then when you go to class, she'll be comfortable, she'll be out of the way, she'll be available, and she won't be distracting you by whining (I don't hear other people's dogs whining, but my own dogs whining drives me INSANE).

"Shane likes to play with Blair if given the chance"

Another bit of homework. Shane needs to be in the training game when you're working with him. At home, work Shane with Blair at differing distances until he understands that training is training and playing is playing. That's good, actually - you have a built-in distraction to work with!

"when he is given the release (ok, free, etc) then he thinks it is puppy-time."

You need a release in BETWEEN serious and EE HAH. Something that says "I don't need you just at the moment, you can look around, sniff the floor, roll upside down - but not leave or get silly". This goes

back to the previous paragraph about him getting silly because Blair is too close.

"The trainer even admonished me one time for not praising Shane enough for a down"

There are two sides to this story. Praise doesn't have to involve leaping, jumping, and doing somersaults. At the same time, a 14 wo puppy doesn't have to be TOO serious, especially if you want to compete in various sports with him. The key here is to teach the pup to "turn it on" and "turn it off". For instance, if he'll play tug with you, hand him a tug toy, make a tugging face and posture, tug, tug, tug, then straighten up your body, assume a serious face, stop tugging and say something like "That's enough". Give him a treat when he stops tugging, then "turn him on" again by handing him the tug toy and getting your tugging posture going again. This "On button" and "Off button" is an incredibly valuable tool to build into your dog. We've been in airports for hours and hours until Scuba is practically comatose with boredom, but sitting off in a corner by ourselves and playing a little game of tooth-tug or kill-my-shoe gets her right back into working mode.

" To pass the class the dog's must walk on a loose lead."

Walking on a loose lead is NOT dependent on a pinch collar! How to avoid having him on a pinch collar? Just say No. There is absolutely no reason to put him on any collar other than the one you have. He's your dog. They can't put a pinch collar on him without you agreeing to it! Here's instructions on loose leash walking:

<http://sue-eh.ca/page24/page26/styled-3/>

(scroll down to LEASH)

(these are the old Training Levels - the new ones are in the books for sale).

"I don't know if I can physically do the class each week."

I take my walker to classes. Sometimes I walk with the class, sometimes I sit on my walker and do other things while the class is walking around. This has helped a lot. Just because you paid for the class doesn't mean you have to do everything the class does. In fact, before I was disabled, I had a "bad knee", so that every time a class did something I didn't want to do with my dog, either because it was too harsh, or because she wasn't ready for it, my "bad knee" would "act up" and I'd "have to sit down for a few minutes". If all you did in class was sit on a chair and work on teaching Shane to concentrate on you, respond to position cues (Sit, and Down), maybe a little basic retrieving in distracting situations, it would be money well spent. The goals of the class do NOT have to be YOUR goals. There's absolutely no reason why you should get on the ground or otherwise get yourself into a difficult physical situation. Classes are generally paramilitary situations - we tend to think that because the instructor barks a command, we must obey. This is totally untrue. Keep your own goals, abilities, and disabilities in mind, and do things, don't do things, or change things so they suit you, your abilities, your goals, and your dog.

"the road home was closed in the lane south"

I always have a paperback book in my car, so if I get tired, I just stop somewhere, relax, and read my book for a while.

Motion Detector Resolves Counter Surfing

OK, definitely time for an update re Chez Ailsby. Song (Giant Schnauzer) and all her forebitches have discreetly countersurfed - the odd half-loaf of bread in the middle of the night, a pound of butter at Christmas, who ate the cinnamon buns? - that sort of thing. This spawn of Satan Portuguese Water Dog, however, while being a

WONDERFUL, SMART, FUNNY, WILLING - well, you get the picture - has been the bane of my existence for the past year with her shopping. Everything that isn't nailed down is fair game for going through the dog door. It isn't malicious in any way - if she's thinking about ME, she'll bring it all to me for a pet (making it rather difficult to do the books until I get all the c*** she's brought me off my desk), but if she's not thinking about me, she'll be out in the yard. Dishrags. Shoes. Paring knives. Towels. Plastic bags. Screwdrivers. Grooming scissors (AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!). King-size blankets. The kids come home from college now with one single sentence: Hi mom glad to be home lemme change my shoes and I'll go pick up the dog yard!

At one point as a puppy, Scuba was quietly taking the dishrags out of the sink (which I can't quite see from the puter) - yes, I'm a wastral of a mother, yes, she should be better supervised, but the reason I don't have LITTLE dogs is that BIG dogs houstrain themselves, and with the Giants this surfing wasn't a problem. Karen's vanilla trick worked beautifully when I remembered to put vanilla on things.)

However, what appears to be finally really doing the job is your discussion from some time ago about the Radio Shack motion detector. I let that percolate for awhile and finally went to buy one (no, we only have the kind you hook into your home sentry setup. What's that? Oh, it looks like a little portable motion detector! I never saw THAT before!). It was on sale for \$29.99 (Can)(that's like 4.99 Am ;-/).

First I put it on the coffee table pointed at the TV - an innocuous place, but one where they don't need to go. Dog walked over there, siren came on, I jumped up from puter and ran around hollering "Oh my God! Oh my God! What are you doing?" for the 30 seconds until it shut itself off and reset itself, then came back and sat down at the computer again (notice I did NOT focus on the dog who set it off, just ran around hollering). Both dogs plastered themselves to my leg for 15 minutes, then set off in search of good stuff again.

I let it play three times, then when they were outside I moved it to the island in the kitchen so it wouldn't go off when they were in the kitchen

but would sound when a head came up into Forbidden Territory. When it went off, I jumped up and ran around hollering again. The next time it went off, I just hollered from the puter, but both dogs were already well on their way to lying politely at my feet (yes, I believe someone WAS in the kitchen, but it CERTAINLY wasn't either of US!).

Scuba spends the night in a crate, but Song is loose. Two nights in a row, at 5:03 AM, the siren went off for the kitchen counter. Song is totally innocent but naturally chagrined that she neglected to bark at whoever it was that set it off ;-D .

That was it, no more nocturnal forays. Then I put it in front of the garbage can and put something particularly stinky and yummy in the garbage - one hit. Then I left my grooming scissors on the grooming table in the dog room, and left a towel to dry draped over the dog tub and put the detector where it could see both the table AND the tub (they also jump up on the table to see the cats that play in the yard). Four hits, and now even when someone drives into the yard they do NOT jump up on the table to see who it is.

At the moment, it's under the dining room table dealing with heavy-duty nose prints on the dining-room window and a certain fishing dog who would gladly watch for whales from the crow's-nest, if you catch my (ahem) drift. How did I ever live without this stupid little gadget? How much better than baby gates do I love thee? THANKS, GUYS!!!

NILIF Story

Story 1:

We have really bad Beagles here. There must be a Beagle factory around here somewhere. I like Beagles, but these are nasty awful obnoxious little ... I was having a very bad week. Both kids were sick, I wasn't feeling well, my husband was having surgery, one of my dogs had popped a cruciate, and someone had skidded on the ice and crashed into my car. A woman phoned and said her kids had to come home from school, take off their socks, boots, mitts, hats and scarves in the car in the driveway and run into the house barefoot, because their Beagle would steal these things, kill them, and bite anybody who tried to rescue them.

I was NOT in a space where I could deal with this Beagle. I spent a good amount of time talking to the woman on the phone, making sure she wouldn't do anything that would get her eaten, and faxed her a copy of the Dance. Told her to do as much of it as she could, and call me next week for an appointment.

She phoned me 4 days later and said she didn't think they'd need an appointment, what did she owe me for the phone consult? Oh no, I thought. Either they've killed the dog, or the dog has killed one of them. What have I done?

I asked her what had happened. Oh, she says, we did what you said with the dog. This morning he came into the kitchen with a pair of my pantihose in his mouth, and I said "YOU SPIT THAT OUT, YOU SON OF A BITCH!" and he did!

NILIF Story 2

Second story.

When I raced my Giants in dogsled races, an old guy told me that you always carry a knife on a dogsled, because the dogs are joined together with a brace line attached to their collars in pairs, so their necks are maybe 20" apart. If they start fighting, he told me, and they can't get apart, they'll kill each other.

So for 10 years I always had a knife with me.

One day, the first run of the year, I just went out for a little warmup jaunt. I didn't have my big jacket, or my big mitts, or my big toque, or my knife. I had two bitches running a double lead - a middle- aged daughter of old granny who played the food-in-the-living-room games, herself an excellent boss, and her daughter, MUCH lower in the general rank. Mom had just come out season, kid was just going in (can you feel the stars aligning against me?).

We got about a mile out from the house, and mom leans over and says "Get in sync, 'cause if you yank my collar again, I'm gonna eat your face!" and kid leans over and says "You and what army, you old bag?" and they're at it. 180 pounds of black dog and white teeth in the middle of the bald prairie, and me with no knife.

I couldn't get their collars off or undo the brace line because they were both biting at their necks. They fought to a standstill, until they were too exhausted to fight anymore. There was blood everywhere.

At one point I had actually considered unhitching the sled and beating them with it and hoping I only killed one of them.

Eventually, they stopped. I was hysterical. I grabbed their collars and I bet their front feet didn't hit the ground once all the home because I had them both up by the collars alternately sobbing and yelling.

I got them home, threw one on the floor and the other in the dog tub and rinsed her off. Switched and rinsed the other off.

When I put the second one on the floor, they both stood up very tall and stared at each other. "I AM going to kill whichever one of you starts another fight!" I thought, but at that instant mom playbowed. After a second, kid playbowed back, and the discussion was over.

Here's what I found when I rinsed them off.

Mom, who was the family boss when the fight started and when it ended, was chopped up pretty badly. Fortunately Giants grip and release, unlike Dobes and Newfs, who tend to grip and yank sideways, so she was punctured a lot, but not ripped.

Kid, who was practically the scullery maid before and after the fight, **DID NOT HAVE A MARK ON HER**. Her neck was swollen wider than her shoulders, to the point where I could hear serum sloshing around when she moved, but she was totally bite-free. What happened?

Kid, having started the fight and immediately realizing her grievous error, went down to apologize. Mom, feeling herself being pulled down by the collar as Kid went down, assumed she was losing and re-entered the fray with renewed vigour. Kid, having tried to apologize and being attacked anew, came up fighting for her life. But mom, during the entire fight, was never actually fighting. Spanking, yes. Fighting, no.

I know that a lot of people would never have trusted either dog again, having seen the raw power involved, the flashing teeth, heard the noise, and being covered in that much blood. But what *I* got out of the experience was how totally I trusted mom. That a dog could be involved in that experience, and never once lose her temper was, and still is, astonishing to me.

OC Military School

Like many trainers, I have long had a list of things for owners to do when they are having troubles with their dogs. Bill Campbell originated these lists (at least as far as *I* know), and they have had many names, including Radical Regimen For Recalcitrant Rover, Alpha-betize Your Dog, etc.

Mine started out as Military School, which worked very well in the context in which it was used. The purpose of these lists has been to remind the dog, without confrontation, who is the boss and who isn't, thus making the owner more important and the dog less important.

For instance, IME 80% of dogs in serious trouble in their families are fed free choice, 80% of dogs who are not in trouble are fed meals. 80% of dogs in trouble have free access to furniture, 80% of dogs not in trouble do not, or have access by invitation only. 80% of dogs in trouble involve the door in getting outside (bark at door, look at door, scratch door, whine at door), 80% of dogs not in trouble involve the owner in getting outside (look at owner, run between door and owner, whine at owner, etc). Thus my list has included feeding meals, keeping the dog off furniture, and requiring the dog to "talk" to the owner to get outside.

A while ago I rewrote Military School to demonstrate a more clicker-friendly attitude, and renamed it Leading The Dance. Still, I couldn't get away from the idea that not only does the dog feel more comfortable when he understands the heirarchy of the pack in his home, but the purpose of The Dance is to demonstrate the heirarchy to the dog. To allow the owner to win the games the dog plays to determine who is in charge.

And I still believe this to be not only true but necessary to our understanding of the animal. The problem has been how to discuss this with traditional and cross-over trainers who have grown up with the ideas that the dog is naturally dominant and virtually everything the dog does is designed to "blow us off".

That the dog runs out the front door because he is "dominant", growls at people and other dogs because he is "dominant", can't be "dominant" because he lies on his back and lets people pet him, etc. *I* want to describe a fascinating part of the ethology of dogs, and to give people an easy and rational approach to problem-solving, THEY want to hear that the dog is spending his nights plotting to overtake the universe.

It wasn't until I got to chicken camp that I realized exactly what it is I'm talking about when I'm talking about Leading The Dance - I'm not so much talking about dominance (and indeed, I very likely may not have to discuss dominance at all any more), as I am talking about SETTING FACTORS. If the dog already has everything he could ever want (food, caressing, attention, toys, comfort), he has no need of training (at least from his point of view) and no need of owners.

How to get a spoiled rich brat to do chores? I don't know. How to get a fat spoiled dog to do chores? I don't know that either. I must first redefine the subject's universe so that good things flow through me rather than around me. This has, for me, been a major big deal. It keeps creeping up on me in blinding little flashes of lightning over my shoulder and I smile at odd times when (I hope) no one is watching me.

OFA X-Rays

It's been over 30 years since I have had a dog anaesthetized to do hip x-rays. I don't use specialists, I use my regular veterinarian and her regular radiograph machine. I do work with the dogs ahead of time, so they are comfortable on a table, familiar with being rolled around, familiar with the idea of being supported on their backs with towels or pillows to brace them (unlike Portuguese Water Dogs, Giant Schnauzers don't normally lie comfortably on their backs), and familiar

with their back legs being pulled out into the correct position for the x-rays.

When we go in for the pictures, the vet leaves me alone at the x-ray table for a few minutes to get the dog on the table and comfortable with the surroundings, then she comes in. As I roll the dog over, she grabs the back legs. I hold the dog's front wrists and put my elbows on either side of her head, thus allowing me to brace myself and hold both her head and upper body steady. It also puts my head near hers so I can reassure her that this is as it should be.

The vet then moves the back legs into the correct position and takes the shot. We've had to re-do maybe one in 20 shots, which I think is a pretty good record, and then it is usually because we didn't have our positioning down as well as we could have, not because the dog was fussing.

At the "local" vet college (3 hours away), it isn't usually possible for me to be with the dog for procedures such as this, but it doesn't seem to matter to the dog. Once she understands what's happening and is comfortable with it, pretty much anybody can do it, so I don't worry when one of mine has to go off for radiographs without me (once I make it clear that I am NOT signing off on anaesthesia).

In this period of time, I've been through 15 generations of Giant Schnauzers, during which time our average hip clearance has gone from Good to Excellent. It's now been something like 4 generations since any of my dogs came back less than Excellent, so I don't think doing without the anaesthesia has hurt our results any.

There is always a little bugaboo of mine involved in discussions of HD - lax ligaments are lax ligaments, and if one wishes to use breeding or working stock that has tight ligaments, that's probably a wise decision. BUT lax ligaments are NOT hip dysplasia, that is another story entirely. Hip dysplasia doesn't deal with displacement, it deals with a malformation of the socket. Hard enough dealing with the genetics of this apparently multi-genetic problem without lumping a bunch of

other genetic problems in with it. (rant completed, go about your business)

On the Loss of a Dog

If there's no new puppy, where will Beau sit and watch his family?

"Sue, are you talking about reincarnation?"

Sort of, I suppose. I've had some pretty strange and wonderful experiences over the years, which admittedly might be all in my mind but OTOH, what's dreamt of in my philosophy has been pretty well stretched by them.

I can't help feel that a new puppy gives the gone dog a vessel to - not guide, not use, not manipulate, but just to sit in and keep an eye on everybody.

Also saying "I loved him so much I couldn't get another (dog)(Golden)(Giant) because it hurt so bad to lose him" pretty much says that the fact of his death overpowered the fact of his life. I guess if his death was worth more than his life, that person **SHOULDN'T** get another (dog)(Golden)(Giant).

Scuba's new "chair" will be arriving early next year.

Preparing the Dog to Travel

Several things come immediately to mind - a) relaxing, b) exercising, c) feeding, d) eliminating.

a) In order to be in good shape to work and hang on to known behaviours, a dog has to be able to relax. I've always espoused the importance of this for show dogs - they need to be able to totally relax and sleep at shows and on trips in order to give their best in the show ring - but it's at least as important for SDs away from home. 30 hours on a bus could be 30 hours of nervously wondering what comes next, or it could be 30 hours of enforced naptime. If your dog isn't able to relax in situations like this, I'd be working on rewarding relaxation in a large variety of places prior to the trip - and be prepared to reinforce relaxation on the bus and in terminals as well.

b) Up until THIS dog (Stitch), I've never had a dog who **REQUIRED** exercise. Sure, they appreciated being able to chase a ball or roll around on grass, but Stitch actually starts rocking back and forth and moaning softly if she gets no real exercise for days at a time. At some opportunity, she then springs into large laps at top speed until her muscles have worn down a bit. The point being, consider the exercise requirements of the dog. Even lying on the floor of a bus worrying for 30 hours doesn't constitute actual exercise. I taught my Giant Schnauzers to longe on a 12' leash (like a horse - round and round), so they could get a lot of running in a small space. If you trust your dog off leash in strange places, you could carry a ball or soft Frisbee to get in a bit of running at rest stops.

c) I try not to feed my dogs on **TOO** tight a schedule, so they are used to eating when it's convenient for me to feed them when we're traveling, based on when it's doable, when I have access to the food, and how soon after eating they're going to have to eliminate. That said, when I'm changing **WHERE** they eat, and **HOW** they eat (possibly dry instead of wetted, possibly out of my hand rather than their dishes on the kitchen floor, etc), I try to stick with a time as much as possible. Eating vs elimination you should have a good handle on before

traveling, so you know you can feed your dog X amount and type of food Y minutes/hours before getting on the bus, and be sure that you have Z amount of time before s/he has to eliminate. And the dog should be trained to eat "on the road" as well, so YOU have total control over what s/he gets and when. I've always given my dogs whatever water is available locally, and I think that keeps their stomachs ready to accept whatever they get, but if your game plan includes giving them only home-based water, be sure you're carrying enough or can buy the right brand as you go. Same with food. A trip is NOT the time to find out whether or not your dog has a sensitivity to changing food. And carry Imodium (I use the melt-in-their-mouth kind). It's GREAT for dogs. Any tiny little indication that there might be diarrhea in the next few days and I'll give them an Imodium.

d) I need very good control of my dog's elimination before I travel extensively with her. I need her to trust me that when I say "go now" I mean go now, as we're not going to stop the bus just because the dog decided she'd rather go in half an hour than when I told her to.

When I can't decide what I need to take on a trip, I put what I THINK I need in a backpack and live out of the backpack for a couple of days - leash, collar, extra leash, extra collar, brush, pills if any, dog food, folding dish, water, Imodium, rabies records. If I don't need it anytime in the 2 weeks before the trip, chances are I won't need it during the trip.

Report

Stitch and I roll along. I set up the Training Levels so that a dog would have the foundation behaviours that she needs to live a good life and be able to explore any endeavour. Stitch is 4 years old, and we're definitely living the fruits of our labours!

I've been in dogs a long time, and I'm no longer interested in pursuing any sport seriously - nor am I physically able to, anyway. So we play at whatever sports strike our fancy from month to month.

Without any apparent extra work, Stitch has achieved Rally Excellent with all scores averaging over 190/200. Whee! That, in CARO (Canadian Association of Rally Obedience) puts us into Versatility, which has looked exceptionally difficult, involving the dog working alternately on the left and right side of the handler, and crossing from side to side in front, behind, by turning any of about 6 different ways, and also by going between my legs while we're heeling. Two weeks ago I took the bit in my teeth and actually started training these behaviours. Stitch and I work for half an hour in class once a week, and for a couple of minutes before supper most days.

Well! Amazing how scary that looked two weeks ago! Right now, I'm pretty sure she could pass Versatility. Another couple of weeks to polish, and she'll be ready to get the scores she needs for her Rally Championship. I LOVE LEVELS!

Also I've been working on getting her to put more oomph into her work for the last couple of weeks. Last night in class, she was mucho oomphy. I was thrilled!

Also for the turns, I've been using her Left and Right cues, which she'll need in Drafting this fall, and she's getting great.

In fact, she was so good, I'm starting to think seriously about CD, and if I do some work on her Sit Stay (which we've never really worked on), once she's ready to heel in the ring, she's ready for CDX.

This summer we'll be working on Rally, Agility, Draft Excellent, and Working Water Dog. And maybe Obedience. Amazing how all these things come together once we have the foundation installed.

What a frustrating little dog this was! What a surprise it is to look at her now and see a partner.

Scuba and the Traditional Trainer

I forget the situation, but a traditional person was holding Scuba's leash and asked her to Sit in a distracting situation. Didn't get a Sit, and tried to hand-cue/push her butt down, and got her dancing her back legs vigorously back and forth with no suggestion of a Sit whatsoever. In our case, the look of confusion was on the person's face, never before having had their hands on an adult dog that didn't understand being pushed into a Sit. I gave myself some chocolate on the way home (I DO remember THAT part!) to celebrate having a dog who didn't understand getting pushed around.

SD Anecdotes

"What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when using a service dog's services."

While walking in the mall one day, I was occasionally dropping a coin or my keys, working toward getting Scuba to grab things when I dropped them rather than waiting to be asked. A woman started following me and picking up the things I dropped and handing them back to me. No amount of explanation would make her go away or stop picking up Scuba's things!

Another mall experience. A man grabbed her (Scuba, not the picking-up woman!) and gave her a good rubbing. When I asked him to please stop, she was working (she's looking at him like "Can't you READ, buddy, Please Don't Pet Me!"), he firmly declared that if she was going to be out in public, she was going to have to learn to accept being handled at some point, and the sooner I taught her that, the better!

I gave a talk on SDs to a WalMart staff meeting. The meeting was at some ungodly hour - maybe 7 AM - and something like half the staff was there. We showed all the great stuff Scuba could do, and talked

about pc questions re pets vs SDs, how to behave around SDs, etc. As it approached time for the store to open, other staff members began drifting by. One innocent woman gasped and came at us with open arms saying "Oh, my! What a BEAUTIFUL dog! Can I pet her?" only to be met in return by a GASP from 40 mouths and a huge echoing "NO!!! She's a SERVICE DOG!!!" from the staff I had been lecturing.

Going through security at airports is always an interesting experience. I am generally expected to put the dog in a stay and go through the little security port alone. If I don't make the bells go off, I can turn and call the dog through. Then I would ask the dog to pick up the leash and hand it to me, and we would go on our way. In the background, I can always hear the security personnel saying things like "Wow, I wish *I* had a dog that was that well trained!" and "Did you see that? She picked her own leash up and handed it to her!" A friend of mine went through Minneapolis airport with a SD. When she got back she phoned me and said "You know how you go through etc and you can hear how impressed the guards are as you walk away?" I said "Sure, that always happens." She said "Yeah, except THIS time, one of the guards looked at me all snooty and said 'There's a black and white dog who comes through here who picks up her leash BEFORE she comes through the gate and carries it through so she doesn't get it tangled in her feet!' as if MY dog was stupid for waiting to be asked! That was SCUBA, wasn't it!"

Yep, that's my girl.

Now, though, they have set the gate machine so fine that the metal rings on her collar set it off, so she has to go through naked. I have a hard time getting her to come through. As soon as I call her to come through to me, she starts looking for her leash where she's sitting, and IT ISN'T THERE. Dang, she appears to think, it was just here a minute ago. I OBVIOUSLY can't go through the gate without a leash! What am I going to do now? And she's looking around the guard's feet and under the machines.

Tue Sep 11, 2001 4:11 pm

Precious friends, the hearts and prayers of all Canadians are with you and your loved ones today.

Song and the Sheep

"I don't have the patience for that".

Sure, people have the patience to spend YEARS being frustrated about a behaviour, but don't have the patience to spend three hours fixing it. If something your dog is doing doesn't bother you, there's nothing to fix. If something he's doing DOES bother you, quit complaining. Sit down, write up a plan starting from what you're starting with, what you want, what you're going to do to explain to the dog what you want. Do it.

Let me tell you the story of Song And The Sheep.

Song is a Giant Schnauzer, and Giant Schnauzers are generally relatively calm and reasonable creatures, but they do have Passions about some things, and one of Song's Passions is Sheep. She would start screaming in the car when we were a quarter of a mile from the sheep pasture, and keep it up until she was running around sheep, where she wouldn't listen worth a darn, being too busy running around sheep to bother with me.

The herding people around here basically told me to let her go, let her run around sheep, use a bag on a stick in her face to keep her from dive-bombing them, and after ten or fifteen minutes she would start to slow down and listen to me. My response to that was not to do herding any more, because a Giant Schnauzer having a heart attack on the floor could still be screaming about sheep. I whined about this on a list

one day, and got several helpful answers, resulting in the flat-forehead DUH.

I took a paperback book, a lawn chair, a sturdy leash, a clicker, and Song, and drove to the pasture. I got her screaming out of the car, put down my chair, sat in it, and read my book, holding the leash of the screaming, lunging, jumping Giant Schnauzer for over an hour. Note I did NOTHING but read my book and sit on the leash. When she finally shut up and looked back at me ("Did you die? Why aren't we in with the sheep?"), I clicked and started to stand up.

Of course, she screamed and jumped back at the sheep, so I sat down again immediately. About twenty minutes later, she shut up and looked at me again, click. This time I got to stand up and almost take a step before she started screaming and I had to sit down again.

That day, it took me three hours to get approximately 20 feet into the pasture. When we were in there, I had a responsive, quiet, pleasant herding dog working sheep. The next day, it took me twenty minutes to get into the pasture, and once in, I once again found myself working a responsive, quiet, pleasant dog. The third day, it took five minutes. The fourth day, she bounced eagerly out of the car and strut-step heeled with eye contact into the sheep pasture, without me asking her to, and then went to work.

It works. Stop jumping around. Stop trying to DO something to get the behaviour, simply decide that you don't go that way until you have contact

NOTE: Further down the experience road, I'd start much further away from the pasture, back where Song could still concentrate on me. Then I'd move closer and closer... and further away again when she went over her threshold of concentration. The training would be easier for me, less noisy, easier on the dog, and wouldn't take any longer. I didn't know that at the time - but at least I knew that beating on her wasn't going to accomplish what I wanted!

Ssst

I give all my dogs S names so I can say SSST in a crowd and they all come. I did that with my kids too, though neither of their names starts with in S. And now it's just a habit. Wouldn't seem like my dog if it wasn't an S name! , Started in about 1968 with Sarah. Scuba, Stitch, Sync. And Song. Spider. Slick. Stone. S'Cat. And so on, and so on. There were a couple of anomalies - Crystal (she came that way, and it had an S in it), Niska (my first Giant - the Cree work for the Giant Canada - goose - that was just too good to pass up), Panda (she had an S name but when she was about 5 months old she told me her name was Panda, and she was right), and The Hooded Fang (my kids named him).

Wed Nov 14, 2001 1:51 pm

Hello all, I'm baaaaack...

Yes, I had a brain tumour. Yes, it was benign, operable - all the good stuff. Still scary, of course, not the tumour so much as the getting-it-out-of-there part. I was advised of possible stroke-like symptoms following surgery, and was prepared for them (or as prepared as one can get, I guess). But, ta da, we appear to have dodged the bullet almost completely. I have an attention span of about 90 seconds at the moment, getting better every day. I have stamina of about an hour a day (half what it was before ;*D), getting better every day. I have a nasty electric-ballast type hum in the back of my head when I'm really tired (useful, really - let me check - yes, I'm tired now!). BUT - no memory loss, no left-side delays or disabilities. Also no hair 8*(but that, as beginner dog-groomers say, will grow back.

I didn't try to take my Service Dog into Intensive Care with me - no one to let her out for one thing, and lots of nurses to do her jobs, so I farmed her out with a friend for a couple of weeks. I didn't realize how

much I used her until my husband told me to stop calling the nurses "Dude" - as in, "Would you pick up that magazine, Dude?" Hubby chose to keep Song the Giant home with him to cuddle - she is unlikely to jump the fence and go looking for mom, and happy to cuddle in between long bouts of nothing.

At any rate, I'm back, I'm OK, they gave me a 3-month recovery time if all went well, and all went great, so I'll see you all in Columbus, Comox, & Phoenix!

The House of God

There's a marvelous little old book called *The House Of God*, about the lives of medical interns. In that book were several very funny and useful terms, including "buff and turf" (take a patient that nobody can help, do a bunch of stuff that looks like you're doing something, then pass him on to another department), and my favourite - description of bed heights, which I immediately started using for jumps and agility obstacles:

orthopaedic height - that height that, when fallen out of, will produce orthopaedic injuries - broken bones.

neurologic height - that height that, when fallen out of, will produce head injuries.

One of my lifelong quests is to get everybody to understand that height is the very, very least important criteria of ANY jump or obstacle. Any dog physically capable of doing a height and mentally trained to be in the game and enjoy the obstacle **WILL** do the height with the very, very least amount of discussion of height.

I start baby puppies doing the retrieve over the high jump with a 2" high jump. We stand on one side of the jump. I toss a treat to the other

side. The baby puppy goes over the jump, finds the treat, picks up (and eats) the treat, then is lured back over the jump to me - voila, 10 weeks old and has the entire retrieve over high jump exercise except for two things that I can plug in later - the retrieve, and the height. This pup will NEVER come back around the jump, NEVER go out and wander around wondering what to do next - she learned all that at 10 weeks. I can even do the toss-the-thing-off-to- the-sides proofing.

The Veterinary Clinics of North America

The Veterinary Clinics of North America puts out a series of books that are a collection of review articles

This has nothing to do with clicker training (OFF TOPIC WARNING!!), but I love these books. I used to go sit in my vet's office and read them in my spare time. One day I was in the University bookstore in a city with a vet college, and found the latest one (in Canadian dollars they are somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100, but my husband buys 60-page books for \$300, and I was feeling flush at the time), so I bought it.

I took it home and for several weeks didn't have time to open it. It sat on my coffee table. Finally one day while I was having lunch, I picked it up, leafed through it, and stopped at an article about "Training Syndrome", which described a condition in racing Greyhounds. The dog goes out for his regular training run, comes back in all panting and hot, and then fails to cool off but gets hotter and hotter and finally dies of heat stroke.

Having finished lunch, I hitched up my four dogs on the sled and went out for their regular week-day 8-mile sled run. Had a great run, came home, unhitched, they all came in the house and collapsed, panting, on the floor. Ten minutes later, three are asleep and one is still heavily

panting. Wo, I'm thinking, Intern's Disease - read about it, think you've got it!

Twenty minutes - three are still sleeping, I can see the fourth one's tonsils, she's panting so hard. I went up and touched her, she was burning hot! Asked her to get up, and she staggered!

Threw her in the dog tub with cool water running on her, called my vet and said "Dimon has heat stroke, I'm cooling her down and we'll be there in 20 minutes!" He replied "Are you crazy? It's minus 20 degrees outside, and overcast. How could she have heat stroke?"

One of the crowning moments of my life. I hollered "Page 1237 in 'Veterinary Clinics!'" and hung up. He was ready for us when we got there. That book saved her life.

What are the chances? These things come out every two years or so, and the one edition I actually bought was that one. In a huge book like that, the one article I had read was that one. Of all the days in a long life full of dogs that one dog would get malignant hyperthermia, it would be that particular day, not an hour after I read the article. Welcome to... the Twilight Zone!

Toileting on Cue

I'm sure many of you have heard this story before. When I lived in the city a guy with two small Poodlish dogs would walk by every day, and BOTH his dogs would poop on my lawn beside a tree while he stood and looked at the clouds, the passing cars, the flowers. Then he would walk on, leaving the daily deposits right there under my tree.

I tried staring out my front window at him. No change. I tried sitting on my front step and staring at him. No change.

One day I happened to have my three Giant Schnauzers and two others for a sleepover when he came by. We waited until his dogs were done pooping, then came out of the house, the 5 Giants and me, and we followed him all the way home. When he went into his house, very aware that five very large dogs were right behind him, he looked out his front window, so I waved and gave the cue. All five Giant Schnauzers dumped on his lawn while he watched. I waved again, and we all went home (yes, bagless).

I don't know whose lawn his dogs pooped on after that, but he never walked by MY house again!

Working for Others

"Once you said Stitch was good enough at agility, but you were not fast enough"

Yes, that's what I said.

Let me rephrase it though.

Stitch is good enough at agility to fairly easily get second-level titles (of 3 levels). *I* don't have time, energy, or enthusiasm for training her to get those titles with me handling her. I COULD do it, no question, but I'd have to practise more and get better control and accuracy at greater distances. Then I could stand in one or two places in the ring and tell Stitch what to do rather than trying to run around the ring with her. Picture a traffic cop at an intersection running around to each driver's window to tell them to stop, then running around again to tell them to go - exhausting. Instead, they stand in the middle of the intersection and gesture. By running less, I would have a better view of the course and an impression of more time to think of what to cue next.

What another handler would need to be able to do a good job of handling Stitch would be a good idea of how I train, the cues and body language she's learned, and what to do if something goes wrong. I have a list of hints for any particular course that I give to her handler ("Babysit the down contact on the A-frame, she's going to miss it if you don't, and don't worry about the offside entry to the weaves, she can do those in her sleep") based on what she's been doing in training.

What ***I*** need to do to prepare her to be worked by someone else is to teach her to be confident and happy about obstacles and courses, have a clear set of cues, and teach her to work confidently for someone else without having to keep an eye on me.

Gee, um... that's in the Levels...



CLASSICS

A Doodle

"What exactly is a 'doodle'?"

Assuming (ahem) that **NOBODY** wants the explanation that starts with "It's a cross between a... " ...

A doodle is a little heeling thing that you can play in 3 square feet (1 square meter) of space. It builds almost everything your dog needs to know about heeling, and there's a huge slot in Rally training just waiting for doodles to slide into.

LEFT TURNS - dog in Heel position, eye contact, handler pivots 90 degrees left, **DOES NOT MOVE FROM SPOT**. Dog pulls butt in to her right to maintain Heel position, barely moves front feet at all.

RIGHT TURNS - dog in Heel position, eye contact, handler pivots 90 degrees right, **DOES NOT MOVE FROM SPOT**. Dog moves front to hold Heel position, barely moves rear at all.

LEFT SQUARES - dog in Heel position, eye contact, handler facing North, handler takes **ONE** step forward (North), pivots left (West) and halts. **NO** forward motion to the West at **ALL**. Dog heels forward, swings butt to her right to maintain Heel position, sits. Repeat West to

South, etc.

RIGHT SQUARES - DIHP, EC, handler facing North, handler takes ONE step forward (North), pivots right (East) and halts. NO forward motion to the East at ALL. Dog heels forward, whips around the corner, keeps butt in precise position and sits.

SLIDE RIGHT - DIHP, EC, handler facing North, handler takes ONE step to her right (East), dog sidesteps precisely in Heel position.

SLIDE RIGHT, LEFT ABOUT - DIHP, EC, handler facing North, handler takes ONE step to her right (East), dog sidesteps precisely in Heel position, handler then pivots 180 degrees left, dog pulls butt in to her right to maintain Heel position, handler then takes one step forward (South).

SPINS AND SPIRALS - DIHP, EC, handler walks a 3' diameter circle counterclockwise, circle getting smaller and smaller and smaller until handler and dog are spinning to the left, handler not moving off spot at all, then handler reverses direction, spins right, then right circle gets bigger and bigger and bigger until you're back where you started.

HEEL BACKWARDS.

PIVOT 8 - DIHP, EC, handler does complete Figure 8 exercise but without moving a single step, just pivoting, first left, then right, halt, left, right, halt.

Etc

Determining Threshold

"How do you help pet owners (and new trainers!) understand how to watch for threshold? How do you help them see and pay attention to the very subtle signs that predict the lunge or the shut down?"

As I listen to their problems, I'm looking for a hook - something I can use. You may have noticed that my mind is always working on "THIS is like THAT".

If the person is really into cooking, I might start talking about cooking. The potatoes don't just "suddenly boil over". It's only sudden if you weren't looking. If you were watching, bubbles formed in the water. Then the water started bubbling. Then the water "grew" and started rolling. The water came up to the lip of the pot. THEN the water "suddenly boiled over".

What can you do to reduce the likelihood of boiling over? You could put salt in the water to raise the boiling point. You could put the whole thing in a bigger pot. You could lower the flame so the pot wasn't boiling so vigorously.

And you could pay attention to what's happening and set the flame to the right level to start with or, if you make a mistake, lower it the instant you realize there's a problem. You're a lot more likely to have a boilover if you think you can boil potatoes faster with the highest flame - if you're impatient.

If you DO boil them fastest, you MIGHT get what you wanted a little faster than you would have if you'd done it the right way, but you run a much greater risk of having burned potatoes, potatoes stuck on the bottom of the pot, potato goo all down the outside of the pot and all over the top of your stove, maybe even a ruined pot. Worth the 30 seconds you saved?

The dog doesn't suddenly explode. There's a whole series of things he does to tell you what's going to happen next. I need to turn you into a

"dog cook" so you can hear what he's saying. Before we start asking him, can you think of some things he does to tell you he's getting upset? What about things you can do to reduce the chances of him getting upset?

Expense of Any Given Behavior

In seminars I usually tell the story of Scuba not wanting to go in the crate to be left at home now that she's retired.

Once last year, a woman put up her hand and said "Doesn't it make you crazy that this dog is 12 years old and you have to give her a cookie every time you put her in a crate?"

I thought about Scuba, and I said "If I told you that I was going to give you a dog who would give you everything you ever asked of her, who would do (and excel) at everything you ever put in front of her, who would make you famous all over the world, and who would help you learn more than you ever thought there was to know about dogs and their world, and I told you that the price of this dog would be giving her a Milkbone every time you put her in a crate for the last few years of her life, would you think that was too high a price to pay?"

And she said "Yes".

It's sad, really. She'll never know such an amazing person as Scuba. And she'll never respect the opinions of the dogs she has, because Scuba wouldn't BE Scuba if her opinions weren't respected.

How to Unfreeze a Popsicle

Stitch and I go out to a bookstore, a place we've been several times before. Maybe because she's just come out of season? Maybe it's a full moon? Maybe she's having flashbacks from the giant flying pig? Whatever the reason, she "stresses out".

Fortunately she doesn't stress out in the freaky direction, but her brain simply freezes. And gently. It doesn't show until I ask her to pick up her leash, at which point she stands as she has been standing, absolutely still. I ask her again. She glances up at me as though I have asked her something embarrassing in front of her boyfriend, and remains still.

I move her to the other side of the leash and ask her again, pointing down toward it. She wags her tail slightly, apparently relieved to finally understand what I want, and lies down.

At this point my own brain kicks in and we go find a place for me to sit down. We spend the next few minutes working Watch, then Sit and Down, and finally move back to Take It. I hold the leash directly in front of her mouth and ask her to Get It. She stares at me for a moment and then moves her bottom jaw slightly. I click and reward, and ask her to Get It. This time her bottom jaw moves and she very gently touches the leash. I click and reward.

I ask her again. She takes the leash softly between her lips. I click and reward, and suddenly "she" appears in her eyes again. I say hello and she wags her tail and sits. I ask her to Get It and she takes the leash. I click and reward, drop the leash, and she picks it up and hands it to me. We work on it a few more times, pay for my book, and go home.

If You Attend Competition.....

"He has his first show coming up very soon, so it is possible that I have been a little bit obsessed with trying to train this. I will try to back off a bit."

The absolute worst Worst WORST thing you can do with any competition behaviour is train for the competition that's coming up. Pull out if you have to. It took me a LOONG time to realize that the money was spent the day I entered. Whether we go in the ring or not doesn't matter. The money is gone. Once I got that through my head, it became much easier for me to make rational decisions about whether to go in the ring or not on any particular day.

Now I know that I'm putting the dog in a show with certain goals in mind. Scuba is entered in 4 obedience trials and 2 CKC agility trials in May. My goals for her are, frankly, to get a CD and two legs in agility, and possibly get a CDX leg as well. She's older than dirt, she has amazing public access skills, and she's been doing this stuff since Methuselah was a pup. Just gimme the legs. Stitch is entered in 4 conformation shows in the same venue. She'll be 10 mo, she alternates between really unsure of herself and hysterically glad to see anybody. My goals for her are to show her that shows are a good place to calmly meet wonderful people and gets lots of treats. That means that if she sits in the ring but hits my goals, I'll be happy. If I have to walk her around at the show and not put her in the ring in order to hit my goals, I'll be happy. If she trots cheerfully around the ring and flosses the judge's teeth, I'll be happy.

My kids and I took Suzuki method violin lessons - and they were way fun for about two months. Then one day the teacher came to class and announced that there was a recital coming up, we had to learn three songs for it, let's get down to business and stop fooling around on this actual "learning" nonsense. Within two sessions my kids hated it. We quit.

My Dog is Pulling my Arm Off

My thoughts on the Armless Discussion:

Whatever you are doing isn't working. Stop it. That is, until your dog learns not to pull, stop taking her out with two dogs. Stop taking her for hour-long walks. Stop taking her where you don't control the situation and can't control your dog. If you don't want to do any of these things, then the discussion is over. Your priorities are clear, you want the hour-long walks right NOW more than you want her to stop pulling, you want to take two dogs more than you want her to stop pulling, you want to not think about the situation more than you want her to stop pulling. End of discussion.

.
If you want her to stop pulling, and you can't take her for walks because that is continuing her education in pulling, you can exercise her by throwing a ball or frisbee or whatever, or you can practise recalls between two people. She can get just as much exercise this way without continuing to be reinforced for bad habits.

.
If she will heel, that's great, you have a way to get her to the car and get her into the vet's office and get her from the car to class, etc, but you are correct in thinking that heeling is NOT loose-leash-walking. Heeling is work, hard work, for the dog, it is a competition behaviour, I certainly won't say it isn't fun, but it isn't fun for an hour, and it certainly isn't relaxing. And you won't GET heeling for an hour, you will get sloppy heeling, inattentive heeling, crummy heeling, so you're not getting heeling anyway.

Understand that what you have been doing is not only not working the way you want it to, it is actively instructing your dog in the art of pulling. She knows that she HAS to pull in order to get anywhere, that's the rules. If you want the pulling to stop, you need to begin The First Day Of The Rest Of Her Life with no, zero, nada, never, ever, ever ANY pulling.

Be A Tree works sometimes. Not often, but sometimes. The problem with it when people think it should be working and it isn't is that by the time people notice the dog is pulling, the dog has already pulled them two or three feet closer to wherever the dog wanted to be, and then is rewarded by being allowed to stand there until she has finished looking at/sniffing whatever it was she got closer to.

What DOES work, with a carefully thought-out plan of action, is "penalty yards" (TM pending, Lana Horton). The carefully thought-out plan of action means that the dog cannot overpower you - GL or whatever you need, that you TOTALLY control the situation, that you have a plan of what you are going to do, what you are going to reward, what you are looking for.

You totally control the situation - she is in your basement, your kitchen, your training building, your totally-fenced back yard, whatever, so you control who/what she sees, where she goes, etc. You need to have tack that you can handle - that is, tack that allows you to pull the dog rather than the dog to pull you. This includes not only a halter, but a leash that is heavy enough that it won't hurt your hands. Unless you are a very small person, I suggest a 1" leather leash, and I suggest it be six feet long because that length will give you time to think. BTW, you put the leash loop over one thumb, then wrap the lead twice around your hand, put both your hands together grasping one another, and put your two hands tight into your stomach. That's where they stay. Once the dog has pulled your hands away from your stomach, she controls you rather than you controlling her. Now put your feet shoulder-width apart, dominant foot slightly ahead of the other foot, toes turned out a bit. Lean back onto your back leg. Practise this without the dog, and get your husband to try to pull you off balance. Feet apart, one slightly ahead, hands together in stomach, lean back. Sink your weight down a bit, and grow your soles into the centre of the earth.

You have a plan of what you are going to reward. EXACTLY what behaviour are you looking for? What if she sniffs? So what? Is that what you're working on? Or are you working on a loose leash? If you are working on a loose leash, then that is the ONLY behaviour you are working on. She can crawl, fly, sniff, roll over, bark, scream, pee, eat

grass, whatever, as long as the leash is loose.

What is a loose leash? Most people define a loose leash as "the dog isn't pulling really hard" - not good enough. "Pulling really hard" is fuzzy criteria. Neither you nor your dog can work with fuzzy criteria. You need something specific, something easy to spot, and something that errs on the side of extreme lightness. **IF THE LEASH SNAP IS NOT HANGING STRAIGHT DOWN, THE LEASH IS TIGHT!**

What are you going to do? Assemble hungry dog, leash, good shoes, gloves if you need them to protect your hands, great treats, clicker. Put your back against a wall. This is Ground Zero. There is **NOTHING** here for the dog to look at, sniff, interact with, or do except you.

Click dog a dozen times for having the leash loose. Not for looking at you, not for sitting, not for "paying attention", not for standing on her head, not for lying down. For having a loose leash. Try to get your dozen clicks in Rapid Fire, that is, within a minute.

Now toss (or have someone place) a focal point out about 20' from you. This could be a ball, a toy, a treat, whatever your dog would like to have. Bam, dog hits end of leash, but you don't care, your soles are one with the core of the planet and you just stand there with your back against the wall and your hands in your stomach (this is the **ONLY** time you will Be A Tree, because with your back against the wall, you **KNOW** the dog didn't pull you forward).

Eventually (5 seconds, 4 hours, whatever) the leash will loosen, click, and shove the most wonderful treat in the dog's face. Rapid-Fire another dozen if possible. Take a step toward the focal point. If you got one step forward, Rapid-Fire another dozen. If you didn't get one step forward without the dog whipping to the end of the lead, then **BACK UP** until your back is against the wall again. Wait for the leash to loosen, and Rapid-Fire another dozen.

Repeat until you can take that one step and the dog keeps the leash loose. Take another step. Click if you've got the loose leash, back up

TO THE WALL if you don't. Keep working.

If the dog gets to the toy WITH THE LEASH LOOSE, she can have it. Click just before she grabs it.

Do the same thing the next day (or that afternoon, or whatever). And the next. And the next. And the next.

When it's WONDERFUL, take it somewhere else. *****NOT***** out for a one-hour walk! Somewhere else where you totally control the situation. When it's WONDERFUL in the second location, take it somewhere else. And somewhere else. You could, after you have about 8 local locations, work on house-to-car with a loose leash. Once you've got that, get the dog in the car and go somewhere where there isn't anybody, and work it using the car as your wall to put your back against. Now you have Infinite Locations.

Keep working it until you have it everywhere. Whether you get it or not depends ENTIRELY on whether you want it or not, and whether you want it enough to actually teach it rather than going for walks, exercising, etc.

My Dogs

I let other people work my dogs all the time - with food. I don't care how my dog works for other people, they're not going to screw up how she responds to me, and if she decides other people have good treats and she doesn't have to pay attention to me, we'll just play Monkey In The Middle a couple of times and solve THAT little problem.

Other people DO take my dogs on leash occasionally, and then how the dog behaves depends on whether or not the person with the leash is pushing the right buttons or not. Scuba will ALWAYS ask a new person on her leash whether or not Loose Leash is a Gravity Rule for

them. Say yes once, you've got it. Say you don't care, and she'll be dragging you all over the lot. I think she'd do a CD performance for somebody else, I think she'd do an Apprentice water trial for somebody else. Where it means something to me, though, is in the conformation ring. I'm a good handler, but I can't really run any more, and when I have a really good dog, I like someone else to handle her. I have a friend who's a pro handler. I've known her for 40-some years, and we worked out our training methods together. I've seen her once in the last four years, and I know that I could hand Stitch to her at ringside and she'd get a star performance out of her, because she knows all the buttons I've built in to Stitch, and Stitch will respond just as she's been trained to as soon as she realizes the new handler is giving the right cues and - just as important - rewarding or withholding according to the compliance she's getting.

What this means to me, with my dogs, is that when I hand my leash to somebody, I expect my dog to be comfortable going along with whoever the leash is going with. The flip side of that is that ***I*** am the one responsible for whether the person I give the leash to is going to be a reasonable human being or not. If something bad happens to my dog when she's on leash with somebody else, ***I*** am the person totally responsible for betraying her trust.

When the Student is Ready, the Teacher Appears. Nobody Loves A Missionary

The first part of that may be from Lao-Tzu, it's a famous martial arts quotation. I got it from a tai chi instructor.

There's nothing designed to turn off people faster than someone running around spouting about how much better clicker training is than what **THEY'RE** doing. **THEY** are being cruel, training doesn't have to be like that, etc etc.

The preacher I want talking over me when I'm dead talks to me about philosophy and science fiction and dogs and people and life. If I want to talk religion, he'll let ME start the conversation.

When I'm doing a seminar, people have gone out of their way and paid good money to hear me evangelize.

When they're walking down the street or showing their dog at a show or getting ready for an obedience trial, I try REALLY hard to mind my own business. You want to ask me a question, ask. You don't want to ask a question, you weren't ready to hear the answer anyway, so I'm worse than wasting my breathe.

When I first crossed over (gack, it sounds like we died, doesn't it?!), my seminars were missionary. THIS is good about clicker training, THAT is bad about traditional training. And I got some hecklers and some pissed-off people.

When I stopped attacking them and simply presented my case, I allowed them the freedom to agree or disagree or think about what I said on the way home without feeling stupid. ALL crossover trainers had to hit a point when they were ready for the teacher to appear.

I've had people come up to me and say "I was at your seminar 8 years ago, and last year it finally came together in my head. Now I understand."

How's that?

Not a Breach of Authority

"It is not some breach of authority or a "dominance" issue to give this wonderful friend a cookie when she goes into the crate at my request. It is a bargain between us."

Oh that's lovely. It's not some breach of authority. I love that.

Spit on the Sidewalk

"To train a dog you have to be more interesting than spit on a sidewalk." No you don't. Who IS, anyway? Really, you only have to CONTROL ACCESS to the spit on the sidewalk.

Superb Goals

"I like to control my pups' environments. I like to shape them, and work with them, and teach them. But what I want to teach my puppies is how to learn, and to love learning. To love working. To love focusing. To be confident. To be shapeable. To relax. To hang out. To swim, and roll in the mud. To be polite, and to be successful."

Superb post.

The Dark Forest

He looks at that dark forest all around him, and he can't find the path back to the meadow.

People. I can't stress enough the importance of having a dog fluent in behaviours before you start adding more difficulty duration, distance, or distraction to those behaviours.

The Plan

Remember, the plan isn't to see how fast you can get her to do the behaviour, but to make sure she understands each bit of the behaviour before she moves on to the next bit.

Training Rules

Trust the Force.

Don't be afraid, just do it.

Don't be afraid to say NO!

When the teacher is doing more physical work than the student, the student is not learning, and neither is the teacher.

Control the mind to control the head.

Control the head to control the body.

Control the situation to control what the dog learns.

You must be physically and mentally comfortable to teach.

The student must be physically and mentally comfortable to learn.

Be aware of your own tendency to blame.

Be aware of your own tendency to punish.

One job of a teacher is to balance the student between bold and shy, between respectful and trusting.

If you don't want a willing partner, don't clicker train.

Never allow other people to set your priorities.

Clicker training is contract training. You get what you want, then the dog gets what she wants.

Control the resources or sell the dog and take up knitting.

It isn't about whispering. It's about speaking clearly with your body and mind, and then listening to the answers.

Teach the animal to target.

It is not my job to control the animal. It is the animal's job to control herself.

It is my job to put the animal in a situation where she can learn what I want her to know as quickly and easily as possible.

Rewards are defined by the student, not the teacher.

Learning is defined by the student, not the teacher.

Work where the animal is, not where you expect her to be or where she "should" be.

If this animal is mine, I am the one who is responsible for what happens to her.

If this animal is mine, I am the one who is in charge of what happens to her.

When the student is ready, the teacher appears. Nobody loves a missionary.

Self-control reduces fear and stress.

Work for five minutes, then quit. Leave the animal interested in you coming back.

The leash is to keep the animal from getting hit by a truck, not to control, punish or teach.

Plan once, train twice. Or plan twice, train once. The choice is yours.

Keep records that will mean something to you.

Break it down. The smaller the behaviour you're teaching, the greater your chance of success.

WHY is not nearly as important as WHAT. Teach yourself to see what the dog is doing rather than worrying about why he does it.

WHY is not nearly as important as HOW. Teach yourself to see how the dog is being rewarded for a behaviour you don't want. Then you'll be able to see how to stop the behaviour.

Stop.

Stop & think.

Stop & evaluate.

Stop & re-evaluate.

Stop & get out of the situation.

Stop & renegotiate.

Stop & change SOMETHING.

Give the animal a chance to think.

Explain clearly and then let her sleep on it.

Look for the startle.

"My dog won't..." and "My dog can't..." should be followed either by an alarm bell or a training plan.

Never go for duration with a really hungry puppy.

It's all tricks, relax.

Sit back and enjoy the ride.

When the Student is Ready.....

"How do you interact with people who use harsh training methods or other less than optimum methods with their dogs? How do you educate them without alienating them?"

When the student is ready, the teacher appears.

This is a philosophy I TRULY try to live up to - I don't always succeed, God knows (I overstepped myself yesterday, as a matter of fact, and regretted it all the way home, even though the person was very polite),

sometimes I just can't stand it and have to butt in and offer advice to someone who didn't ask for it (and frequently didn't want it). But I do TRY.

If MY dog is incredibly good at what she does, and if *I* do not use a leash harshly, do not speak harshly to my dog... if I smile at her, and she laughs at me... if we demonstrate teamwork every second we are together... then people who ARE ready to hear what I have to say will put themselves in a position to hear what I say.

If I push, I'm a) not speaking to someone who will benefit from what I say, therefore I am not only alienating them, I'm wasting my time, and b) I'm not allowing the person to become operant, therefore even if they DO learn something from our encounter, they learn considerably less than they could have if I let THEM do the work.



THE ART OF TRAINING

4 Quadrants (according to Sue)

I get really bored listening to people get into long, involved discussions of exactly what quadrant a particular handler response belongs in - and almost everything can be argued in at least two directions.

Don't overthink the homework. I just want you to understand that there are different ways of dealing with a problem.

Positive means adding something.

Negative means taking something away.

Punishment stops a behaviour (behaviour is punished, not dogs).

Reward/reinforcement increases a behaviour.

Dog sits, I give her a cookie. Dog sits more often. Positive reinforcement.

Dog sits, I kick dog in head. Dog doesn't sit near me any more. Positive punishment.

Dog sits, I take the thorn out of her paw. Dog sits more often. Negative reinforcement.

Dog sits, I take away the ball she had in her mouth, dog doesn't sit near me any more. Negative punishment.

Dog sits, I kick dog in head, dog wishes I wouldn't do that but doesn't alter behaviour in the future. Abuse.

More On the 4 Quadrants

Punishment: anything that decreases the frequency of a behavioral response.

Reinforcement: anything that increases the frequency of a behavior response

R+ Positive Reinforcement: adding a stimulus the animal will work to elicit, (e.g. food, praise, access to other dogs) in order to increase the frequency of a behavior (e.g. loose leash walking)

P- Negative Punishment: removing a stimulus that the animal desires (e.g. attention) in order to decrease the frequency of a behavior (e.g. puppy mouthing/biting)

R- Negative Reinforcement: removing an aversive stimulus to increase the frequency of behavior (e.g. releasing the pressure on a choke chain when the dog is in the proper heel position; releasing the ear pinch when the dog holds a dummy)

Four Quadrants Updated

What we have here is a delay in keeping up with science.

Pursuant to the persistent nagging ;*D of many of you, a friend and I are actually turning this into books, which has turned out to be a vastly larger job than even I had feared it would be, so I'm not putting a lot of effort into updating the website. So here goes.

There are now FIVE "quadrants" to OC.

Positive reinforcement - something added to increase a behaviour. Dog shies from a person, I pet her, she shies again.

Negative reinforcement - something removed to increase a behaviour. Dog screams, I remove the trap from her leg, next time she wants me to do something, she screams again.

Positive punishment - something added to decrease a behaviour. Dog jumps on someone as he sneezes. Dog doesn't jump on him again.

Negative punishment - something removed to decrease a behaviour. Dog tries to knock food dish out of my hand. I put food dish away. Dog stays away from me next time food dish appears.

AND THE NEW ONE: Extinction - which is simply letting the dog do something again and again and again with no reinforcement until she decides it isn't worth it and stops. A person puts a dollar in a pop machine and gets nothing. How many more times will it take until that person won't put any more dollars in that pop machine?

Duchess

Does putting the animal in control of a situation make them feel more comfortable? Consider the following story (reprinted from the Clicker Journal, 2000), and consider that aggression of any kind is usually a response to fear. This, by the way, is the story of a llama:

Duchess looks at me from the door of the barn. Am I there to tidy halters and check the water? Or am I there for Serious Business - passing out the daily grain ration? Duchess is one smart llama, and it looks like it's time for grain so she comes inside and watches me pick up a couple of pans. She's the first one in line since she was the first to notice. I carry the pans outside and open the gate to a small pen. Duchess runs past me and jumps into the pen, spinning to meet me as I step in behind her and shut the gate. We play our grain games. She touches my hand with her big lips, gets a click and a mouthful of grain. She stares at me again. What now? I run my hand down her front leg. She stands still, grinning at me. I click and she gets another mouthful. What now? I run my hand under her belly and touch her udder. She flinches slightly, but stands her ground with her ears up. Click, and I put the pan on the ground for her to eat in peace. While I'm feeding the rest, I remember Duchess in our first week together.

I bought her at an auction. I'd studied the information, looked at the pictures, looked up pedigrees and progeny and ancestors. She looked good. When I got to the auction, she looked better. I had the owner halter and re-halter her, lead her up and down the aisle, and show me her teeth. I bought her. It wasn't until he was handing me the lead rope to take her out to the trailer and home that Reality set in and I started learning a bit more about how to buy animals at auctions. He said "By the way, don't go behind her withers." Oh? Why not? "Well, she kicks. I've been training her not to kick for four years, and it's getting worse." OK, I thought, how bad can it be? Llamas have feet like dogs, with soft pads. Duchess explained how bad it could be as we were loading her. 318 pounds of determined oomph can make an outstanding foot-sized bruise on your thigh. And on your hip. And on your shin. Hmmm.

I don't mind an animal being afraid of me in the beginning. I don't mind a few spit-threats until we get ourselves settled in. I do mind not being able to walk through my herd without someone trying to kill me. Obviously the previous owner's training-to-kick was extremely effective. How to change her mind? It was obvious that she wouldn't work for grain. Her whole body said she hated me and thought I was going to eat her. As I tried to plan a contract that I could make with her, she reinforced something I already knew. An animal that is afraid of you wants you to leave her alone. Could this work? I wanted to touch her, she wanted me to drop in a deep, dark hole. I wanted four feet on the floor at all times, she wanted to push me through the wall. Looked like we had a deal!

With Duchess tied to a stanchion in the barn, we began our discussion of the contract. From 30 feet away, I simply stood and stared at her. She danced, she fussed, she fidgeted. Finally she seemed to decide that I wasn't going to attack her right away, and she stood still for a moment. When I saw four feet on the ground, I clicked, and left the barn. I stayed out for 30 seconds. Then I came back in and stood and stared at her. When she again eventually stood still, I clicked and left the barn for another 30 seconds. We repeated this 10 times, during which Duchess started standing still as soon as I looked at her, and I started staying out of the barn for shorter periods of time. She understood! Stand still, I go away! Time for the next step.

I came back in the barn and took a giant step closer to her. She immediately started dancing again. Her head swung from side to side as far as the leash would allow, looking for escape. Her rear was swinging back and ... The thought hit her like a lightning bolt - wait a second, if I stand still, will the monster go away like she did before? YES! (I didn't actually leave, that time, I just clicked, turned my back, and went to the door for a few seconds). I turned back towards her and took that step forward again. Her flanks twitched, but her feet stayed on the floor. Click! and I jackpotted by leaving the barn again.

We worked like this for twenty minutes. At the end of the session, I was standing just out of range of her feet, and she was standing quietly and calmly. I had clicked and rewarded her only for having her feet on the

ground instead of in the air, but I noticed another benefit. Duchess had previously always faced away from people, swinging her rear into range if possible. At the end of our first session, she not only stood quietly, but she stood looking at me. Probably I was the strangest thing she had ever seen, but she knew how to get rid of me, so she was starting to relax. I unhooked the leash and let her rest.

The next day, I brought a 4 foot long horse whip with me. I needed to touch her, and I didn't want to get in range personally until we'd discussed being touched. If she kicked the whip, it would bend harmlessly and stay with her. I trapped her in a chute, put the lead back on, and tied her to the stanchion again. We started our discussion with me back at the door. She didn't believe the same rules applied as before, but it took her only a moment to begin the discussion again. Within five minutes I was back to being just out of range, and rewarding her by simply turning my shoulders and face away from her for a few seconds. Then I started moving the whip slowly in the air around her. When she stopped fidgeting, I clicked and put it down by my side. OK, that was easy for her to understand. I touched her neck with the whip. She flinched but stood her ground. I clicked and took myself and the whip half the barn away for 30 seconds. I came back and touched her neck again. Still doing fine. I touched her withers with the whip. Still doing fine. I touched her back an inch behind her withers, and she kicked eight times in a row without putting her hind leg down once. Wow! An athlete! I left the whip sitting quietly on her back. I think she would have gone on kicking but she lost her balance and had to put her foot down. I was ready. When the foot touched the ground, I clicked, and took the whip off her. I left it at my side for a minute to let the idea percolate, then touched her back again. She kicked twice and was wound up for the third strike when she stopped. She very slowly and very deliberately lowered her foot to the floor. I clicked and removed the whip. We looked at each other. I undid the lead and left her alone for the rest of the day.

The third day, it took only a minute or two to get the discussion back to where we had left it. I touched her back with the whip. She kicked once, from habit, and then almost rolled her eyes at her own foolishness and put her foot down. That was her last kick. By the end of

the third twenty minute session, I was running the whip up and down her back legs, over her udder, touching her toenails. And Duchess stood firm in her belief that all she had to do was to stand still, and sooner or later I would leave her alone.

The fourth day, I suggested she might like to stop thinking about dropping me in a hole, and start thinking about how to get grain. Since she was now in control of the situation, she was able to agree. We worked on her allowing me to touch her with my hand, and me giving her grain. Hey, maybe people aren't so bad after all!

The fifth day, I taught her to target my hand. By the end of that session Duchess would walk across the corral to me, swing her head away from the grain in my left hand to target my right hand, then swing back for the grain. At one point she touched my right hand, got her click, and then stopped between hands and just looked in my eyes for a minute. Her face and body were relaxed. She sniffed my chin. She continued on and got her grain.

That was a great experience, and I thought the story was over, but this morning after I had fed everyone, I went back to let each animal out of her pen and to pick up the grain pans, and I realized that Duchess' story didn't end there. Five years later, Duchess views the world calmly. People make sense. They aren't monsters, and they don't eat llamas. We can cut her toenails, and we can shear her, and we can do our pregnancy checks and play with her crias, and we make sense to her. I pick up her empty pan, and I scratch her neck for her, and then I hold up my hand for her to target. Her reward for this is to have the gate opened so she can go back with the herd, but she walks companionably out of the pen with me instead.

Alpha - Dealing with Behavior

Almost all "dominant" behaviors that dogs do are TRAINED behaviors. Dogs demand to be fed because demanding works. Playing tug with a dog? That's a GREAT game to play. There are ways to play it, just as there are successful ways to play baseball, to ride bikes, to play Monopoly. My siblings and I used to get in some pretty hefty fights over Monopoly, but for some reason no one ever suggested that Monopoly was causing us to think we were Alpha, nor that we shouldn't ever be allowed to play it.

For general "uppityness", a NON-AGGRESSIVE nothing-in-life-is-free program (such as Leading The Dance) will help rearrange everyone's priorities, specifically upping the status of the humans. There is nothing linear or easy about family heirarchies, they are very location- and situation-specific. We do much better to deal with behavior, reinforcing or punishing BEHAVIOR rather than fussing about whether the dog is dominant or not.

Chutes & Ladders

Every time I talk about "300-Peck", I get confusion. People are still asking me when we're going to start training the pigeons, and if that's a requirement of clicker training.

My dad grew up in a more polite age than our own, where swearing people said "Jehosophat" instead of "Jesus", and "Shoot" instead of "Shit". So I grew up listen to him and his cronies say "Shoot!" when they hit a snag.

It occurred to me a little while ago that 300-Peck is just like the kid's game of Snakes and Ladders, or, as it is also known, Chutes and Ladders.

For those who have never played it, it's a board game, where you throw dice to determine how far you'll move. On the board there are drawings of Chutes, like children's slides, and Ladders. If you land on a square that holds the bottom of the ladder, you get to "climb" up the ladder to a higher square closer to the finish line. If you land on a square that holds the top of a chute, you must "slide" down the chute to a much lower square further from the finish line. When I played this kid's game with my dad and he landed on a Chute, he would always say "Chute!" as he moved his player down.

I've been using the term "Chutes and Ladders" to describe the process of increasing Distance, Duration, Difficulty, or Distraction for several months now, and have encountered no apparent confusion at all, so I'm no longer call this process 300-Peck.

So here's the whole story:

Lynn is standing on the landing, getting Lily to go down 5 stairs to close the front door. When Lily understands that job, Lynn will "climb the Ladder" to the 6th step. Now Lily has to go 6 steps to close the door. She's successful, so Lynn climbs to step 7. Lily starts out fine on her way to the door, but gets lost. She goes to the bottom of the stairs and stands there, uncertain of what to do next.

Chute! Lily has told Lynn that 7 steps is too many, so Lynn will slide down the Chute and start her explanation again at Step 1. By the time she gets back to Step 7 (Lily's previous threshold of being able to perform), she will have rewarded Lily 6 times for going down the stairs and closing the door (click for closing the door from the first step, click for closing the door from the second step, etc). Will Lily land on a clear space and keep going? Can she handle the 7th step this time? Or will she land on a Chute space again and have to start over? Only Lily can say...

Training For Praise

"You have to keep treats with you all the time but by giving love and praise for the things the dog does right is more important to the dog than treats. The Mother Dog of hers does not give treats she gets after them with her sounds."

I have a few comments on your post, Michael.

First, my post (When you've got enough treats in the bank, you can afford to stop rewarding every one...) specifically discussed the beginning of NOT carrying treats with you all the time, which is also written up in some detail in the Levels.

Second, love and praise work great - for a few dogs, and under normal circumstances, but they're not very powerful as a reinforcer for most dogs for getting enough repetitions for the dog to get really good at complicated behaviours, nor do they help much when your dog is afraid of something or when you're working on a prey drive problem.

Third, Mother Dog didn't ask for complicated behaviours, she was mostly intent on STOPPING things she didn't like. Humans need to teach the dog WHAT to do, and on this list we're discussing how to do that without getting after them.

Not in any way saying love and praise aren't important, and if they work for you all by themselves, good, but my dogs aren't going to fetch a wheelchair because I love them, nor will they stop chasing ducks for praise.

Cue Blues

When I'm adding a cue, I start with the dog volunteering the behaviour just the way I want it. If the behaviour isn't quite right, or the dog isn't volunteering, I don't use any cue at all.

When the behaviour's correct and the dog is volunteering, again and again and again, I start telling her what the behaviour is called as she's doing it or preferably just starting to do it. So I'll tell her the name of it maybe 100 times while she's volunteering it.

Then I change the subject for a moment, then cue with the name of the previous behaviour. If she gives me the behaviour in response to the cue, big reward. If she doesn't, I get her back in the volunteering situation and tell her the name of it another 100 times. And so on. And so on.

For Stitch, Sit was a 100X behaviour and she had the cue nailed. Down was a 400X behaviour.

Then if you want the behaviour truly on stimulus control, you have to let her wear it out when you're not asking for it. Ask for the behaviour maybe 10X, then stop. She offers, again and again, and you do nothing. Finally she stops offering. At that point, you ask for it again, and pay for it when she gives it to you. Keep working this until she realizes that she won't get paid for that particular behaviour unless you asked for it.

Dog Allergies Discussed

People who are "allergic to dogs" can be allergic to dog dander. Dogs who shed put more dander into the air than dogs who don't shed. People can be allergic to dust/yeast/mold, all of which can sit on dogs. People can be allergic to pollen, which dogs roll in and bring into the house. People who are actually allergic to dogs are usually allergic to their saliva, which can be in their mouths or on their feet and coats where they have licked.

"Wool" is a specific term for the hair of sheep. When used to describe the haircoat of other animals, it refers to animals who have single coats, rather than an outer coat of guard hairs and an undercoat. Poodles, Bichons, Portuguese Water Dogs, Softcoated Wheaten Terriers, Bedlington Terriers and others all have single coats but still can carry dust/yeast/mold and still have saliva. **NOTHING** is non-allergenic, some things are less allergenic than other things. Clean things are less allergenic than dirty things unless you're allergic to the soap used to clean them.

Many people are not allergic at all but are "reactive". I am not allergic, but I'm extremely reactive, which means I can have a rash from wool sweaters but I do not develop an allergic reaction.

Allergy doctors tend to be pretty useless as far as I'm concerned - and I'm married to a doctor. One guy told me I was allergic to sheep. What does that mean? Sheep? Lambs? Wool? Mutton? Lamb? Sheep saliva? Sheep poop? Inhaling sheep air? "I dunno, just sheep."

As for the Cavalier with frog downs, don't worry about it. a) it means she has FABULOUS hips, and b) as she grows more muscle, she'll realize that this is a relaxed down, more athletic downs can get her up and down faster.

Dominance & Anthropomorphism

It's really dangerous to assume we have ANY clue what a dog is thinking. Most of the time I can't tell what my husband is thinking, and he's the same species as I am and has, presumably, approximately the same senses as I have. When we use words describing what the dog is feeling, we are, at best, describing what WE think the dog is thinking, and, at worst, projecting our own feelings onto the dog. This is a slippery slope that brings us words like "blowing off" and "dominant" and "deliberate". If we humans stopped at pretending we knew what a member of an alien species was thinking, we'd only be deluding ourselves, but unfortunately we carry things further. We use words which make us angry. Which make us feel blown off, picked on, deliberately defied. And then we act on how those words make US feel. MUCH safer and more reasonable to deal with the behaviour we see. When I'm coaching someone, it's usually about 6 months before they're allowed to use ANY word describing feelings, and then only as clearly-understood shorthand for a specific set of behaviours (eg "afraid" as shorthand for "ears back, pupils dilated, weight back, tail tucked, eyes darting, shivering").

Now, about "dominance". There's a very strongly-held idea about dominance endemic in the dog community. That idea is that dogs are in a constant struggle with humans for dominance. Along with this central idea is the theory that dogs fight to determine dominance, that the strongest animal is the most dominant, that dominance comes from proving that you're the strongest animal, that dominance is lineal, and that dominance is a physical situation. None of these are true.

Let's take them one by one. Researchers from the vet college at Guelph, Ontario, about 10 years ago, told us that there is ZERO correlation between puppy dominance tests and the family relationship of adult dogs. I'm going to run with that and say, at the risk of the anthropomorphizing I just despised, that dogs don't care who the boss is. All they care about is that SOMEBODY is in charge of the universe. One way I've explained this is that Cavaliers need to have somebody in charge because the person in charge is the one with the money for ice

cream, so if no one's in charge, there's no ice cream today. And Giant Schnauzers need to have somebody in charge because THEIR person in charge makes the grass grow and the sun rise. So Cavs will sit around and hope somebody's in charge today, while Giant Schnauzers will be staring at you when you wake up, just checking to be sure you haven't lost your touch. What this means in real terms is that if a dog is having problems that appear to be related to "dominance", it isn't that the DOG is too high on the ladder and needs to be lowered, but that the human isn't high ENOUGH and needs to be raised. All the physical dominance methods aim at lowering the dog by physically controlling it. Then you have a human who isn't high enough to control the universe, and a dog who isn't either. Unfortunately, there are unpleasant consequences to ignoring the ice cream money - when a dog, like a child, appears to be living in a world with no rules, they act out, apparently pushing to find that nonexistent line, and they frequently exhibit signs of inappropriate fear. The non-physical "nothing in life is free" programs, like Leading The Dance, on the other hand, build up the human by applying the rules that were missing. Once there's someone capable of getting the ice cream and making sure the sun rises every morning, the dog can start relaxing.

What does this have to do with the dog biting, the dog not coming when it's called, having a bedtime running fit? Nothing. Nothing at all. Those are behaviours. Behaviours are trained.

Next, the idea that dogs fight to establish dominance. With this, I'll throw in the idea that dominance is a physical event. Wrong again. Sane dogs who speak "dog" well will do almost anything to avoid fighting. The best teacher isn't the one running up and down the school hallway fussing about untied shoelaces, but the one who's class just hums along. Of the best teacher, others frequently say how "lucky" they are that they always get the "easy" classes. The best cop and the best mother are not the screamers but the ones who calm things down just by showing up. The most dominant dog I ever saw never raised her lip once in her life, but an adult male German Shepherd once scraped a tooth across her croup. She turned slowly to look at him, and he peed himself and released his anal glands. Dominance is not a physical thing. It's purely mental. Dogs who fight are dogs who can't

communicate with other dogs, so can't tell whether another dog is going to ignore them, attack them, or try to breed them.

"dogs fight to determine dominance, that the strongest animal is the most dominant, that dominance comes from proving that you're the strongest animal"

Think of all the facial expressions and body expressions and positions that dogs use to speak. Scuba will teach you if you let her. In another life I'm sure she would be Alpha rolled and disciplined for being "dominant". She has a strong opinion about her personal space. She doesn't like people in her space when she's sleeping. She'll sleep on my bed, but if I move under the blanket or put a leg over her, she'll get off the bed. She's more opinionated with strange dogs, especially when we're doing a seminar and she has a table to lie on as her only private space. Using her on her table, we can start rewarding dogs for reading her correctly and for giving appropriate responses to what she's saying. And I can teach people to "hear" what she's saying as well. First she'll tighten her neck muscles. If the dog fails to respond correctly by moving away, she'll twitch her cheeks. If the dog fails to respond correctly, she lifts a lip. Next she lowers her head. Then she lifts her lip higher. Then she starts vocalizing. Finally, she'll make a bark and pretend lunge which is not in any way intended to come near the other dog. All this is discussion designed to AVOID anything physical.

Finally, the idea that dominance is lineal. Even humans know that possession is 9/10ths of the law. Scuba may be the queen of the known universe, but that doesn't mean she can take Stitch's blanky away from her. One dog may be in charge of the dog bed, another the living room, and another the car. True dominance is a roundabout and convoluted discussion.

So what can we do about "bad" behaviour? We can use the exercises in non-physical nothing-in-life-is-free programs to raise ourselves up the ladder when our dogs appear to be exhibiting NON-SPECIFIC anxieties and misbehaviours. We can TRAIN (gasp) the specific behaviours we want, and train out the specific behaviours we don't want. We can use management and planning to prevent the dog from

being rewarded for behaviours we don't want. We can TRAIN a cue which says "what you're doing is not allowed" and we can remember to use it as a prelude to redirecting the dog to behaviour that IS allowed.

Dominance

So, do I believe dominance is important to dogs? Yes, I do. I think it's as important to dogs as it is to humans. I think knowing you can count on mom and dad to keep you safe and set the rules is almost as important to a sound mind as breathing is.

I believe that a good leader gets the job done with respect for everybody else, and without nitpicking. The best teacher isn't the one patrolling the hallway bitching about untied shoelaces. The best teacher is "just lucky" because "she always gets the GOOD kids!". The best cop is the one who just walks into a situation and everybody in the situation calms down.

People say "Oh, Puppy must be the boss, because Puppy always has the best toys!", but if Mom is a good leader, she's not going to be running around fussing about toys. Maybe she's got an old toilet paper tube she thinks is important, and Puppy wouldn't even THINK of going near that tube, but we don't see that.

I do NOT believe that dominance has anything to do with running out the front door, failing to come when called, or biting you when you try to cut toenails.

I use the Dance to say "we're going to start learning about running out the front door. I'm a person worth listening to, I have stuff you want, and I'm going to show you how to earn it."

Environmental Cues

Since we've been talking about environmental cues, I've been noticing what happens in my own life the last couple of days.

Stitch sits in the back seat of my car with a seat-belt harness on. When we go through ANY drive-through, yes, even the ATM at the bank, she stands up and looks eager, hoping for a cookie (she got a cookie at McDonald's maybe 3 times in her LIFE), but as soon as the car is in motion again, she lies down.

She doesn't much think about being a Service Dog when we're at agility class, though if I drop something, her default retrieve kicks in.

When I put my shoes on, Stitch comes and puts her paws up on me to get her service vest and collar put on.

When I tell her to go out the front door, she does, but stops on the step to wait for me. She uses the opportunity to scan the yard for feral cats, but stays on the step.

At 10 PM, Scuba goes and sits in the doorway to the dog room, tapping her toes, glancing at her watch, and sighing dramatically. She won't go to bed without being told if any human is still up, but she clearly thinks it's time for everybody to pack it in for the night.

My friend was here for the weekend with her rescue Portie, Fish. Fish knew that to get attention, he had to rake people with his claws (a perfect example of bad attention being better than no attention). She's now successfully transferred this to - in order to get attention, he has to be holding a toy. Fish took it a step further. Anyone coming in the front door is a cue for him to run to get a toy.

When the footrest comes up on my recliner and I don't have food or drink in my hand, it's a cue that the dogs can jump up in my lap for a cuddle.

If I go to bed and my husband's not in the room, it's a cue that the dogs can jump up and settle on the bed. If he drives in the driveway or walks into the room, it's a cue for them to get off the bed.

Explanation of Click Ends the Behavior

If you ask her to DOWN and toss a treat, and you are using DOWN as a downstay, she shouldn't break to get the treat. HOWEVER, the click ends the behaviour, so a click or a word marker (Yes, for instance) IS a release. She can do anything she wants after hearing the marker. This is glorious - the dog holds the position UNTIL she gets the marker, since she's actively working to produce the marker.

How to Separate Foundation Behaviors and Access Skills

For me, the absolute bottom line behaviour is self-control. I demand self-control of 7 wo puppies, and 8 mo pups, and 5 yo dogs. The SC I ask of each of these dogs, though, is on a totally different level. A 7 wo puppy must keep four-on-the-floor in order to be petted or fed, and any contact with humans stops immediately if there is unsolicited play biting. In addition, an 8 mo dog must walk on a loose lead without forgetting 80% of the time, be quiet and lie down in the car, be able to stay on a table or chair for up to an hour under most circumstances, and greet people by sitting. In addition, a 5 yo dog must walk on a loose lead 99% of the time, not solicit when in uniform, be able to hang with me without fussing for hours at a time, and generally be under control 99% of the time.

Then there are OTHER foundation behaviours, which I start working on at 7 weeks, because for me clicker training IS work and IS play, and the more work-play the pup and I do with shaping and exploring the mind, the smarter the dog will be. And if the pup EVER wants to quit before I quit, wow, I go to bed with no supper. So, sit, down, stay, come, walk on a loose lead, retrieve, let me handle you all over, roll over, play dead, weave around chair legs, go to mat, etc etc etc. I ask for these behaviours when and if I expect to get them from the pup, and I try really hard not to ask for them when I'm not expecting to get them.

Then there are the access skills, which are not really different but it might help the trainer to consider them in a separate category. Just because a pup has an attention span of over an hour at home, and can brilliantly give me 28 different behaviours in that hour at home, doesn't in any way mean she has the attention span of a gnat or can give me anything at all in public. So when the pup is old enough to be out in public, we go to a soccer game, which is a terrific place to take a pup. Because soccer games happen in parks, we can be as close to or as far away from the game and people as we need to be. There may be one or two dogs at a soccer game, but they are leashed and under control and there aren't too many of them. There are little kids at soccer games, and parents, and pretty much everybody is sitting down so I can control them. And my car is right nearby so if things aren't going well or we need a break, we can go sit in the car.

At the soccer game, I can start half a block away from the game if need be, take the pup out, let her sniff around for a few minutes, do a couple of minutes of work-play, and leave. At HER pace, we can work up to work-play for half an hour behind the spectators, and to a whole gameful of work-play right in the middle of the crowd, or we can leave at any time. Since the same people go to soccer games, I can talk to them and tell them what I want them to do next time I come. Then I can show up with the dog in her vest, keep her focussed on me, work-play, watch the game a bit, and leave with no interaction with people. The next time, I can come with a naked dog, she can flop down on her back in the middle of little kids and spend an hour getting her belly rubbed and learning to be calm and quiet and sleep in the sun amidst the hubbub.

Always ALWAYS ****my**** focal point is the dog, what she is learning, and how she is handling it. She will not EVER pull me to the spectators. She will not EVER refuse to watch me if I ask for it. She will not EVER jump up on people or misbehave, because if any of these things happens, I will slap myself on the forehead, go sit in the car, and re-evaluate how far I pushed her that day. So I'm never in a position where I'm upset and desperately trying to control a puppy. Control of the puppy is SELF-control, and I'm only the facilitator, there to put the puppy in a position where she will be rewarded for controlling herself. With Scuba, and with most clicker-trained dogs, they are easy to turn off a situation or behaviour if they're put in a position of being wrong AND THEN HAVING THE HANDLER UPSET, EMBARRASSED OR FRUSTRATED ABOUT IT.

Here's a quote from Scuba's herding trainer about Scuba's first try at Herding Intermediate, where she was possibly ready for Intermediate, but not for Intermediate with the flighty sheep she drew, so, put in a position of too much responsibility for the amount of training she had, she got herself in a real pickle, with sheep (and dog) racing all over the arena:

"I couldn't even catch her!!! She was partying - having fun - and in her own little world... I ran to the re-pen, opened the gate, and let the sheep in so that I could catch her!!!!!! I was totally shocked... my well-behaved, nice little cute PWD!!! hee hee..."

Now, that could easily have been a disaster for Scuba's future as a shepherd. Clearly, she was WRONG. In fact, she was SO wrong she forgot COME! When was the last time this dog forgot the C word? She's 7 yo and I don't remember her ever not coming. It COULD have been a disaster - if not for that "hee hee" at the end. Clearly if the handler had EXPECTED Scuba to behave like this, she wouldn't have put her in this position but, having overstepped the dog, she did what needed to be done to get the dog OUT of the situation WITHOUT BEING UPSET ABOUT IT. And the next time she took her out, she worked, not on Intermediate work, but back to the beginning with calm, confident control of the stock, and on Come.

So that's my answer: Foundation behaviours from the get-go, and ask for them as the dog is able to give them to me. Access behaviours from the get-go as well, but again, only as the dog is able to successfully give me the behaviours and control herself. And ALWAYS watching to be sure I don't overstep the dog.

Generalizing

"I'm having difficulty in how to respond when I labeled a behavior and the dog does not "do" it."

Aha, it's a perception problem. You labeled ****A**** behaviour, and the dog DOES do it. The behaviour is "fold up your back legs and plant your butt on the floor in the kitchen" and the label you put on it is "Sit".

Then you went outside and said "Sit". Clearly it's not possible for the dog to plant butt on the kitchen floor when you're outside, so he does nothing. Or sniffs, or whatever.

Dogs are very poor at generalizing, so a behaviour taught in the kitchen is NOT learned in the bathroom. If you want the dog to give you the behaviour in the bathroom, the back yard, the parking lot at the mall, etc, you must teach the behaviour to the dog in those locations as well. How did you teach it? From scratch, with the clicker, and NO label until he's offering the behaviour.

As a rule, anytime you change ****ONE**** thing about a behaviour - that is, strength, distraction, duration, location, or anything else, go back to the beginning and retrain. The 20th change will probably be pretty quick to train, but it must be trained nevertheless.

Getting Through Puppy Adolescence

There is NOTHING that annoys people so much as a parent and child getting through adolescence without doing all that "terrible teens" stuff. AND YOU CAN if you simply understand that it is the child's job to grow up and take control. A scary thought for "traditional" parents, an easy one for clicker parents.

Same for dogs. It is SO annoying for Portuguese Water Dog people to have their little twerps almost under control and then they hit adolescence and start running all over visiting people rather than doing what they are supposed to - but from my observations this is a direct result of coming down on them for growing up. Stick with the clicker, let them work out the consequences, leave them things they can make decisions on independently, sit back and enjoy.

Gravity Rules

There are some behaviours that I need to have on the same level as gravity. These things become Gravity Rules. Many people want to have a dog that walks on a loose leash, but *I* like very small tack, like show leads. I have very large dogs (the smallest dog I've owned in the last 15 years weighs 45 pounds), everything I own hurts, and sometimes my hands hurt worse than anything else. I REQUIRE a loose leash.

I don't get up on Saturday and think "Maybe gravity doesn't work on Saturdays, I think I'll jump off a building and see". If I had spent my first ten years in freefall, I might not have this totally religious belief in gravity, but I didn't, so I do. Similarly, my dogs grew up with loose leashes. Loose Leash is a Gravity Rule. Yes, when they go off-planet (go for a walk with someone else), they can be graceful in freefall (might very well tighten the leash on someone who lets them), but for me, they never think about it.

Not running out exit doors (house, building, car) just because they are open is a Gravity Rule for my dogs.

Food that isn't paid attention to disappears: GR

Food on plates on the couch is unavailable to canids: GR

Etc. Different planets (people) have different gravity (rules), of course, and whether any person actually has ANY GRs depends only on whether or not that person is willing to commit the same dedication to that behaviour that gravity commits to keeping us on the ground.

Handsignals

"What is the correct hand signal for down?"

A competition-obedience hand signal is described as "a single motion of one arm and hand returned promptly to a neutral position". Satisfy that requirement, and there is no "correct" signal for anything. If you're NOT in competition obedience, you can use anything you want. Lots of deaf dogs are trained using Ameslan signs.

The reason for the Hitler sign (throwing one arm and hand upward in a Heil salute) was that handlers were taught to hold the leash taut in the left hand (standing in front of the dog facing him), raise the right hand over their head, then slam the right hand down on the taut leash, thus correcting the dog into the Down. Thus the Hitler salute was a threat that the leash was about to be popped.

From our POV, raising the dog's head to get him to lie down is pretty silly, since raising his nose is how we taught him to Sit in the first place (I just put my hand above Scuba's head, thus raising her nose, and told her Down. I told her 13 times before she looked at me to see what I was talking about and then started to lie down - but as she lay down,

she lowered her nose, thus proving my point, that raising her nose to get her to lie down is counterproductive).

With that in mind, people are using all manner of downward hand swipes to get the dog to lie down. I tell people to go home, don't talk, play around and see what signal your dog will understand as a cue to lie down. Then if you're aiming for competition obedience, cut it back to a single motion of one arm and hand.

How Much is Too Much

"Her eyes absolutely shine when we get the clicker and start. Is there a chance that she will "burn out"?"

Don't put a lot of effort into worrying about this. Ask the dog. Always leave her wanting more. Another way of saying this is quit before the dog does. If you leave her wanting more, if you back up when she starts getting confused, if you pay attention to what she is saying about the quality of reinforcers, you'll never have any trouble with burnout.

That's not to say that one day she might not really feel like working - that happens to everybody, a little under the weather or tired or whatever. But it's not an ongoing thing.

How Much Time It Takes to Train a Dog

"I tell people "Do not set aside time to train your dog!"

Absolutely right. I always laugh when people ask me how long it took me to train Scuba. The answer is either "8 years" or "about five hours" depending on whether I count the time specifically set aside to train

her, or all the time spent living with her. The dog WILL spend 100% of her time learning. If I pay attention, she'll learn what I want her to learn. If I DON'T pay attention, God (or the devil) knows WHAT she'll learn!

In Defense of Bill Koehler

"Bill Koehler did not use the ear pinch to train the retrieve. He used it once he had shaped(!) the retrieve, when he believed the dog "knew" what was expected but was not doing it."

Koehler, in fact, was a HUGE step up from what was going on before, though he gets a lot of blame for things that he didn't actually do or say. He was the first person I ever heard who believed you should actually TEACH the dog what you wanted it to do, in small, easy steps, rather than just jumping in with corrections. Without revisionist history, Koehler was truly amazing, and the beginning of my journey towards becoming an actual dog trainer rather than just someone who yanked when I was told to yank.

Intelligent Disobedience

"So, especially the very early stages, how do you all distinguish between "she's just pawing me for attention" or "she is just being bratty today" or "she just wants the treat I have" vs. she is trying to tell me something is wrong, etc."

Retrospect, usually.

Invisible Fences

"What are the opinions on invisible fences "

Your dog is a lot more likely to go through an invisible fence with her adrenalin up than she is to get hurt chasing little critters. Once out, she won't be able to get back in. My opinion, bad idea.

Is Stay Command Necessary?

"Is it really necessary to have a separate command? I was planning on teaching my dog that 'sit' means get into the sit position and don't move until I click or give another command. "

No, that's the way it should work. However...

The benefit of having a separate Stay cue, in my life anyway, is for emphasis. Plus it's a cue that dogs generally find very easy to generalize, so that having taught her Stay, I can then roll her upside down on the vet's examining table, tell her to Stay, and have her lie there compliantly while we look at her tummy.

Keep Going Signals

Turning the click into nothing more than a keep- going signal is generally a waste of energy, at the very least. I think of people who have taught their dogs that the dog should only weave if the people are walking right beside them chanting WEAVE WEAVE WEAVE WEAVE and clapping their hands with every syllable. If you followed the link posted earlier today that showed Susan Garrett doing agility,

can you imagine her walking, clapping, and chanting while her dog is weaving? By training and then trusting the dog to do the job, she's not only given respect that I love to the dog, but given herself a HUGE bonus in being able to get into position for the next obstacle instead of having to nurse the dog through the weaves.

In water trials (can you tell I have water trials on my mind? We leave in a week) I can often hear spectators telling me to praise my dog while she's going out to retrieve a bumper. The fact is that I not only don't need to, but I can't. She knows the job. She knows that good things will happen if she does her job, and that knowledge has led her to really, really like doing the job. If I yell at her to tell her she's doing a good job, she's going to stop, turn around, and ask me what the heck I want? Was she going in the wrong direction? Did I want her to find a different bumper? Did she miss a Stay cue? More to the point, perhaps, was that Good Girl really a click? Is the behaviour over? Instead, I'll ask her to do her job, then respect her enough to leave her alone to do it.

If she turns back to ask me a question, or if I see her falter or lose the bumper in the choppy water, or (yes, it's happened) forget what the heck she was doing out there in the first place, THEN I'll say something useful.

Bottom line - if I find myself using a keep-going signal, I KNOW that I've pushed the dog too far, too fast, and that she is operating WELL past her understanding of the behaviour I'm asking her to do. Not saying it doesn't happen, but it certainly isn't what I'm aiming for, or something I'll put up with after I notice myself doing it.

Kinder Training

"My question - is this just Montana? What do other people do in their areas to truly promote positive training? How do you deal with people who are abusive in their training? (besides 4 letter words, I know them all)"

Sigh. No, it isn't just Montana. What can you do? **FIRST**, don't preach. Nobody loves a missionary, and people don't **LISTEN** to missionaries anyway. Understand that our society teaches us to treat each other this way, never mind animals. Understand how the scenario must seem to the **OTHER** person when you take a person who is having trouble with a dog pulling their arm out of the socket, barking, lungeing, etc, and you come along and tell them that they have **TOO MUCH CONTROL** on the dog. Say what? Are you stoopid? I've got a pinch collar and a heavy lead on the sucker and he **STILL** won't stop lungeing and barking!

Get the vets on your side. Offer to speak to any get-togethers they have. Speak to the local vet tech association. **DEMONSTRATE**. The first problem they're going to have is that they don't have time to train every kerflushinner dog that walks in the place, thank you very much. So you can demonstrate that you're not actually taking any extra **TIME** - that while first talking to the clients, the vet can, at the same time, be using body language to talk to the dog, facing it, turning away to reward relaxation, etc, so when they finally put hands on it, the dog is totally relaxed about the situation. If there happened to be a couple of local humane-society volunteers or staff at the meeting, even better. Humane societies have the same problems - no time. But you can show them that by spending an initial 5 minutes with a new dog, teaching it that food disappears when it's leaping on the gate, for instance, they can save a **LOT** of time because the dogs are all controlled while they're waiting for them. An idea that I've seen implemented at a lot of shelters is a small clipboard hung on each cage for each animal. Each volunteer writes what they were working on. When potential owners show up, they can read what the dog was doing - "Oh look, hon, this one knows how to sit and stay and shake hands!"

And the best way is just to have the best dogs you possibly can. Keep racking up the points - I couldn't talk about herding, except that Scuba has a herding title. I couldn't talk about Rally, but we've got Rally. I couldn't talk about obedience, but we've got titles (with excellent scores). I couldn't talk about household, but my dogs happen to be well-behaved, and when they're not, I TRY to sit down in a corner and explain to them what's going on, and emerge with them handling things better. People see this. Whether it has an immediate impact on them or not, it DOES have an impact, and sooner or later they start getting curious. And sooner or later they start changing. Maybe they don't change all the way, maybe they do. But next year, or the year after, or five years from now, people are still giving corrections, but the pinch collars are gone. Displays of violent temper are no longer acceptable in class. Classes change from "obedience" to household, tricks, etc - learning to communicate with the dog and teach what the CLIENT needs to know rather than what's right for the obedience ring. This happened here last week: one new vet in a practice of 4 vets did an Alpha roll on a puppy. She won't do it again because she was told that wasn't acceptable. YES!

And surprisingly, especially when you feel like you're in a black hole in the universe, kinder training IS moving at light speed. New technologies, new opinions, new attitudes - it can't change overnight, but it IS changing. Do your own thing, don't preach, stay out of situations that will make you crazy, help anybody who asks, and things WILL change. By this time next year, you'll have invited several people who are interested to meet with you once a week or once a month to train together...

Labels

"She just looked at me!!!"

First, forget about dominance, and forget about labels like "bull headed". Dogs DO do some things because of heirarchy discussions, but it isn't at all a useful thing to think about in regard to training.

For the cues you gave her that she just looked at you - think of one in particular. How long has it been since you gave her a reward for doing that behaviour? Has she regularly and cheerfully performed that behaviour in those specific situations before? Was she feeling well? Is she coming in season? Were you stressed or giving the cues in any different way? Was this a sudden thing, or have you been repeating yourself fairly often recently? Did she have to go outside?

Was she disinterested in training? Or did she not perform a behaviour you cued that was NOT in a training situation. If you can stop thinking about her "disobeying" you and break down what happened, you'll discover you know a lot more about what happened than you thought.

Latency Described

"At what point do you raise criteria for a faster response? Before adding the cue?"

Yes. Don't use the word at all until she's absolutely offering you the behaviour, then start using the word AS SHE'S STARTING TO SIT, essentially saying "Oh, by the way, that thing you're doing? It's called SIT". When you've done that maybe a hundred times, try saying the word to her sometime when she's not thinking of sitting, and see what happens. If you get a good response, super. If you don't, go back to naming it as she does it.

The bottom line is, yes, latency is one of the criteria for any behaviour. If she takes 20 seconds to respond to a cue in agility, the run is over, thanks for your donation. When you say SIT, you want to see your word strike her ear, arrow into the brain, ricochet to her back end and knock the legs out from under her. If she's thinking about it, stop using the word, she's not ready yet.

Learn from Mistakes

"How is it possible that after a year I still can find new mistakes to make?"

I hope you can go to my website and read Stitch's blog. I'm a professional trainer, by golly, and sighted. I do this for a LIVING, for Pete's sake. I've been doing this for 48 years! I think you'll be greatly encouraged by the number of mistakes and stupidities I've made in the last 9 months. The number of times I got into situations because it seemed like it would be OK and then wasn't, the number of times I've done something because the CLASS was doing it, the number of times I've felt like hitting myself upside the head - well, the list goes on. The important part of training - the important part of simply being with a dog - is to learn from your mistakes. What's that saying? Good decisions come from experience. Experience comes from poor decisions...

Leash On - Leash Off

"I guess I'm actually presenting 2 questions here - training off leash and testing off leash. The dogs are all compatible and the trainers are all "in the game" - Thoughts???"

Sure, go for it, as the dog is able to concentrate and stay in the game. Be warned: dogs worked with leashes off are NOT doing the same behaviour as they are with the leash on! I recently realized that Stitch, at 18 months, has a problem that she freezes when I put the leash on her. So now I'm working her through that.

"These dogs are in a program that will eventually have them working with the disabled, so it is entirely possible that their future handlers will not have the physical ability to use the leash for anything except to basically keep them "connected"."

I'm not in any way trying to say that you need to use the leash, just that, say, one day a week, you should work with the leash ON the dog. Use a 4' leash and let it drag. One of Scuba's best "tricks" is picking up her leash, which I am constantly dropping (being is it's so terribly important for keeping her under control ;*/), and untangling her legs from it before she hands it to me. I never would have thought of that - she taught herself because she's a person who likes a deep pet/huggle, but isn't in to little tickly things happening on her.

"Let Me Explain It Again!"

"This is so discouraging. She'd been doing so well, and now it's like I never worked with her at all."

Remember how you start right from the beginning every time you change something - a location, a distraction, etc? Sometimes it takes a

while to work through the explanation again, sometimes it just takes a minute or two before the dog says "Oh, wait a sec! This is just like that OTHER thing we did, right?"

So yes, start from the beginning. It might take a week, it might take a month, it might take an hour, it might take a minute. Say it after me, now:

"Let me explain that again... "

And remember, the more times you explain it from the beginning, the less time it's going to take.

I have a llama that I worked as a baby and did very well with. Then I sold him and he was abused (came home with huge open wounds in his face), screaming every time he SAW a human. I got him back two years ago and he still has flashbacks where he bugles (a danger call, thank goodness, a big step down from screaming!) when he sees a human, and every time I start at the beginning. I walk toward him, give him a chance to stand still, then I stop and respect his space until he relaxes. Sometimes I'll work him daily for six weeks with no bad reactions at all, and then two or three days in a row he'll bugle when he sees me.

But he's getting better. We're down to a bugle once in 40 approaches, and he's down to maybe 4 seconds of thinking to get his sh*t together once he's lost it, so it's a) worth it, and b) working.

"Let Me Explain It Again!" - 2

"Couldn't we say something like "Oops!" when the dog looks away? This would signal going back to the beginning. I know you don't actually say to your dogs "Let me explain that again!""

No, I don't actually say that to the dog ;*) , but think this to yourself:

Dang, we were playing this really great Watch Me game, where you watch and I give you treats. And you went and BLEW it. Too bad! LET me explain that AGAIN.

During that time, you've been NOT giving the dog the opportunity to make eye contact. If she's in the game, she's been trying, but your eyes aren't available. When you get through with those four (silent) sentences, lock eyeballs and start again. So yes, I use a No Reward Marker, technically, but it's a body language marker, not a vocal one.

Levels and Short Term Memory

"My biggest problem now, is my short term memory. I have to literally take the notebook outside and read and re-read each skill as I'm working on it with Hannah."

I have the same problem, compounded by working five llamas in a) obstacle courses - three different levels, some animals nearly done competing at one level and getting ready for the next; b) pack courses - same problem; c) driving courses; d) showmanship; e) halter and working two dogs in a) Levels; b) Service Dog levels; c) agility; d) drafting; e) Rally

I get outside with a critter and I have ZERO idea what to work on. I've solved the problem by printing off AND LAMINATING a set of cards for each animal. Each card has a list of skills for a particular sport and level. I punch a hole in the cards and hang them on a lanyard around my neck. Then when I get a critter, I just have to leaf through the cards to find the appropriate critter and sport.

Luring vs Free Shaping

*"Is there any reason to abstain from luring, ie will it interfere with c/t?
Maybe you aren't doing "pure" click training unless you wait for the
behavior to reward it, but does it matter as long as you are
communicating clearly what is expected of the dog and using only +R?"*

IMO waiting for the behaviour has very little to do with clicker training - oh sure, I will reward the dog for sitting, for lying down, for peeing in appropriate places at appropriate times, but that is a small part of training.

Most of clicker training involves setting the dog up to give you the behaviour you want (or the next closest thing to it from what you have now, which is shaping) so you can reward it. Getting the behaviour can be done with luring, then the dog can be clicked and rewarded. My definition of clicker training certainly includes luring.

There are only a couple of potential problems with luring. First, luring doesn't do much to produce a dog which is operant, which is out looking for things to offer you, so you can take your pick of the offerings and shape other behaviours (I once asked the marvelous Alex Kurland why she did so much luring with horses - she replied "Trust me, you don't want a 1200 lb animal standing in a stall experimenting to see what kinds of things it can do with its teeth and its feet!"). Luring tends to produce dogs which wait for YOU to do something before THEY do something - pretty much the definition of a cross-over dog. Or, to put it another way, constant luring tends to produce dogs who don't know the thrill of offering.

Second, constant luring produces owners who don't know the thrill of having a dog who offers. Why do I go to do seminars and show Scuba playing 101 with a chair, and blow 3/4 of the room out of the water? Because, although they think they have been doing clicker training, they have never before been in the presence of a dog that they could actually see thinking. Why not? Because they teach everything by luring.

So you should never lure? Of course not! Luring is a perfectly reasonable way to Get The Behaviour. What you **SHOULDN'T** do is rely on luring to teach everything, unless you want a dog with that traditional sit-and-wait-for-mom-to-do-something attitude.

Do I ever lure? Of course I do. When I **AM** luring, however, I do as little as possible (being, essentially, the original Couch Trainer). I will lure with bait if I have to, but if I don't have to use bait, I'll lure by moving my shoulders, or looking over **THERE**, or standing in a particular spot that will ensure that the dog stands in **THAT** particular spot, where he will have a higher probability of doing **THIS** behaviour (taking the dog outside to the grass where he's peed before is, essentially, luring the peeing behaviour).

I very highly recommend the idea of trying to eliminate **ALL** luring until both you and your dog feel proficient in the use of freeshaping, though, because it **IS** easy to get stuck on luring and not venture into the truly breathtaking, knee-weakening, mind-blowing, training that is freeshaping an animal who is into the game. Scuba blows **ME** out of the water frequently.

Luring

"Why are you opposed to luring for Crate?"

I'm not really opposed to any method for any behaviour - as long as the method works within the guidelines of my mind - which are sort of like the Rally judges' guidelines for abusive behaviour - if it offends the sensibilities of the judge, it was wrong. Or, to be fairer:

- it works
- it gives control to the dog
- it respects the dog and the handler
- the dog did most of the work
- the dog is happy with what she learned at the end of it

What that means is that I WILL lure the dog into the crate if I think it's going to work and it seems like the easiest/simplest way to get the dog in the crate.

Why I'm opposed to luring the crate in general is because SO many people think they're going to get somewhere by tossing a treat in the crate, which gives SO many dogs a choice:

go in the crate, get the one lousy cookie, live in jail for the rest of my life, die lonely and incarcerated with the taste of one lousy cookie in my mouth, or

stay out here, have a good life, play with my friends... hmmmmmmmm

So I basically never start anybody off luring this behaviour because I never want the dog to practise NOT going in the crate.

With shaping, I'm saying - you don't HAVE to go in the crate. Heck, I don't even WANT you to go in the crate. Just LOOK at the crate. Thanks (treat). - you don't have to go in the crate, I don't want you to go in the crate, just take a STEP towards the crate. Thanks (treat). etc. And, like looking at the Bad Guy, because I'm neither asking nor forcing the dog to sell her soul, because she's in control of the situation and can back away from the crate any time she wants to, she can afford to offer me the tiny step I want next. It's fun to watch the dogs with a real aversion to the crate when they finally contact it, or step into it - run in, get the click, ZOOM out, stand there looking like "Ha ha, I was too fast for you to slam the door!" and then to see the look on their faces when they realize that I'm still 5' away and never made a move to slam the door "Ha ha, I don't care! Treats if you put 2 paws in the crate, no treats if you don't. Your choice!"

Priceless.

Medical Awareness

"My vet has frequently requested that I ask my Belgian list for input on my dogs' treatment, especially when it regards specific breed tendencies or behavior. He's also a fan of Sue's"

What a lovely vet (the part where he asks you, not necessarily the part where he's a fan of mine). This is why I hate having to see a vet when I'm traveling. Vets who don't know me pat me on the head and say stupid things like "ALL dogs go off their food from time to time!" You can just hear the "dear" tacked on the end of the sentence, can't you?! Fact is, MY dogs do NOT EVER go off their food, and if I told MY vet that one of my dogs hadn't eaten supper and hadn't eaten breakfast either, I can guarantee that dog would be on an IV and have had \$200 worth of X- rays before 11 AM!

Missing the Cue

"So, what do I respond to my friend when she raises her eye brow at me for not forcing him into position? I would greatly appreciate some ideas on what to do in situations like this,"

Since your friend trained the sit behaviour by pushing (or yanking?) the dog into position, by pushing him into position when he has "ignored" a "command", she is retraining the behaviour (even though she is looking at it as a correction). We know that dogs don't generalize well, and that a command OR cue given in location or circumstance #27 is NOT the same command or cue given in location or circumstance #26 (or any of the previous ones, either).

You, however, don't have any commands, you have cues, which are, as you say, an opportunity for the dog to earn (or miss) a yummy treat.

So what do you do when the dog misses a cue? Personally I take almost all FIRST time weird things as aberrations. If it happens once, I WILL usually re-cue, having gotten the dog's attention by saying his name, tapping him on the shoulder, or some such.

If it happens again, however, I know I'm in a situation we haven't trained for, or haven't trained enough for. So the answer is: retrain the behaviour. Start from scratch. Get the behaviour, (or get the behaviour in a less-stimulating environment and work back up to where you were), get the dog volunteering the behaviour, put the cue back on, voila, you have the dog no longer "ignoring" a cue in that circumstance.

My View of Operant Training

"The more I read and find out about dogs the more I can see that they are more like humans than we would like to believe. By that I mean, we do not work well for dictators and tyrants, the work is sloppy and often just enough to get by and not be harmed by them. Now give us a leader who builds us up and makes us feel so good when we do right and wanting to do better when we fail to meet the mark; to the ends of the earth we will follow. So my goal with my dog has to be as the leader who earns respect and loyalty, the one who earns the undying desire to please. I cannot gain this thru intimidation and pain, only thru a consistent uplifting of the good and praiseworthy efforts of my dog doing what I ask. Does that mean I accept mediocrity? In the beginning I might reward the effort and not precision but over time as with any creature the goal must rise to continue interest, just like a job without challenges is a training program that never asks for more or better. If you flip hamburgers how much do you enjoy your job when all you do is flip hamburgers, but give me a goal to flip more hamburgers than the other guy or flip them better today than I did yesterday and you will find a happier worker. So again my goal as leader is to find the thing my dog will work harder for and make sure to make to raise the goal to get that

reward by enough to insure that the goal is not too lofty but also not too easy."

Wow, that was a good post.

There are three common reactions to pain and fear (aside from screaming, falling down, and peeing). One is to run. Shelties tend to do this. Hurt them a lot, then channel the direction they're running in, and voila, Heeling. "Trainers" like Shelties. Shelties are an "obedience breed".

One is to attack. When I was 10 I was assisting in an obedience class run by a Boxer breeder. There was a Boxer in the class who bit the owner every time he yanked the leash. The instructor went over and took the leash, and gave the dog a tremendous yank. When the dog went to bite him, he "strung him up" - lifted his front feet off the ground by the leash and choke collar. The dog climbed up the leash and bit him. "Trainers" don't like Boxers. Boxers are "aggressive".

And one is to shut down. I'm mentioning this because Gabe is a Giant Schnauzer, and Giant Schnauzers tend to shut down. Give them a yank in one corner of the room, and that corner becomes dangerous, so they go reeeaaaaal slow through that corner. This makes people furious. "Trainers" don't like Giant Schnauzers. Giant Schnauzers are "stubborn".

But I had 17 generations of Giant Schnauzers, and I have to tell you, a big, black, shiny, well-groomed, enthusiastic, happy, working, clicker-trained Giant Schnauzer is one of the most beautiful sights this planet has ever produced.

Naming Behaviors

"HOW do you come up with such awesome cues!"

One of the best things about clicker training - you aren't even SUPPOSED to have a cue until AFTER the dog knows the behaviour. Which is great for me, because by then I've just sort of started talking to the dog about what she's doing, with no pressure to do it (which would probably have resulted in something more severe, like Pay Attention! (Dammit!) rather than the more benign Mind your business!

No NRM?

"How do you effectively convey to your dog that they are making the wrong move, etc.?"

Simple. Don't pay.

Once you realize (on the second or third repetition, if not before the first one (!), that you are not going to get the behaviour you want, a) STOP GIVING THE CUE. b) Go back to getting the behaviour you want, whether by waiting for it, luring it, or shaping it. c) When you once again have the behaviour that you want, the way you want it, with the dog volunteering it again and again in full understanding that producing the behaviour will cause the click, start putting the cue back on it by giving the cue as the dog is about to offer the behaviour. d) After a hundred reps, try asking for it when the dog wasn't thinking of offering it. If you get it, yay. If you don't, repeat b) and c) and then try d) again.

On Fading Treats

"I bring them downstairs to tell them the basic sit. They sit. Do I say "yes" and "let's go get a treat" and go get one upstairs with them. Or do I simply praise and pet them for a good sit. Or do I simply release them and move on."

Yes.

Any/all of the above. When you've got enough treats in the bank, you can afford to stop rewarding every one. Sometimes you go upstairs and get a big treat when they knew absolutely that none were coming. So really, they never know. And this, too, is Chutes & Ladders. If you push them past the point where they're willing to trust that a treat MIGHT be still coming, and you've run out of treats in the bank, you have to start over again.

On Patience and Expectations

"I think I'm figuring out (from scratch, over and over, ugh!) that patience is just a code word for paying attention to what seems to be happening with my dog and allowing him to solve the puzzles I put before him, as best he can, in his own time. Respecting where I have helped him to arrive in his learning process, inside his own head, can be so humbling. Where did I go wrong?"

Easy - you allowed circumstances to control you and your expectations.



CROSSOVER

Crossing Over

*"I still struggle with crossing over daily! It is kind of like the saying,
"Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic"."*

That's why I say "My name is Sue Eh and I'm an obedience trainer" - (no, I'm not an alcoholic too - ONE problem is enough!) - one step at a time, one day at a time, TODAY I will not punish my dogs, TODAY I will keep my hands under control, TODAY I will not beat the tar out of that stud llama who ran over me last week, I will simply back up and remind him that he shalt not come unto the lladies save through me (and I don't mean THROUGH me, I mean by doing what I want!). Is it in our genes to punish, or only in our culture? Or maybe it's just easier and more rewarding to pitch a fit than it is to buckle down and change something!

Crossover Dogs Forever Handicapped?

"My question is, are crossover dogs forever handicapped by their early training, or does a good lightbulb moment (moments ?) liberate them and their creativity?"

No, they aren't forever handicapped. They CAN achieve bulbhood ;*D . It took Song a year before she was really comfortable thinking on her own, but she got there.

Crossover Dog

"I have a 7 year old Border Collie who is a crossover dog. He has his AKC CD and RN. We tested through Level 1, and we are working on Level 2, but I had some questions. There are behaviors which I know he will perform from his prior training. Do I need to retrain these behaviors using positive methods? For instance, he knows stay in all three positions. If I can test the behavior at Level 2, do I need to do any training since he already knows it? I'm not trying to skip ahead, and I'm sure there are holes in my training, but I'm pretty sure he understands stay and come at this level. Do I need to retrain these behaviors using positive methods?"

Nope. Just test them out. If you start to see holes later, though, you'll have to be sharp enough to go back and retrain to eliminate the hole - sometimes traditionally trained dogs didn't actually learn what we thought they were learning.

Sue on Crossover Training

"I am "introducing" the shaping concept to my crossover-dog. That, I am finding, may be even more of a challenge than to introduce the concept to a dog new to training totally."

MUCH more difficult! A crossover dog has learned specifically to sit and do nothing until told what to do next.

This reminds me of my most difficult seminar - at a vet college, no less! Very, very smart people whose careers involved learning all day, every day. I stood before the class. Their pens and notebooks were ready. I started to speak, introduced my dogs, and they wrote down the dogs' names, their breeds, their ages. I told them I was going to introduce them to the amazing brain of an alien species, and they dutifully wrote "an alien species". I said "There's no exam on this. I'm here to give you an amazing tour of the emotional heart of the dog. I want you to put your pens and paper away now." and they wrote "pens and paper away now". I laughed out loud and ONE of the students looked up at me. I tossed her a chocolate Kiss. Three more looked up. It took me several hours to get the entire class engaged. EXACTLY like introducing a crossover dog!



LETTING GO

Can We Let Go?

"Any of us who used to train in a different manner had to learn to let go and trust ourselves and our dogs when crossing over to clicker training."

Excellent point! I SORT OF let go - I thought "Well, maybe I can get down to only one correction a week". A couple of weeks later I thought "Well, maybe once a month". And before you know it, the pup I was raising was 5 years old and had never had a correction. Still, 15 years later, I still occasionally rely on my friends/coaches to tell me to go sit down until my brain comes back. Not that I've gone back to "the dark side", but that I'm starting to think the competition is more important than the dog, starting to think that a couple of tiny little leash jerks would get the point across. Fortunately I'm blessed with several very good friends who DO tell me to go sit down.

"Am I going to be able or even WANT to be able to keep my hands as part of the cue for this behavior, or will I need to grow Go-Go-Gadget Arms to do this?"

I always think of grabbing the dog's ears, pulling them rapidly up and down, and chanting "Shake! Shake!"

Here's a Modeling story - a Little Old Lady in front of me in the grocery store started to fall down. I let go of Stitch's leash to catch her. We both fell down, but fortunately the LOL fell on top of me, and I have lots of padding, so neither one of us got broken.

"Helping out", a man picked up Stitch's leash, I suppose because she seemed in imminent danger of dashing around the store eating raw steaks and stuff (that is, she was standing quietly exactly where she was when I dropped the leash). Then he tried to get her to sit by pulling up on the leash, pushing down on her butt, and chanting, more and more loudly, SIT! SIT! SIT! SIT!

Stitch, of course, couldn't sit because the man was pulling up on her leash (causing her to lower her head) and pushing down on her butt (causing her to brace her back legs). Finally he gave up and said "I thought Service Dogs had to be TRAINED!" whereupon, since he'd stopped interfering with her freedom reflex, I looked over and quietly said "park it, please" and of course she did.

Letting Go

"Sometimes we might actually learn something from the animal!"

GO ON WIT' YOU! What would an ANIMAL every have to teach a HUMAN?

I never had much to do with little kids when I was growing up. I brought my first child home from the hospital, put him in the middle of the bed, and started to cry. What was I supposed to do with this thing?

After a few minutes of sobbing, I realized that I had had excellent teachers in mothering around me all my life. I started thinking about

the lessons I'd learned. Babies must be warm and comfortable all the time unless they go wandering off, and then they must only be safe.

Eat through a wall if you have to, to get to a baby that's crying.

Don't take any guff at all. Take a joke.

Only pretend to bite. Otherwise tell the truth.

Roll around on the floor once in a while. Dignity isn't all it's cracked up to be.

They should/must/will be themselves. Go along with it.

Show them that the universe is a safe and happy place. Bite somebody if it isn't.

Let them grow up.



LEVELS

Clicker Training

" It just occurred to me that you may be 'shaping' the dog - AND the owner/trainer - to think, by starting with the easier ways of getting behavior and progressing to the more difficult ones... splitting this 'thinking' behavior in a similar way to the way that all of the other levels behaviors are split..."

Oho, you CAUGHT me! Always trying to supply early AND continuing success to everybody involved. Yes, of course Leash is important, but so is success, and learning to be successful, and learning to communicate. Introducing Leash too early just gives everybody a chance to get frustrated immediately, and gives the coach a chance to yell at everybody all the time for coming in and leaving on a tight leash. Yes, I'd rather they all learned LLW immediately, but it ain't gonna happen, and pretending it is isn't going to help anybody!

Discovering Holes in Your Training

"We went back and did the Level 1 exercises last night. Golly, we must have been slack."

Hurray! That's what the levels are for, really, to point up small burps in your training that will come back later to haunt you - usually when you've spent a great deal of money to get somewhere to show off that training.

I started writing one day when I took some students to a park to work and discovered that my Group-winning Ch CDX TT CGC (insert multiple agility titles here) Giant Schnauzer couldn't work for at least 10 minutes after she got out of the car in a new place. Too busy looking around, sniffing, wondering where we were.

THEN I realized why she wrecked two trials when we got there late and went straight from the car into the ring..

Distance

Another cool way to lure the poles is to get the Get Lost game down pat - the dog makes eye contact, you click, contact click, contact click, contact and you turn your back, the dog comes around as you turn and holds onto your eyes - and then stand near a pole and turn. Then you can turn less and less, then you can move further and further away from the pole.

Nevertheless, I think this is a perfect behaviour to freeshape, even for dogs or people who aren't good at freeshaping yet, as it's a pretty simple behaviour and one that dogs seem to catch on to very quickly.

(Note: See "Come Game" in files for more info)

"Where is the pole? next to the dog? next to the handler? I'm not getting this one."

To use eye contact to get the dog around a pole, I'd get the dog in front of me grabbing contact, with the pole sort of poking into my right armpit. Then I'd turn toward the pole and past it so it was poking into my left armpit. Thus the dog would have to go on the outside of the pole in order to refind or hold onto my eyes. Then I'd turn back to the left so he had to go around the pole in the other direction. And I'd gradually move further and further from the pole as the dog successfully went around it.

Homework

The reason for this homework is not a power trip. I find that when I run into a training problem, it really helps me to sit down and work out exactly what behaviour I want to work on, whether I want it to increase or decrease, and what I'm adding or taking away to make that happen.

A good example of this (and a Giant Schnauzer example - Giant Schnauzers have HUGE Passions) was the whole ATV scenario. I ran my Giants with an ATV. I would go out, start the buggy, then open the front door and let the howling, screaming, scratching, scrabbling mob out, and away we'd go. Over 15 generations I tried EVERYTHING to get them to shut up between turning it on and opening the door - hitting, yelling, leash yanking (olden days, remember) - NOTHING worked.

Finally I sat down and figured out what the behaviour was (screaming) that I wanted to work on, I wanted it to decrease, and I was rewarding it by opening the door. This was a huge lightbulb - seems obvious in retrospect, but I'd never thought of it that way before. So I went outside, started the machine, and came in the house to work on the computer. The howling lasting for hours. Literally. Finally they shut up

and came to the computer room, probably to see if I'd started the buggy and then died or something, so I stood up. Howling, screaming, scrabbling for the door. I sat down again. After **THREE HOURS** of this, I walked to the door in total silence. Total, blissful, blessed silence. But then I'd been rewarding the screaming for 15 generations, I just never saw the scenario clearly until I "did my homework".

"Extinction or -R or +R? Probably all three, depending on how you look at it."

Ah, now you get to the part of this whole thing that I hate - meaningless discussion that goes on and on and on and **ON** about what is what. People getting told that they're wrong, **THAT** isn't +R, it's -P - and you're exactly right. You can go around and around depending on what behaviour you're looking at at the particular moment. For the screaming Giants, I'd say -P for screaming - I took away myself to reduce the screaming. For silence, +R - I added myself to increase the silence.

"Not many people would have the patience to wait them out like you did."

True - and this is a comment I've heard a lot in relation to that story. **BUT** - remember I spent 10 minutes a day, 5 days a week for **FIFTEEN GENERATIONS** of dogs trying to get them to shut up, and **NOTHING** worked. Given a history like that, it doesn't seem to me like it took much patience at all to work for 3 hours on getting silence.

"Did your neighbours have ear plugs?"

For myself, the front door is quite a way from the computer, so the screaming didn't bother me that much once I decided to just let it happen. For my neighbours - well, if I lived in the city I wouldn't have the ATV, hence no problem. My neighbours are more than a klick away, so not a problem!

How Do You Pass a Level?

"What is the test for Level 1, and is there a certain number of times Quinn and I must perform the Level 1 behaviors before we can do the test?"

Sounds like Quinn is doing great. Isn't it cool the way that good sit in front just sort of begins to happen when you're playing the Come Game?!

The test for any of the behaviours at any level is simply to do the behaviours. If you have someone available, you can ask your dog to do them to show off for the other person (that prevents cheating on your part, and also has the benefit of ensuring the dog will do the behaviours in front of someone else). If you have several people training along with you, you can call one over and say "I want to test the Level 1 Sit" and have them "order" you through it. If you don't have anybody available at all, then just do it.

What I do, when I don't have anyone else around, is just do it, but NOT in a training session. That is, if I spend 2 minutes working her up to doing something, then she starts doing it spontaneously, I've added the cue and she's responding to it, great, but NOT tested. Tomorrow, I'll try just giving her the cue. If she does the behaviour in response to the cue, shazam, passed! If she doesn't, we'll work on it more and try again tomorrow. Thus we're not working on "can I get her to the point where she responds correctly" but on "she responds correctly without any warmup (or, as I've called it, "out of the box" - take her out of a crate, ask her to Sit. Does she Sit?)"

And you don't have to test the whole Level at one time. You can test each behaviour as she gets it (sorry, I've been saying "she" and meaning "he") securely under his belt. In fact, you're welcome to test behaviours at higher levels too. Personally I find it very inspiring to know that, while I'm having a lot of trouble with a Level 2 Watch, we've tested up to Level 5 on Handling. Keeps me going in the rough spots.

"We did the exercises in Level One and Level Two with great success – at home. Should I be proofing these in different locations before moving on?"

Totally your choice. I need some of the behaviours proofed NOW, can't wait to get to Level 5 to have a good Zen or Loose Leash Walking, but that's personal. The main purposes of the Levels are to lead you through things they might not have thought of training if you don't have a lot of experience, and to find holes in your training if you do. They were first designed around holes I saw in my own students' training (for instance, getting stuck on a long trip with a student and his dog that didn't know how to ride in a crate in a car or stay quietly in one in a motel). The Levels ARE designed to proof behaviours as they go along, but if you want to go off on a tangent and proof something earlier than "necessary" in the Levels, by all means go ahead.

"Do we pick one spot, one time, and test each behavior one right after the other? Or just hit each behavior at some time during the day as a test for it?"

One of things I particularly like about the Levels is that you can challenge any behaviour at any time. Personally, it gives me a boost to be bombing out on every behaviour so far in Level Three but to look further along and be able to say Wow, we've got L5 and 6 tricks, and L7 handling! So I'm not looking for "next Tuesday is Test Day". At the same time, it's a lot harder to test for two things, one after the other, than it is to prepare for a week and manage to squeak past one behaviour. And I'd definitely say "OK, this is going to be a test for XX" rather than looking back and saying "Yeah, he can sit when I tell him to". When I'm testing Stitch's behaviours, I train until I think she's got it, then we try it cold the next day. I won't say she's passed it until she can give it to me without a buildup.

"Should we be able to do all of these in various places? Should we test them in various places before moving on?"

One of the tests in L3 is to pass L1 in a strange place. That way the "strange place" behaviours start easy and get harder as they go along just like they did in the first place. Also part of the thinking on this was that if the dog passed a L1 behaviour at home, by the time you get to L3, he's had a lot more experience with that behaviour and SHOULD be able to offer it to you in a strange place. And if he can't, AHA, that's a glitch in your training. And the main reason for the Levels is to expose and eliminate glitches.

"So, practicing in my front yard with the kids running around playing tag and screaming are a bit more than I have to test for in Level 2?"

Yeah, I want an honest test of the dog's ability, but I'm not averse to the dog actually SUCCEEDING...

How Long on a Level?

"How long do you spend on a Level? Would the first level be one, two or even three weeks for beginners? "

When I first wrote the Levels, they were for my own students. I was quite ill at the time, and no longer had energy for people "off the street", so Level 1 was, in fact, called the Entry Level - things people had to pass to get into my class. I think a couple of weeks at least. The Levels from 2 to 5 were planned for three months each for someone who is really working, perhaps four to five months for people who are working more casually. Level 6 and 7 - well, lifetimes, perhaps ;*)

Making the Levels Your Own

The Levels ARE what YOU make them. Training a dog is truly a case of getting back what you put in. Think of it like this: When your dog passes Level 1 Sit, this is a gift from me to you. Today, your dog will Sit in your living room when you ask her to. When your dog passes Level 3 On The Road, this is a gift from me to you. Today, in the parking lot at the grocery store on south 12th Street, your dog will Sit when you ask her to.

From there, it's up to you. Use it or lose it. If you keep asking for it, and keep rewarding it, you'll keep it. If you keep asking for it (and retraining it when you don't get it, or when you identify a problem with one of the Ds), you will well and truly make it your own.

You can certainly go through all the Levels and, a year later, stoutly declare "Clicker training doesn't work, we need a pinch collar!" if you haven't been using what I gave you.

Here's a problem that I see over and over again. People use a clicker to teach the dog to Sit, then blithely and repeatedly put the dog in situations she hasn't been trained for. From that they see that "clicker training doesn't work".

Traditional trainers use pinch collars or choke chains to teach the dog to Sit, then when the dog is in a situation she hasn't been trained for, they "correct" her for not giving the correct response. What they (and we) don't realize is that this isn't really a correction - they TAUGHT the dog to Sit with the nasty collar, so what they're really doing is taking her into all kinds of situations and RETEACHING her - exactly what we should be doing if we want a solid behaviour (except of course they're using -ahem- harsher methods than we are).

"Even if Molly is marked off as "passed" on a behavior, I tend to make a point of asking for it in all sorts of different locations and situations."

Lucky Molly - Making a point of asking for it in different situations is making the behaviour useful. You're thinking about the dog, thinking about the situation, thinking about her actions and reactions. If she can't handle the cue, you back up and reteach it with the available Ds. And the more you do, the better the behaviour gets. This is taking what I gave you and making it well and truly yours.

Milling People

"What is the intent of the "milling people" specification in the level 3 come...in terms of density of people, and how much they are moving? Is the dog to weave a path through a dense crowd, or simply show she can refrain from visiting nearby people on her way to me?"

If you wait or manoeuvre so that your dog is on the other side of the dog-park-people-clump and THEN call, that would certainly satisfy the requirements. The intent is both - that the dog doesn't have a straight path to you, but must at least weave a path around a clump of people, and that she must refrain from visiting on the way. Given the opportunities at a dog park - lots of people, lots of dogs, dogs freely doing interesting things, people holding treats and toys, etc, I'd call a moderately busy dog park recall a pass on both the milling people AND milling dogs.

In fact, basically, the intent of the "milling people" is to simulate a dog park or similar, so that you show you can actually get your dog to a) find you and b) respond correctly to your (single) call. And what a grand feeling it is, hmmm?

Session Changes

"Every time I work on something, I try to change SOMETHING about it." Sue - can you elaborate on this?

I know that dogs are very tuned in to directions and positions in a room, and what you're wearing, so if I'm sitting on the couch in the living room facing east wearing a bait bag when I start teaching a behaviour, the next time I teach it I'll be sitting on the steps in the parlour facing south and have the treats in a plastic cup. Very minor differences from a human POV, but it might make a difference to the dog at a later date. If I teach five different Zens with the dog facing me, I would sooner or later notice this and work on a Zen involving the dog facing away from me, or with me at a different distance, or lying down. When my husband says "As soon as you leave the room, Stitch puts her paws up on the counter" it tells me that I haven't worked Zen with me not in the room, so I have to broaden my horizons. The more I broaden them in everyday training, the easier it will be when I need to change something major.

Testing the Levels

"So are you suggesting going 'no treats, or clicker' 'just in case' the dog passed... which I am a little leary of. Would you suggest forgetting about 'testing', except for once a week, or longer? "

Now that you're getting up in the Levels, I would like you to not rely on spur-of-the-moment tries to pass. Set a date and time - next Thursday, first thing in the morning - and use that time to test. This isn't a ten-times thing. You test it, you either pass, or you don't. If you don't, the dog needs more practise - WITH rewards, of course.

The "Aha" Moments

I've tried to set up the Levels to help explain that as we go along. Level 1 is so easy, and there's no manipulating the dog at all. We work on luring and capturing behaviour, because IMO shaping is too hard/scary for beginners. Let them get a bit of success going first, THEN hit them with the scarier stuff ;*).

Hand Zen is the first huge ah ha. We haven't done ANYTHING to the dog. No yelling, no hitting, no yanking, NOTHING. And the dog, "all on her own" learned some self-control. This is HUGE. People start to cry. Suddenly a majority of clients are looking at the dog as a living, breathing being. What we have here, suddenly, is a failure to communicate, not just a stupid dog. NOW they start thinking about learning to communicate rather than thinking about me showing them how to beat the GD dog into submission.

And because I got the dog to stay off FOOD FOR PETE'S SAKE without doing ANYTHING to the dog, I look like a genius - somebody worth listening to. This is another big breakthrough. From there I can either look like a jerk (nyah nyah, *I* can handle your do-og, and you-ou ca-an't!)(and unfortunately, this sort of person seems pretty darn common in dog training) or I can show THEM what happened and help them do it themselves, and help them apply it to other situations, and look like a really smart person.

Then there are only 5 behaviours in Level 1, so we're not overwhelming the trainers. People can only remember 3 things at a time anyway. Those 5 behaviours look like a lot from the client's POV, but I know that I can get any dog that's interested in food through those 5 behaviours in about 20 minutes, so it's not a big lump at all.

Then the 5 behaviours are broken down already into even tinier pieces. This is another ah ha moment - almost everybody will say something about the tiny steps - "I see now, I was trying to get her to whistle and dance and juggle all at the same time, when she doesn't even know how to whistle yet!"

Another step is when they first see the startle that happens when the dog has been trying something specifically to get the click to happen. When that dog hears the click, she'll startle, which means she was trying to make it happen, and waiting for it to happen. At that point, the clicker becomes sort of a magic talisman. HOWEVER, I frequently don't start people off with a clicker because that's often one too many things for them to think about, and the clicker is most useful for its precision and for its ability to mark distance behaviours, and there's very little of either in Level 1. As we go along, I see that people more and more start to talk to their dogs in voices that say "please pass the salt" rather than "GIMME THE GD SALT!" IOW, they start to speak to the dog as if they EXPECT compliance, rather than as if they expect "stubborn".

Another ah ha is when a more advanced student approaches a new behaviour that looks really hard - maybe even beyond them and their dog - the retrieve is a terrific example. They're leery of it, it would be very cool to have it but gosh, it's WAY beyond them and their dog. Then we start looking at it - you already started teaching the retrieve in L1 with the nose-target. And the dog is sitting in front of you, ready to learn something new. And look, the steps are very small, and easy to explain. And then suddenly, on their faces, I see that they're eager to work on it.

And another - the first day they come to me and tell me that their dog came when they called it at the dog park, or the dog didn't want to give up a toy so they stood up and turned away and the dog came and dropped the toy at their feet. Or they got up the courage to show their next-door neighbour a stupid pet trick, and he thought it was amazing. Or they used Zen or some other behaviour AS a trick, or to solve a problem, and you know they're getting it.

And another - they came to you 3 weeks ago because their dog wouldn't do this or that, and now you point out that the dog IS doing this and that, and it was so easy to get from there to here that they hadn't noticed, and THEN they start crying... these are a few of my favourite things.

Using Time to Advantage

"He loves classes but hates waiting."

What are you waiting for? Train the dog! I taught Scuba to heel on the right side while we were "waiting" in an agility seminar. I taught Stitch to tapdance while we were waiting in an obedience class. I taught both of them SitStays while waiting in Rally classes. An idle untrained dog is a leash waiting to be chewed!

Working Up Through the Levels

"Should I work on distance, or leave this?"

Leave it. Get L1 and then move on to L2. It's perfectly OK if you work Zen up through the levels, but the level behaviours do tend to support themselves, so distance supports itself if you're working it in context.



101 THINGS.....

101 Things to Do with a Box

"I have not heard of '101 things to do with a box or chair' up until I read through the training levels. Where can I find this info???"

"101 Things" is a creativity exercise. Bear in mind I have very little memory now (brain injury), but I think Karen Pryor described it with a dolphin in 'Lads Before The Wind'. Basically, you put down an object - a chair, a box, a stool, whatever, as long as it's safe for the dog to push, pull, and drag - and then start clicking the dog for ANY interaction with it. Do this without preconception. You aren't aiming at any particular behaviour, but accepting what the dog will offer you. The next time you play, the only rule you have is that you will NOT reward the behaviour the dog gave you before. Eventually you get to the point where the dog understands that you will not click ANY behaviour more than twice, after which the dog has to think of something else to offer you.

You'll notice that "101" isn't on the list until Level 4. Not that you can't challenge any behaviour at any level, of course, but I've seen a lot of people encouraging absolute beginners to start with "101". Personally, I think shaping is one of the most difficult things about clicker training, and IME shaping without even having a goal other than "creativity"

makes this an extremely frustrating thing to present a beginner with. I like to have people have some success with shaping simple behaviours first, to have seen the dog working to make the click happen, and to see that the dog is thinking about what will work before I point them at something as esoteric as 101.

OTOH, when the trainer and the dog understand the game, it's a real high. I put a chair in the middle of the room. Scuba runs to the chair. She puts one front paw on it. She gives me that behaviour twice, then that isn't good enough anymore. Next she puts the other front paw up. Then both paws. Then she climbs onto the seat. Sometimes she'll put one, the other, and finally both paws on the back of the chair while she sits or stands on the seat. One time she did this and then rode the chair over backward. When I put the chair back up, she figured she'd only been clicked for it once, so she did it again. When those things don't work any more, she gets off and rests her chin on the seat, then ducks her nose UNDER the seat, then starts going through the legs: north to west, then north to south, then north to east, then west to south, west to east, west to north, and so on. Once she retrieved the chair. Once she knocked it over and then started jumping it in different directions.

"I think the original idea of the game was to get a dog to offer something, anything at all. This was particularly for 'crossover' dogs that were reluctant to do anything (for fear of 'correction')."

Yes. Traditionally trained dogs have been taught from the beginning that doing nothing is the safest path until told to do something specific. I've found, though, that the REAL disability in traditionally-trained teams isn't the dog's, but the trainer's. Very few traditional trainers have the training behind them to be ABLE to click for tiny motions, though. Leave a traditional trainer alone with a dog with instructions to click for ANYTHING that isn't sitting still, come back 10 minutes later, and they'll have done nothing, because (and I quote) "The dog didn't do anything". Before you can break through the dog's reluctance, you have to teach the trainer to see what the dog is actually doing: ear flicks, nose wrinkles, lip licking, heavy breaths, yawns, slight raises or drops of the muzzle, eye flicks, weight shifts, etc.

Couch Training 101

"Can someone please explain couch training to a newbie?"

Welcome to the list! Couch training is a LITTLE bit of a joke, it started when someone asked what can be trained while in a cast, and I responded with a list of 101 Things To Train From The Couch, and we've been adding to them ever since. The Couch IS a metaphor for the ease of training with a clicker, and for keeping your hands off the dog while training. The benefit of couch training is that you can teach the dog virtually anything at any time with shaping, you can train the dog in 30 seconds bursts, you can catch neat things you weren't expecting to happen. It takes your mind off how "serious" training is, how certain exercises "have" to be done correctly from the beginning or some dire warning will come true, how "horrible" it is that your dog has decided to break the sit-stay, or whatever - just sit down on the couch, relax, and have a good time with your dog. Since I made the list, my dogs have learned to lie upside down with all four paws in the air, to give a huge smacking kiss in the air when I ask if they love me, to ride a skateboard, to do scent discrimination, to back up, to stand on cue, (and if I must confess, they are currently working through my hysterical sit-stay "problem"). Couch training stands for teaching anything at all in the simplest, most fun way.

"Please give me suggestions as to things I can train while stationary!"

Holy cow!

Watch me

Come

Sit

Sit pretty (Beg)

Sit up and put paws high so I can see the pads (Did you wash your hands OR Stick-em-up)

Sit and put one front paw up (Which foot is white?)

Stand on back legs and put paws high (Sooooo big)

Stand on back legs and spin (Dance)
Stand on back legs and walk forward/back (Cha-Cha)
Stand Total show free stack
Back up
Come forward
Move sideways
Spin/Turn circles
Come by (circle something clockwise)
Away to me (circle something counterclockwise)
Wag tail
Put tail up or down (Are ya happy/sad?)
Move/perk ears (Radar)
Lick/smack lips (Do ya love me?)
Bow (Are you a gentleman?)
Down Lie down over on one hip (Relax)
Lie down with front legs crossed (Are you a princess?)
Lie down flat out on side (Bang!)
Lie down on side and cover yourself up with blanket
Crawl
Roll over
Lie down head first, rolling half over, twitching before lying still (Die in convulsions, or Ham it up - gross but kids love it)
Go to mat and lie down (Go lie down or Outta my face)
Get in kennel and lie down
Stay
Target me with muzzle (Touch)
Target me with foot (Shake hands or Hit)
Target me with one foot high (High four)
Target me with one foot low (Low four)
Limp
Target objects with muzzle and foot
Retrieve dumbbell
Go to fridge and get me a drink
Retrieve any object
Put objects in garbage can (Clean up this mess)
Retrieve named objects (Get your boofie, get my slippers, etc)
Bark (Speak)
Bark with little or no noise (Whisper)

Howl (Sing or So sad)
Moan (Elections coming up?)
Have your nails cut (Hold still you little #*@&# - just kidding)
Lie still to be brushed
Lie still to have ears cleaned
Lie still to have teeth cleaned
Balance treat on nose
Don't take treat no matter where it is until told
Wipe your face
Salute
Do a somersault
Count (with barking or pawing)
Scent discrimination (all kinds of spelling tricks with alphabet blocks)
Jump in arms or on lap when leash is thrown on floor (Snake!)
Rest head on something (I call this "Assume the position", and use it to get the dogs' heads resting on their grooming stand)

That ought to hold you for a couple of days ;-)

101 Things to Do with a ??????

Just occurred to me to mention - for Heaven's sake don't confine yourselves to 101 Things To Do With A Box.

Chair.
Skateboard.
Tricycle.
Exercise bike.
Teeter.
Dog dish.
Llama cart.
Hay rack.
Rubbermaid bin.
Tree.

Hay bale.

Plastic bag.

Broom.

Empty milk jug.

Soccer ball.

etc etc etc



EQUIPMENT

Dremel

If you find a deciduous tree with small branches the same size as your dog's nails, you can practise with the Dremel by grinding away the wood of the twig and leaving the pith. This is very much like grinding the nail and not nicking the quick.

We also use the Dremel for grinding down the incisor teeth of old llamas when they get overgrown. Kathleen's warning about heat buildup is a very good one - you know how painful DSR (Delayed Slurpee Reaction, or BrainFreeze) is, having heat building up in the root of your tooth or the base of the nail must be incredibly awful. Try leaving the grinder on the twig for a while - it will actually start to smoke.

How to Carry the Remote

"How I could get the sock, or some other cloth to stay put on the remote?"

Get the Velcro with the glue on the back. Add a little Crazy Glue to the glue already there. Put as large a piece of Velcro on the remote as you can (or two - one on each side), sew a piece of Velcro onto the sock or fabric, stick them together. Or, assuming you glued the hook part of the Velcro to the remote, wrap non-hook Velcro around the remote and let it hang out so she can grab it.

Pain Induced Training

"Is the link collar okay? I mean the one they use in the show ring? We used to use that to train with... and just doing a light jerk (making the noise)"

The noise makes no difference to the learning. If it did, you could use a plain buckle collar with a bell attached. The point of a choke collar is to choke. The point of a pinch collar is to pinch. The point of an electric collar is to supply an electric jolt. These are all training with pain. We used pain to train when we thought that was the only way to get the point across. We know better now. When we teach something new, we don't use a cue OR force, we let the dog figure out what we want and then what's in it for her if she gives us what we want.

The Front Ring Harness

A little while ago on a Service Dog list Debi Davis talked about a product which is a combination of a no-pull harness and a Service Dog vest. There was some skepticism, and I thought the whole idea of a no-pull harness was pretty dumb, but Debi's not a dummy, so I did a bit more research and discovered that Gentle Leader is selling these things without the vest attached. I made one to try on my 8 mo Portuguese Water Dog puppy, Stitch.

Holy Shamoly, I am sold, Sold SOLD.

I went to a friend of mine and got him to make me up a dozen, with some improvements of my own. So here's what we've got:

The harness is a simple girth strap that sits just behind the dog's elbows, with a chest strap. There's a ring on the very front of the chest strap to attach the leash to. That's it.

What I find ridiculous about walking a dog on a harness is that the harness not only encourages the dog to pull by kicking in the dog's freedom reflex and rewarding pulling (feels good), but wraps around the dog's most powerful part, giving her a much greater advantage when she's trying to haul you around. THIS harness, though, by putting the leash ring at the FRONT, doesn't allow the dog anything to pull against. Like a head halter, when the dog pulls, she's automatically swung around to face the handler, but without the attendant fussing and unpleasantness of having something wrapped around the dog's face (some dogs accept this, some dogs don't). Dog tries to pull, bingo, dog is facing the handler, leash is loose, dog is pretty automatically focussed on the handler (OK, handler has to give dog SOME encouragement to focus!)

I made an improvement. First, I WANT my dogs to pull into the leash SOMETIMES - for carting, for instance, tracking, sled racing, holdbacks in agility and flyball. Second, if I could bend over easily, I wouldn't need a Service Dog, so I need some way to hold on to the dog

in class and other places without having her drag a leash around, which I can't reach anyway when it's on the ground. So I attached a removable soft handle to the harness. The handle sits across her back over her withers so I can grab it as she goes by, use it to hold her by when I want her to concentrate on the agility obstacles but I need to have **SOME** control over her so she's not out taking everybody else's turn as well. This worked **SO** well! I can use it to help with my balance as well. Stitch pulls into the harness when I'm holding the back of it, and doesn't pull at **ALL** when the leash is attached to the front ring. This is a sliced-bread, better-mousetrap idea!



GAMES

Hide and Seek

"Is this a counter-productive game to play?"

Everything we teach a dog interferes with something else we teach her. Sit interferes with Down, Go interferes with Come, etc. Getting to breed when arriving at the breeding pen on a loose leash certainly makes the initial teaching of loose-leash-to-the-breeding-pen more difficult. We work through the interference, and the dog ultimately knows more about Sit BECAUSE we taught her Down as well.

Hide & Seek is, IMO, a TERRIFIC game, and it's kind of tough to play without a Stay, which the dog then breaks in order to find you. If the dog breaks to find you before the click or call sounded, well, too bad, let me explain that again. That's how Stays work. Sometimes you come all the way back, sometimes the dog comes to find you, sometimes treats fall from the sky. Click ends the Stay, then the reward, whatever it may be.

The Come Game

"When we play the come game she comes, fronts, and sits and looks up at me. I then click and treat. "

Good work - recognizing that this is 4 different behaviours. For now, though, click as she's approaching you, BEFORE she has a chance to Sit. One of the best things about the Come Game is that the dog learns to come to people looking down, which short-circuits the whole jumping-on-people thing. Also, we really, really want to reward coming, but if you hold the click until you've got all those other things as well, it's really the front, sit, and stare you're rewarding. The Come is only incidental. Another great thing about the Come Game is that it helps trainers learn to break things down into little tiny pieces.

Sue's Get Lost Game

"(though I still have to lean in towards her to get her to move at all)"

This is not only a great trick, but a conformation behaviour as well. That "lean in" cue gets smaller and smaller until bystanders can't actually see it. You just sort of THINK about leaning towards her and she backs up. THINK about leaning back and she comes toward you. Very cool. With conformation dogs, I make a point of moving my right leg toward the dog before actually stepping forward, and this becomes a wonderful cue that nobody can see - I tighten my right thigh muscle and the dog moves back. Like dressage.

"She will come around in front of me and give me eye contact - only once I have encouraged her, and she also seems to have to find position before she will give me eye contact."

What finally got Stitch moving was doing all the fuss about making her meal - get the dish, put the food in it, add a little water - and then stand

there holding the dish with my back to her. All that buildup made her think we "weren't working" and she came around to see why I got stuck. CLICK, and BAM the dish hits the floor. Try that a few times.

"Do you use you left hand folded at your waist?"

Depends on where you're competing, the size of your dog, personal preference. When I was handling Giant Schnauzers, I had to keep my hand at my waist or whomp them in the face with every stride. With the Porties, I prefer both hands down. Personal preference. How you carry your body, length of stride, where you look - all part of the visual cue.

"Is eye contact from heel position, or from any position?"

From in front. Not Front, but in front of you. This - isn't necessarily easy to get but - is easy for the dog to do, and we'll use the Get Lost game to show the dog where Heel position is later. Contact makes sure the dog is in the game, actively seeking the game. Without that, there IS no Heel, so get that first.

"How do you help the dog distinguish between eye contact in front and eye contact at heel?"

Heel position requires the handler to be in a particular physical position as well as the dog. If I have fabulous eye contact from in front, when I pivot to my right (do a right about turn), the dog MUST fall back close to Heel position as he comes around holding my eyes. Later, If I do that initial about turn, take a single stop forward and do another about turn, the dog has automatically done two about turns and a short straightaway in Heel position. And I haven't touched him at all. Then I take TWO steps on the straightaway, then 3, etc. As soon as the dog's butt starts swinging forward on the straightaway, I do an about turn and he's back in Heel position. I can click for Heel position anywhere in there.

Then, when I get the dog following contact as I pivot left (left about turn), I can start clicking the butt for catching up instead of for remaining behind as I did on the right pivot. As the dog continues to hold my eyes and moves his butt faster and faster, voila, a swing finish. Now I can do the about turn, straightaway - and when his butt swings out, instead of doing a right about turn, I can do a left about turn to make him swing it in.

Left about turns are harder than straightaways, and if I do a left about turn or ask for a swing finish every time his butt gets out of line, he'll stop swinging his butt forward - except on the right about turns, where I need it to get him around the corner. Ta Da, heeling.

"it doesn't take much to frustrate me to the point where I want to give up on it"

Read the end of Stitch's 16 week blog and the start of this week's - I've been working her on retrieving since 9 weeks. Thursday I tried something new and the whole thing pretty much went to h*ll in a handbasket. We stuck it out and holy cow, it's SO much better now. It's just a matter of trying to figure out how to explain something to someone who doesn't speak English.

When you turn your back and call her, do you just call her, wonder where she is, or do you get hysterical? Hysterical works MUCH better than curious. Like, you're beside the freeway, she was here a second ago, now she's gone AAAAHHH WHERE'S MY DOG? JOEY! AAAAHHH WHERE ARE YOU? OHMYGAWD so the dog doesn't come around trying to find the right spot but comes around "I'm right here, mom, don't have a heart attack, geez, are you OK?" That little extra pressure seems to make them want you not to have to get hysterical again.

" Is there a good description of the get lost game anywhere?"

You guys are forcing me to write the book! The Get Lost game is the beginning of heeling for me. It's what I'm discussing with Stitch right

now, where I teach her to find my eyes. Teach her to find and hold my eyes. Then click X 10 for finding and holding my eyes, the 11th time she finds and tries to hold, I turn my back on her. What I'm looking for is that the dog comes whipping around to find my eyes again. If she doesn't, I get hysterical, like I've lost her "Aaah, where's my puppy? Where is she? Aaaaah... click" and she comes around like "I'm right here, duh". A couple of those and when I turn she comes around with me, "Hey, we were playing Contact! Don't stop now!" and you have your first about turn. Turn and take a step and you can click the dog for being in heel position for a moment. Turn the other way and you can click the butt for moving faster than the front and you have the beginning of a swing finish. Stand beside a pole and turn, and the pup will have to go around the pole to hold your eyes.

"The biggest change I need to make is to turn just a wee bit, just enough to lose contact."

Congratulations on splitting the behaviour into finer pieces! Unfortunately, THIS splitting doesn't always make it simpler! Some dogs respond brilliantly to only turning a bit - others just continue to sit there saying "I'm right here, dopey, why should I move? It isn't like you got LOST or anything!" Still, you don't know which dog you've got until you try it, and anything you can do to split it is liable to be an improvement!

Get Lost is a game I teach to start heeling (and many other behaviours later). First the dog needs excellent eye contact, needs to be actively seeking that contact and knowing that contact makes the click happen.

Get the dog volunteering eye contact, click for it maybe 10 X in a row, then **INSTEAD OF CLICKING** the eleventh time, **FROM CONTACT**, turn your back on the dog. Get hysterical vocally if he doesn't come around looking for you. Click for contact again. Then try another 10 for contact, then instead of clicking the 11th, turn again. Soon the dog will be whipping around as you turn in order to keep your eyes from escaping from him, and you'll be clicking the turn as the dog holds contact. Voila, about turn.

"Ok, so what amount of duration do you build up to before making your Get Lost turn away?"

I don't really think of it in terms of duration. Maybe 10 seconds would be enough. What's important is that you can get the contact, click and toss a treat, the dog runs for the treat and comes back

IMMEDIATELY looking for the contact. So you can click 10X for the dog ACTIVELY seeking contact (not just showing up on your doorstep eventually), then FROM CONTACT, instead of clicking, turn away.

And if the dog's ready to do this, he'll sit for a moment thinking Hey, Stupid, we were playing contact! Where are you going? And then he'll get up and come around to remind you that you were playing contact. And after a bit, he won't LET you get away, but hang on and move with you as you start to turn.

The Mind Your Manners Game

Start with one dog. Work hand Zen. Put that dog away. Bring out another & work hand Zen with it. Then bring out both. Work hand Zen with your right hand working one dog, your left hand working the other. When they have both figured out that self-control is what gets the treats to happen, start handing them treats one at a time - "This is for JOE" (hand treat to Joe), then "This is for PETE" (hand treat to Pete) and so on. This not only emphasizes the need for them to control themselves but also teaches that if the other dog is getting a treat, all you have to do is your job and you're almost guaranteed to get one as well, making the other dog getting a treat into a cue for MORE self-control rather than less.



PROBLEM SOLVING

A Better Lid for the Garbage Can

"I could definitely get Sabella to come from 40' through a group of milling dogs, but she might take a few down on the way and I'd really rather not take any steps back in that direction! What do you suggest with this sort of dog, Sue?"

I'm pretty sure Aidan knows the answer to this question, he's a wise trainer, but it's a great question, and he's gotten some excellent answers so far.

What do you do with this sort of dog? You work the problem. You work the rest of the Levels and identify anything that might help - all the Zens, all the Distances, etc. You work with one strange dog that you can control.

With one other dog, I'd work as I did with the original Leash work - toward the dog, rewarding glancing at the dog, rewarding any soft stare at the dog. Backing away from the dog when I got any unpleasant reaction from mine, including bouncing, growling, any semblance of a hard stare, etc. When she could handle that one dog, I'd switch dogs. When she could handle any Distance for any 1 dog, I'd start working on 2 dogs. I'd put as much effort into this problem as I could afford to. I'd continue to love my dog, enjoy my dog, do whatever I could with my dog. I'd explore all possible veterinary answers.

And when I had finally put as much into the problem as I could, I would sit back and evaluate the results. It's one thing to say "I've been working on my dog with kids for 2 years, and she can handle one or two kids sitting down offering her treats and petting her face, as long as they don't reach for her body" - it's a totally different thing to turn that dog loose to play at a kids' day care.

The trouble with Sabella and milling dogs, of course, is that you can't control the milling dogs. One of them might look at her the wrong way, or mutter something under his breath.

So, you manage while you're training. You train until you've trained what you can, and then you manage some more. 17 generations of Giant Schnauzers were perfectly happy with my covered plastic kitchen garbage can. Yesterday I bought one of those big heavy stainless-steel step-on jobs because I can't leave Portuguese Water Dogs alone in my kitchen for 5 minutes without finding garbage everywhere. Could I train them to leave it alone? Yes, I could. Is it worth it? No, it isn't. Sometimes the best training answer is just to get a better lid for the garbage can. And sometimes you hit something - like running through a field of milling dogs - that you just can't train, so you smile ruefully and manage it.

If you can't smile ruefully, Aidan, better start practising. It's a useful skill for a dad.

Aggression Problems

At a particular seminar with Scuba, I had a LOT of Border Collies who didn't speak Doggish and thought it was OK to challenge any dog who looked at them "wrong". Scuba is a calm, rational person, queen of the known universe, and a high-ranking official in the Fun Police. She HATES teenage male Golden Retrievers because they don't know how to Behave In Polite Society, but she won't go out of her way to cause trouble.

I put Scoob on a pause table at one end of the room. We worked the other dogs one at a time. We started clicking them for looking at Scuba, closer, look, click, etc. Scuba ignored them.

Finally they would get close enough that she would glance at them - close enough, bobo, take your creepy little stare somewhere else. And we'd click immediately, before they had a chance to react to what she said. If we missed the opportunity, we'd back them up and start again.

One by one, they learned that she had a right to her opinion, and they didn't have to pull a gun just because she gave it to them.

Then someone pointed out what SCUBA was doing. No matter what the dog was doing, if the trainer appeared confident and competent, she'd let the dog get within 5' of her table before she suggested they move along.

If the trainer appeared nervous or unsure, Scuba was drawing her line up to 20' away.

Cool. They are SUCH good teachers if we're prepared to listen!

Aggressive Behaviour

The post about Stitch and her aversion to large stuffed lifelike toys contains examples of working with a dog who would rather not be near large stuffed lifelike toys.



Because we worked out her problem with rocking horses and flying pigs, Stitch had no trouble sitting beside this giant wolf when I asked her to.

Backing away from things is a long way from trying to attack them, I know, but IMO it's exactly the same thing. Stitch is afraid of something, but has the benefit of a lot of training and a handler she trusts not to push her over the edge to where she feels she has to defend herself.

Of COURSE it isn't going to take 15 or 20 minutes to overcome the feelings of a dog who HAS been driven to feel he has to defend himself. Nevertheless, this method works, and it can provide little victories along the way that people can actually see.

By rewarding the dog for looking AT the Bad Guy, instead of AWAY from him, I'm making sure that the dog isn't going to get over her threshold to the point where she has to do something ugly to be safe. I'm also teaching the client to read the dog. Most people, in the beginning, think that this aggressive behaviour happens "out of the blue". They don't see the tight neck, the popped pupils, the ears back, the weight shift, the tail position - and when the dog is suddenly vastly over the threshold, things are happening too fast for them to be ABLE to see it.

I'm also changing the Bad Guy from a Bad Guy into just another treat-dispenser lever. Pretty soon the dog is seeking out BGs - hey! hey ma! I found a Bad Guy! Look! Click, ma!

When I started taking my llamas to fairs, they didn't like crowds, and stood with their tails to the people, wishing they were back at home - which doesn't begin to say all the nice things I want to say about how cool llamas are. So I taught them to touch my hand, then to touch my cheek, then to touch somebody ELSE's cheek - and before you know it, they're standing in the pen with their long necks stuck out between the bars, snapping their fingers at people like carny barkers - hey kid! Yeah, you! C'mon over here! Win a prize! C'mon, kid, I need a cheek over here! You can't win if you don't play, kid! And we've got thousands of local kids with pictures of themselves getting kissed by a llama.

A guy came to me with a Golden. He couldn't walk her, because she LOVES people, and if she saw one, she'd be up on her back legs squealing and pulling the lead to get to them. We taught her to sit to get petted. He still can't walk her, but he's happy now. When she sees a person, she plants her butt so hard he can't move her until the people disappear.

And once a woman brought me a Rough Collie. "The dog goes nuts if she sees another dog." Immediately, I'm looking for the threshold. How far away? 50'? A block? 2 blocks? "No", she says, "there IS no threshold. If she can SEE another dog, she's going crazy."

She was right.

So since we obviously couldn't use the dog's distance threshold, we used time instead. I planted someone with one of my dogs behind a building 100' away. We got the Collie working with us, and my dog stepped into view and IMMEDIATELY back out again. The Collie, of course, went nuts, but it was too late, my dog had already disappeared. It took her about 10 minutes to calm down enough to be able to work with us again and after another minute or two, my dog stepped in and out of view again.

By the third session, my dog could step into view, walk the entire length of the building, pass the Collie, and go out of sight on the other end of the building.

From there, we went looking for other situations. If we didn't have another dog we could control, we found loading docks and other places where we could duck the Collie in and out of sight.

I hope you're noticing that all that talk of "training" we did before was really talking about "behaviour". In fact, I don't see any difference. A dog who doesn't know how to sit and come has a communication and motivation problem. So does the dog who's biting people.

Are you seeing the Chutes & Ladders in the threshold work? The very small steps? Giving the dog control of what happens next? Letting her mind lead her body, rather than the trainer forcing the body and hoping the brain follows (or not caring whether it does or not)?

Barking in the Car

"When I'm driving he stands on the seat or on the floor with his bum against the back seat"

OK, teach him to lie down on the back seat with his head down on his paws or hanging down into the foot space. This is a specific behaviour, he can't see out the window with his head down, and he's concentrating on what he's supposed to be doing.

"I have sat in the car reading and catching up on my e-mail waiting him out but maybe I'm rewarding incorrectly."

When I did this with Song for barking at sheep, and later for barking to get the quadrunner going, there WAS ****NO**** rewarding for silence. There was either barking, or being quiet for **SEVERAL MINUTES**. I wasn't trying to catch tiny moments of silence, precisely because I was afraid of what you have achieved - if you have been putting enormous effort into clicking and rewarding silence, and all you get is barking, it is quite possible that what you've been doing is **REWARDING BARKING**. I would sit in the car until the dog shut up and started to fall asleep, then I'd wake him up and give him a big treat. Then I'd sit in the car until he started to fall asleep again, then wake him up and give him a big treat. I wouldn't give him the treat unless he was relaxed and lying down and had been quiet for at least 2 minutes.

Also don't underestimate the power of a trained behaviour. Teach him to go lie down on his mat in the house. Reward for silence, relaxation, and staying put on the mat - that is, reward him randomly when he is completely relaxed on the mat and "not thinking about anything" - reward the state of relaxation. Get it on cue. Then put the mat in other locations and get the same thing. Then put the mat in the car and give the cue. If he continues to bark, personally, I would say **KNOCK IT OFF!!** Go to your mat. Thank you.

"If I could get silence, I could reward it."

I'm coming in in the middle (as usual), but from this statement, it occurs to me that you haven't waited long enough, and you are trying to train the dog when he's over his threshold.

Song barked at sheep, ran around sheep, loved to work sheep, yap yap yap yap yap. One day I took a lawn chair and a paperback and my treats and clicker and went and sat with the dog on leash just outside the sheep pen. She barked and lunged and squeaked and fussed for TWO HOURS, during which I simply sat on the leash and read my book. Finally she shut up, I clicked and started to stand up (the reward), she barked, I sat down and read my book until she shut up again, clicked and stood up, she barked, I sat down and read my book until she shut up, clicked and stood up and took two steps, she barked, I went and sat down and read my book until she shut up, clicked and stood up and took five steps, she barked...

It took three hours from the time we arrived until we walked in silence into the sheep pen. Know what? She was totally under control in the pen, worked sheep on MY direction, not her own, it was the Finest Performance she'd ever given.

So the dog barks in the car. Does he bark in the car when it is sitting in your driveway without the engine on? Reward correct behaviour.

Does he bark in the car when it is sitting in your driveway with the engine running? Reward correct behaviour.

Does he bark in the car when someone is driving it up and down your driveway? If you don't have a driveway, find a spot like a company parking lot on a weekend where there are no cars, no people, no stray dogs, absolutely nothing. Reward correct behaviour.

Does he bark AT things he sees? Why is he up that high? Cover the crate or, if he's not in a crate, get him in a down-stay on the floor of

the car where he's at least partially safe and he can't see all those exciting things. (PLEASE put him in a crate or a seat-belt harness!)

Feed the dog his meals in the car with the engine off. Doesn't want to eat when the car is sitting still and nothing is happening? Too bad, go back in the house until the next scheduled meal, then go back out to the car and offer him the meal again.

Spend a LOT of time in the car, just sitting and reading a book, or working on the computer, or knitting, or whatever.

Biting When Taking Treats

Solutions to biting really hard when taking treats:

a) put the treat **IN** the dog's mouth, not **NEAR** the dog's mouth. Teasing the dog is a self-reinforcing behaviour - owner holds treat a little too far away from mouth, dog bites while grabbing it, owner holds it further away from mouth next time, dog has to grab harder, etc.

b) smear gooey stuff - Cheez Whiz, liverwurst - on a wooden spoon and whip that over to the dog to reward him - I didn't say get a big gob of stuff on the spoon, the point is to teach the dog to lick the spoon rather than biting it. Biting gets practically nothing, licking gets more.

c) when the dog is licking the treat off the spoon, smear the gooey stuff all over your hand. I know, disgusting, but I had a litter of 10 Giant Schnauzer puppies who were awful - really, I had dreams about vampire dogs - and those needle teeth - for some stupid reason I smeared liverwurst all over my hand, gritted my teeth and stuck my hand in the whelping box, and voila, they all licked and not one bit, and no biting after that.

d) put the treat in the palm of your hand, hold it there with your thumb, and shove your whole hand, palm first, at the dog, whipping your thumb out of the way at the last second. The whole hand coming at him makes the dog back up a smidgeon, and there's nothing to bite.

e) sit calmly with the dog sitting and offer him a treat, whip it back if he lunges at it, offer it, whip it back, offer it, whip it back, offer it, whip it back... when he comes at it gently, click and let him have it.

f) teach hand Zen. A little self-control on the dog's part slows him down, and encourages the owner so they might be capable of putting the treat IN his mouth, or have the timing and observation skills necessary to see whether the dog is lunging or going to take it gently.

Boredom

The trouble with the whole idea of "boredom" is that IMO it doesn't exist. I once tested my dog on Sit - a simple, "boring" behaviour. She did it 300 times before *I* got bored and quit. Every dog, every horse, and every llama that I've seen who was described as "bored after x repetitions" was simply getting too little reinforcement for the amount of effort they were putting in. Up the RATE of reinforcement, up the KIND of reinforcement, or up the AMOUNT of reinforcement, and suddenly you have the dog working again.

Another problem is that frequently it's the TRAINER who gets bored, loses focus, slows down on the clicks, until the dog realizes the Game isn't Afoot any longer. A more graphic example of this is me - when I'm demonstrating shaping in front of an audience, and I start explaining something that just happened, or someone asks a question and I get going on the answer, my dog will drift to a stop with a look on her face that clearly says "WhenEVerr! Text me when you're gonna play MY game again, eh?"

Calmness-While-Looking-at-Scary-Thing

"Calmness" for me is a very difficult criteria. I'm not clicking calm. I'm clicking SEEING the scary thing. I've set up the situation so I'm far enough away from the scary thing that the dog isn't going to have a panic attack. Let's put this in the situation of the doorbell.

Kerflushinner dog screams and scrabbles to the door every time the doorbell rings. Not acceptable. OK, I could start out by teaching Go To Mat, get it really strong, and then start adding the doorbell - or a combination of that and what comes next. Nothing wrong with either one. But in this case, I'm going to approach it differently - since this is the way I had to work the Mountie bear in the airport.

I'm sitting on the couch. Dog is wandering around, lying down, sucking on her blanket, chewing a mosquito bite, whatever. I look towards the door and say "hello?" Dog perks ears and looks toward door. This wasn't enough of a "door bell" to get the hysteria, just enough to get a momentary alert. Click, treat, go back to reading my magazine. Several minutes later, I look toward door and say "Who's there?" ALMOST enough to get hysteria, but not quite. Dog perks ears and looks toward CLICK!! and treat immediately in the dog's face. Back to magazine. Several minutes later, "hello?" Perk/look click/ treat. We continue this for about 15 repetitions. Then I knock on the table beside me. Dog perks, stands, then looks at me, but I already hit the perk with the click. My criteria is to notice the door without getting hysterical. I WILL get superstitious behaviour - looking at me, standing up, etc, but it's the ear perk or head-turn I'm clicking. If the dog explodes instead of a simple perk or turn, I read my magazine so no reinforcement for running madly to the door, and the next repetition will be with LESS of a cue (put that in terms of a car going by, if the dog can't handle how close the car is, then we move further from the road and try again).

Chasing Livestock

It IS possible to teach a dog not to chase livestock. Whether it is worth the trouble has to be answered by each individual owner, bearing in mind the possible consequences of any mistake. And whether it is ever controlled to the point where it is safe to leave livestock unattended with a former chaser... well, I guess it depends on how you feel about your livestock.

Teaching a dog not to chase livestock involves a great deal of management - control of the situation, NEVER putting the dog in a position where he CAN chase livestock during training, intense reward for NOT chasing livestock, intense communication about being calm in the presence of livestock, in the presence of moving livestock, in the presence of running livestock, in the presence of noisy livestock, in the presence of young livestock.

I let Stitch chase our feral cats occasionally, which was fine since they ARE feral and have lots of places to hide and trees to climb, she'd never actually CATCH one. I thought the only other stock she had access to was the llamas, who don't run but walk toward predators and would spit her silly if she didn't listen to their first warning. I was mistaken. There were two ducks. She chased a cat one day and as the cat disappeared, Stitch turned around with all her adrenalin running and ran smack into a duck, who had been watching her go by chasing the cat. Duck turned and ran, Stitch chased it, and plucked it to death on the move.

Stitch is worth a lot more to me than either of the ducks (or both of them), and she's never out in that yard unattended, so I chose to train her out of her unfortunate impression of ducks. It's been a year now, and she will walk politely from the house to the car or car to house without sprinting for the barn. I trust her now while I'm with her, but I wouldn't trust her without me.

Corrections – plain and simple

"I wonder if there is any way to construct a lesson (without dogs) to demonstrate what the receiving end of harsh training is like"

"How many times did you correct your dog in the last hour of class?"

"I couldn't possibly count."

"So was it working?"

"Gee, I guess not."

Cue Discrimination

" The problem is that she can't wait for the cue, she's offering it if I don't cue her in a few seconds. "

Have you taught her cue discrimination in any other situation? Take Sit, for instance. Ask her Sit, click, toss a treat. Dog gets up, gets treat. Cue Sit, click, toss treat. Dog gets up, gets treat. Cue Sit, click, toss treat. Dog gets up, gets treat. Dog Sits. You stare off into space. Dog continues to Sit. You stare off into space. Dog whines, you stare. Dog shuffles, you stare. Dog lies down, you stare.

Dog gets up, you click, toss treat. Dog gets treat, Sits. you stare off into space. Dog Sits. You stare. Dog gets up. You click, toss treat. Dog gets treat, quick now, you cue Sit. Dog Sits, you click, toss treat. You cue Sit, click, toss treat. Dog gets treat, Sits. You stare off into space.

Etc. You're explaining that Sits following the Sit cue will be paid for, Sits the dog offers will not. Thus the cue becomes an opportunity to earn a treat - an opportunity that was not there before you gave the

cue. I find teaching this concept first using the Sit seems to work better than using something more complicated like the Stand.

Determining the Threshold

Anytime you see a threshold, come back behind it - try one time without food, then 5 with, one without, 4 with, 2 without, 5 with, 2 without, 4 with, 3 without, 5 with, 3 without, 4 with, 4 without, etc.

Anytime the dog fails, that's the threshold.

Drop back and explain again.

Dog Aggression

"Her dog aggression has only recently begun to emerge. We wonder if it is not linked back to something that happened to her as a puppy. "

Maybe. So?

A facetious answer, but really, you can't prove it one way or the other, and people spend a great deal of time and effort worrying about things that happened long ago and far away. Forget about it. Deal with the problem.

Have you come up with a plan to deal with the problem?

First Do No Harm

You may be anxious to try to help a dog overcome a problem, but take the time to think and consider carefully your training options and how each will affect the dog – right now and for the long haul.

The familiar dictum "First, do no harm," comes from Hippocrates' work, *Epidemics*, Book I: "Declare the past, diagnose the present, foretell the future, practice these acts. As to diseases, make a habit of two things – to help, or at least to do no harm."

Hippocrates' recommendation should also serve as a caution to enthusiastic and well-meaning trainers. We shouldn't rush ahead in an attempt to solve a problem behavior without thinking through the possible results of the training.

Taking the time to think and consider does not mean that we won't make mistakes. There are so many variables in dog training, we might not get the best recipe (set of tools) on our first try. That's not failure. It's diagnostic! It's information we can use to evaluate and alter our approach to the training.

With careful planning, anything we try that doesn't work, will at least not make matters worse.

Fussy Eater

I have a mental problem with "fussy" eaters. It sounds so much like a friend of mine - one Christmas her son didn't like any of the (myriad of) toys he got, and he made so much of a fuss about not getting anything decent for Christmas that they went out that afternoon and bought him a whole other bunch of what HE pointed at. Want to guess what happened the NEXT Christmas?

I do not have fussy eaters. I have had dogs given to me who were described as fussy eaters. I have had dogs given to me who were desperately underweight as a result of years-long battles to get them to eat. I have had students' dogs who had not eaten anything except off a spoon ("if we're lucky, he'll eat off a spoon, otherwise we have to roll the food into balls and stuff it down his throat and then massage his throat until he swallows") for three years. I got a 10 mo Giant Schnauzer back from an idiot - she weighed 28 pounds (should have weighed about 70) - apparently she had been attacked by his Dane bitch every time she tried to get to the communal bowl - she was actually AFRAID of her bowl, and she got special attention, as do dogs that are ill. Otherwise, it is my job to supply the wherewithal for the dog to live a happy, healthy life. It is NOT my job to get the dog to eat. I present food to my dogs twice a day. I feed them reasonable food (I do not wish to get into BARF vs dry food, etc) which is good for them. If they choose not to eat, the food is removed. They then get absolutely nothing but water until the next scheduled meal, 12 hours later. They get a count of five to decide whether they will eat or not (they can take as long as they want to eat, as long as they don't move away from the bowl, but only a count of five to START eating).

Normally my dogs are fed in separate bowls a few feet from each other in front of the kitchen sink. Sometimes, though, they need to be fed in crates, or in motels, or in a car. If one of them decides "I don't eat in crates", my answer is not "oh dear, what can I give you that you'd really like so you will eat in the crate?", my answer is "fine". Dish comes out, that's the end of that meal.

What this produces is dogs who like to eat. Dogs who will eat anything I put down. Dogs who will eat in cars, on trains, in planes, on grooming tables, in motels, or in crates. Dogs who will eat at their normal meal times, or any other time (I normally feed at noon and midnight, but that doesn't always work if we're flying, or they're in an agility trial, or etc). Dogs who can be trained in any circumstances with plain, ugly, dry kibble (not to say they don't appreciate Really Good Stuff!).

It works for llamas, too. In the winter, each llama gets a quart of oats every day, most of them in separate small pens so they can't hog anybody else's oats. When we get a new adult llama, I give them a special big feeding pen for a couple of days, to be sure they really like oats, then I put them in a regular small pen for feeding. The first time this happens, they wait eagerly for me to bring the pan in to them, then when I arrive, they start running around the pen warning off any other llamas outside the pen that might be thinking about butting in. A simple rule - if you are thinking about getting oats, oats come. If you are thinking about other llamas, oats go away. It has never taken more than two trials for any llama to figure this out - it's just like "be a tree", except in reverse.

Get Out of the Situation

If you get him into a situation that is out of control (cat shows up), get out of the situation ASAP. I might, for instance, back up into the house. This puts the whole Zen thing right smack into the realm of Loose Leash Walking - if he can keep the leash loose, he can look at the cat, if he tightens the leash, the leash (and his head) go back into the house where he can't see the cat any more.

Hoovering Exercise

I've been trying to think of a clean explanation to the dog for a problem that people perceive when asked to throw treats on the floor for the dog. This makes people think the dog will spend the rest of her life sniffing for the last little crumb - and indeed, without a little extra work, it does. So how to solve it? I DO solve it, but I needed a clear exercise. I just got it.

Find a sewer drain in the sidewalk or street somewhere (safe). Stand near it. Give the dog a treat. Toss the dog a treat. Toss a treat down the drain. Let the dog sniff for it. And sniff. And sniff. And sniff. Stand and do nothing. When she finally gets sick of sniffing and finding nothing - and focuses on you again, rapidfire five treats into her mouth. Toss one on the ground where she can get it. Toss one down the drain. Let her sniff for it again.

This is nothing complicated - it's really just playing Monkey In The Middle with yourself. I'm trying to explain that if the treat is right there on the ground, by all means get it, but if finding it looks to turn into a production number, come back to me and I'll give you a free one.

How to Solve a Problem

When attempting to solve a problem, the first thing you have to do is define what you want - and that means an APPROPRIATE (read: useful) definition. I can say I want the dog to stop jumping up on me. That would leave him free to bite me, lift his leg on me, pull my pant leg until he knocks me over, etc. I have to define what I DO want. What is an appropriate, acceptable, and desirable behaviour for greeting me? How about sitting? OK, now I have a goal, I can start working on a plan to teach the dog to sit when he greets me.

So what is an appropriate, acceptable, and desirable behaviour for your dog when you let the dogs out? How about sitting and staying while you open the door and let the other dogs out, then you can reward her for her appropriate behaviour and let her out too - once the other dogs are out.

Mat Diving

Refraining from mat diving is the same behaviour as Conformation Zen. If you didn't teach Zen when you were reading the Stacking article, go back and teach it now. Zen reminds the dog that he needs to control himself and give you what you want in order to get what he wants. When he understands Zen and has had some practise, you'll start explaining that bait which you throw on the floor is fair game, but bait which other people throw down, or that's just sitting on the floor waiting for innocent dogs to walk by, is completely unavailable.

If you have a reliable helper, you can teach this off leash. Do a little work on attention. When the dog is watching you, confident that if he watches you hard enough he can force you to click and give him a treat, have your helper show him a treat, then put the treat on the floor and cover it with her shoe so he can't get it. Let him try. Short of biting through your helper's shoe, there's nothing he can do wrong. When he finally decides he can't get the bait under your helper's shoe and starts to move away from it, click and hand him a treat. Do it again. Your helper takes the treat out from under her shoe, shows it to your dog again, and puts it back under her shoe. When he stops trying to get it, click and give him a treat.

When you're training by yourself, have the dog on leash. Show him a treat and, without clicking or saying anything, toss the treat on the floor close enough that he'll be interested in it, but definitely far enough away that the leash will prevent him from getting it. Let him try. He can pull on the leash, duck down, stand up, reach for the bait with his paws, whine, jump up and down, bark, but he will not not NOT be able to get to the treat. When he finally gives up, click and give him a treat from your hand. Do it again. Pick up the treat from the floor, show it to him, toss it out again, and let him try for it again.

With or without a helper, on or off leash, think about what you're telling the dog. He can't have the treat on the floor no matter what he does, but as soon as he stops trying to get it, you're guaranteed to click

and give him a free treat. Hmmmm. Work really hard and get nothing? Or don't work at all and get something? Zen is starting to make sense! Now you can start changing the criteria. Can he walk away from the floor bait without diving for it? Click and treat. Can he trot a big circle around the floor bait without diving for it? Click and treat. Can he trot a small circle around it? Can he trot over it? Can he free stack on top of it? Can he back up over it?

Will this training actually work? You bet. In Best Of Breed competition at a National Specialty, another handler tossed a huge chunk of liver and hit my freestacked male Special right in the face just as the judge was coming to him. My dog allowed the liver to hit him in the face and didn't take his eyes off his handler. In fact, he didn't move a muscle. He had the training to know the chunk of liver was unavailable to him, but that by avoiding the temptation, he was earning a guaranteed goody.

When you have more confidence in Zen, you can add a voice cue ("Off" perhaps) if you want to, although I would suggest that an "OK" cue would be better. You're teaching the dog that food which hits the ground is not available. Food which hits the ground after an "OK" or a click, on the other hand, is his for the taking.

My Shifting Household

I know it is painful to watch a dog who has been queen all her life losing her position, but let her slide. Trying to interfere by holding her position up artificially in the group is a very good way to get her killed.

Reluctant Harness/Vest

Since Stitch was a puppy, she's had a "thing" with me putting her collar on over her head. She also gets "sticky feet" when I put her cape or harness on.

Tonight this is brought home to me as an actual problem when I discover that she is rock-solid on go-behind returns OFF LEASH on SitStays, DownStays, AND StandStays, but can't do any of them ON leash. No matter how hard she tries, the loose leash magically pulls her around.

When a llama is skittish about leashes or costumes, I have him wear an elastic harness with ribbons hanging from it. Today I'm going to make one for Stitch. Elastic so she can pull out of it if it gets snagged on something, and ribbons so she gets used to things brushing her body.

Alright, no elastic - I drape her in Velcro for two days. Tonight at agility class she is much less "sticky" about her harness.

Sniffing LLW

There's nothing wrong with sniffing, it's how dogs enjoy their surroundings. It's the same as humans looking at things. Think about all the different kinds of "looking".

a) teenager bopping along with earphones on, completely oblivious to the fact that he nearly got run over by a car because he was barely aware of where he was. I've had dogs that paid such close attention to me when they were heeling that they would literally run into things if I didn't swerve to avoid them.

b) person walking to the bus in his own neighbourhood, he'll notice something really out of place but otherwise not really noticing because

he's seen it all a million times before. This is a dog walking around in his own house - yep, they're having chicken for supper. Otherwise, same-old, same-old.

c) person walking around a new workplace. Have to see everything, remember where things are, pay attention to the boss who's doing the orientation, notice things that are really interesting that he'll have to come back and learn about. This is a trained dog walking in the neighbourhood. Lots of cool stuff, new spice smells, different dogs, a new squirrel family, a crow that ate a dead mouse landed right **HERE**.

d) yokel standing gobsmacked in the middle of the street, never saw a building taller than 1 storey before, never saw neon lights, never saw more than 5 people in one place. Three busses and 8 taxis honking at him. This is an untrained dog going for a walk, nose to the ground, no thought of anything else except the information coming in through the nose.

What ***I*** want from a walk is a Lazy Leash - a leash that is completely out of a job, no tension on it at all - and the ability to get the dog's attention focused on me when I need it (when we're walking past a dead squirrel, when a skateboarder or a snuffle of daycare kids is approaching, when I need to move faster to get across a street before the light changes). What the ***dog*** wants from a walk is a Lazy Leash and the freedom to enjoy c) - all the wonderful things to learn about the area.

The essence of training: in order for the **DOG** to get what she wants, ***I*** have to get what I want, so as long as I can have my Lazy Leash and I can get the dog's attention when I need it, she can sniff herself purple and I won't mind.



PUPPIES

7 Week Old Puppy

Here's the life of a 7-wo puppy:

Wake up. Pee. Run. PeePoop. Sleep. Wake up. P. Eat. Wrestle. PP.
Sleep. Wake up. Run. P. Eat. Sleep.

Add "Play Come Game" in there anywhere. Always quit before the dog does.

Advantage of the Umbilical Cord

In re-homing adult dogs, I usually have the new owners come over, chat for a while, then give them the dog and its toys, mat, food, etc, and send them away, saying I want to talk to them regularly, but that I don't want to see the dog for two weeks (unless it isn't working out, of course). Used to be - they would (obviously reluctantly) bring the dog back in two weeks, obviously expecting the dog to be relieved to be "home" and to want to stay, followed by the dog excitedly greeting me, checking out the smells, then plunking down on the new owner's foot and asking if they were going to hit the Dairy Queen on the way home. During this second visit, I would frequently notice that the dog

had to go out, and mention this to the new owners, only to have them say "HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?". Since I've been recommending the umbilical cord for that two week period, I've noticed that new owners feel more securely that the dog is THEIRS when they come back, and THEY notice before I do that the dog has to go out. It helps dog and people understand each other to have to be closer together.

Another place it helps ME is in housebreaking - my house is an open plan, and my temperament is such that I get wholly-immersed in what I'm doing RIGHT NOW - if I'm on the puter, I'm on the puter and the rest of the world drifts away. If I'm doing dishes (ha ha ha), that's what I'm doing. Sorry, no matter how great I might be at reading dogs and noticing things, this is my temperament. I simply cannot concentrate on something as mundane and boring as housebreaking for two weeks at a time without drifting off into something else. The umbilical cord means the pup (or adult dog) is within 6 feet of me most of the time - giving her zero opportunity to make an error in the house, giving ME zero opportunity not to notice or read her when she's telling me she's uncomfortable. I have the same problem with the llamas - when I'm at a fair with an animal in a pen, I'm there to sell people on llamas. I get talking to someone about llamas, and I neglect to notice the animal telling me he has to go outside. And bingo, we have an accident in the pen. I just came back from an 8-day fair, matter of fact, and had only 4 accidents in the pen, but as far as housebreaking is concerned, that's four accidents too many, and four that wouldn't have happened if the guy was on an umbilical cord instead of in a pen nearby.

One more place it really helps - an adult dog who is being rehomed has frequently learned to rely on himself because he's the only constant he has in an insane universe. Wandering around my house, he's slowly learning to trust me, but he's still relying on himself. Putting him on an umbilical cord shows him that *I* am important, trustworthy and reliable. He starts to rely on **me**. He starts to relax. Once the bonding has happened, he is still on an umbilical cord, but one of faith. Certainly it is possible to accomplish all these things without the use of the cord - but it's possible to teach a dog anything you want him

to know without luring, too. The "method" just speeds up the process. The umbilical cord is a tool. Like any other tool, use it to further the relationship. Use it to help you explain what the dog needs to know. And if it bothers you or you don't see the need for it, don't use it. All training is explaining, and explaining is a conversation between you and your dog. What other people do is only "method" and method is unimportant if your conversation follows the rules of operant conditioning and is understandable by both involved parties.

Teaching Houstraining

Part of houstraining a dog is teaching him an appropriate place to go. Most dogs living in human houses learn this. The second part of houstraining is teaching the dog HOW TO GET to an appropriate place.

Maybe this has nothing to do with your situation, as you haven't mentioned anything about the dog asking to go out, except that he whines at you in the morning, but maybe it does, so here goes.

Many people get past the first part of houstraining successfully, but don't notice what the dog has learned about the second part. How does the dog get outside? What does he have to do to make the door open? Does he stare at the door? Does he sit by the door? Does he just wander around the house hoping? Does he do cartwheels in front of the fireplace? The please-open-the-door discussions are many and varied (and really amusing if you start collecting them) - "He sits on my foot and shivers" or "He stares at me and I just know" or "He pants in a particular way" or "He runs back and forth between me and the bannister".

Because you said when he has an accident, he has it at the front door (an exit), I'm thinking the dog is very well housebroken (the first part, anyway), and certainly doesn't need to be punished. Look at this from

his point of view - whatever it is he does (for instance, sit by the door and hope) to get the door to open USUALLY works, but once in a while, you just don't listen. He waits and waits, he does what he's supposed to do, but the door doesn't open. Finally he can't stand it any longer, and he HAS to go, so he goes as close to the door as he can get.

So really, the problem isn't housebreaking, it's only communication. Here's what I'd do.

Once every hour, I'd call the dog to me and, in a bright, happy voice, ask him if he has to go out. "Do you wanna go OUT? Wanna go OUT?" or whatever you want to say. Then I'd ask him to sit, like, "If you wanna go OUT, sit!" Then when he sits, I'd say something like "All RIGHT! Let's go OUT!", get up, and head for the door with great enthusiasm and commotion. When I got to the door, I'd forget why we were there, so I'd have to ask again - "Oh, Georgie, do you wanna go OUT? OUT? OK then, sit!" And when he sat, I'd open the door with a flourish and send him out. If he does something, great, reward, and let him back in. If he doesn't do anything, fine, just let him back in and get on with your life.

An hour later, go through the whole thing again. Every hour for two or three days. What you're doing is focussing the dog on the fact that YOU are involved in opening the door. Staring at the door doesn't do it, YOU have to be involved.

After two of three days of this, get up one morning and DON'T ask him, but keep a REALLY close eye on him (not on a leash, though). If you see ANY sign of him needing to go out, go through the ritual again and let him out, but do this ONLY in response to SOME indication from him that he needs to go out, be it whining, staring at the door, going toward the door, whatever, and be sure to start your response by asking him to come to you.

After a few days of this, he should have the idea that he needs to ask YOU, not the door, in order to get out. If you notice him by the door, call him into another room and do the whole thing again.

Puppies.....from an older dog's viewpoint

Puppies don't move "right". They don't have decent personal spaces. They lose their minds to cheap thrills. They are out of control.

I picture Queen Elizabeth suddenly surrounded by day care kids. Are those gritted teeth under that unflappable smile?

I believe many dogs think puppies are out of control and their handlers are going to allow them to climb all over decent, law-abiding canines. Obviously SOMEBODY needs to control these ragamuffins!

Communicating and The Big Prize

"The dogs can handle a puppy biting them better than a human can!"

Nyuh uh - hurts them too. In fact, if I need an indication of a planned universe, I have only to look at those nasty little sharp puppy teeth. A puppy learns to use those suckers properly, or NObody plays with him. I see several questions recently about yelping when a puppy bites too hard. That won't work. Yelping only makes them play harder. What works is yelping in a crabby voice - not Owee, that HURTS but OUCH YOU DORK, THAT HURTS! Then the play immediately stops. Matter of fact I used this yesterday with my nephew - he kept telling me how to play Monopoly, telling me how much money I had, moving my piece for me, etc. I asked him once to stop treating me like an idiot. The next time he did it, I yelped crabby (I AM NOT AN IDIOT!) and left the room. Today we played and he was polite and reasonable.

" Right now though, we are not communicating. I am thinking.. don't be on the furniture, and Kelly is thinking. "What a fun game.. I jump on the couch to get the water bottle. Person keeps it away from me. Puts me

on the floor. Now jump with a better arc so I can get to the water bottle first. Yes! I got it! Now.. RUN... Person chases me" etc"

Wow, she's doing a great job of teaching you to play! Several solutions come to mind. First, never never NEVER chase a dog unless you are aware that you're playing with her. Second, never never NEVER try to grab something away from a dog unless you're aware that you're playing with her. If you don't want the dog on the couch, make some arrangement so the dog isn't on the couch. This could be covering the couch with something so you can sit on it but she can't get on the rest of it, or it could be putting her on a leash so if she gets on, you can get her off. A friend of mine cut one of her dog's toenails every time the dog barked. That worked virtually immediately - you could cut a toenail every time she jumps on the couch. I like the Big Prize punisher, myself. Jump on the couch if you want, but every time you do, WOW, CONGRATULATIONS, you just won the BIG PRIZE - four minutes in your crate!

Silly aside, this dog needs a lot of work on how to behave - when you're playing and when you're not, and what is allowed when you are. For now, I'd say, not on the couch at all. Couch is a reward for excellent behaviour and she's not there yet. I'd work a lot on Zen as well - to get what you want, you need to offer me what *I* want - that is, down, on your mat, or whatever calm behaviour you want. Grabbing doesn't get you what you want. EVER

Crate Training

"She is only 8 weeks old"

Basically, a puppy alone is a dead puppy, so the puppy's job is to squeal when she's alone. Sounds like she's good at it, too. Put her in the crate to eat, as you are doing, but also put her in the crate when she's really, really tired so she can have a little nap. If she's still squealing, she isn't

tired enough! Wear her right out! Also put her in the crate with really good stuff - a Kong stuffed with peanut butter and Milkbones or something like that. Stuffed with canned dog food and frozen.

I'd sleep with my hand and the puppy in the crate before I slept with the puppy in the bed. I'd sleep, in fact, in the car (or not, as the case may be) with the puppy and my hand in the crate before I slept with the puppy in the bed. This is just because it's a tough expectation to stop once she's got it - as you are discovering.

Puppy Socialization Dialogue

"I have a question about something I read in Stitch's blog. You mention in her 11th week, 'I wish I could get her out to meet a lot of people right now. Part of me thinks this is a good time for her to stay home and work on her confidence and trust in private.'

Would you mind sharing your thoughts on that. I don't have my puppy yet, but when I do, I have visions of spending at least 2 days a week, sitting outside the local mall with her on my lap, just exposing her to people. It seems my thoughts are opposite of yours. I'm wondering if I should change my plans. :)

I'm an old, old bag. I was around when "distemper teeth" were a normal part of dog shows. I've lost several dogs to distemper. I CAN'T take my puppies out until their shots are complete. This is a symptom of my age, nothing else. My vets all tell me I'm crazy, get those puppies out. I have no trouble playing with other people's puppies early, I just can't take my own out. Strange (in my own mind) that I can use these newfangled communications gadgets and I frequently travel on those strange new flying machines, but can NOT take my puppies out before their shots are finished. Sigh.

New Puppy Scared Child

" 8-year-old family member who is scared to death of the puppy"

Start by teaching the puppy all kinds of calm behaviours - lying down at people's feet when greeting, etc.

Then I'd put the kid behind a gate or fence and play the Come Game - calling the dog from family member to family member, each person dropping a treat on the floor at their feet as the dog approaches, but with the kid, and probably an adult with her, behind the gate so there's no possibility of the dog jumping on her - or even touching her.

If you get that far, I'd show the kid how to use the clicker, and start her off teaching the pup, hands off, some tiny behaviours - silly things, like having the pup target her paw with her nose, or roll on her side, so the child starts to see small, controlled motion under her control.

Nipping

"My new puppy (5mo), Gambit (aussie/beagle mix) is doing wonderfully in his basic training. My major problem is the nipping! He's 1/2 herding, so I'm not surprised. My other dog was never this bad, so I'm not really sure how to stop it. Everything I've tried has not worked. If he's chewing or biting an object (shoes, pillows, etc.) as soon as I say "no!" he stops. But when it comes to my pant-leg or hand/arm, he goes deaf. I've tried turning my back to him and ignoring him, immediately redirecting him, giving him time-outs, and even spritzing him with water. NOTHING worked. I'm sure there is a method of clicker training to help stop it, but I'm not sure how to go about it. I'm still new to dog training, so I'm a little lost. Can anyone give me advice?"

Screech like a dying hyena, BUMP his head very fast with both open palms, walk directly to another room, and close the door with him still in the original room. Stay out for 2 minutes, then walk calmly back in. If he goes for your pants again, repeat.

"Thanks Sue! I do have concerns though: He's still young and learning what's right and what's wrong, so I'm afraid in those 2 minutes, I'll have shredded pillows and carpet. Also, I have another dog, so when I leave the room, he'll just start pouncing on her and start playtime with her. Are these things I should be concerned about?"

Go back to basics. If you don't control the environment, you don't control what the dog learns. You've presented a dilemma: you can't train the dog because if you do, he'll shred the pillows.

You have many choices. 1. Keep doing some of the things you've been doing, which haven't been working, but maybe they will later. 2. Wear leather boots and gloves. 3. Muzzle him. 4. Move the pillows. 5. Work in a puppy-proof room. 6. Cut off his teeth. 7. Tie him to the wall so he can't get near you. 8. Put a crate in the room and after bumping him, put him in the crate and then leave the room. Hope that touching him to put him in the crate isn't enough reinforcement to keep the behaviour active. 9. Shoot the dog.

I present these 9 alternatives not, as might be supposed, to belittle your problem or to make fun of you, but to show you how my mind works when I'm solving problems. And this, incidentally, is the basis of Karen Pryor's book called, appropriately enough, *Don't Shoot The Dog*. If you give yourself the freedom to throw out any and all solutions, no matter how ridiculous, you'll start coming up with viable alternatives to having a shredded room or shredded arms.

You can put these in order of consequences to the dog: 2 4 5 8 1 3 7 6 9

And you can put these in order of bother to yourself: 9 5 4 7 8 3 2 1 6

And then you can start looking at the numbers and see what happens. I see that 4 and 5 are in the top three in both lists - not harsh on the dog, and not too much bother for you. You can also, once you've thought of them, eliminate the patently silly ones like shooting the dog and cutting off his teeth - although for some problems putting the dog down is not only a viable answer but the only correct one.

So my answer to your question would have to be: move the pillows, or work with the pup in a puppy-proof room.

"None of the bitches ever yelps for over-rambunctious biting, she gets her point across with a bite of her own."

OK, let's look at what's actually happening here. Puppies MUST remain with their littermates as long as possible. Puppies have those nasty little baby teeth because those teeth HURT with practically no force behind them. If a brother is playing with a sister, and sister's tooth lands too hard on brother, brother has a momentary YELP!, which may or may not be followed by or incorporated with a BURF! and a lunge at sister, followed by immediate isolation of sister. Brother tells sister she bit too hard, then stops playing with her. Sister learns to control her teeth.

Sister goes to play-bite mom. Mom a) gets sick of it, b) thinks it's rude, or c) gets hurt and mom tells sister to knock it off. Mom first stiffens her neck, usually looking away from sister. If sister was smart, she'd quit biting mom right there. But she continues. Mom then glares at sister. If Sister Was Smart, etc. But she continues. Mom then lifts a lip. ISWS, etc, but she continues. Mom then growls "If you keep doing that, I'm going to rip your face off!" ISWS, etc, but she continues. Finally, mom lunges at sister with a very loud, very deep, very sudden BURF!, bumping sister very lightly with her muzzle. As if to say "I could have killed you there, but I'm your mom, and I didn't. Now knock it off!" And sister immediately knocks it off, and may run screaming from the near vicinity of mom: YIPE YIPE YIPE YIPE... oh, golly, I'm still alive! I guess I better sheath my teeth a bit better in future!"

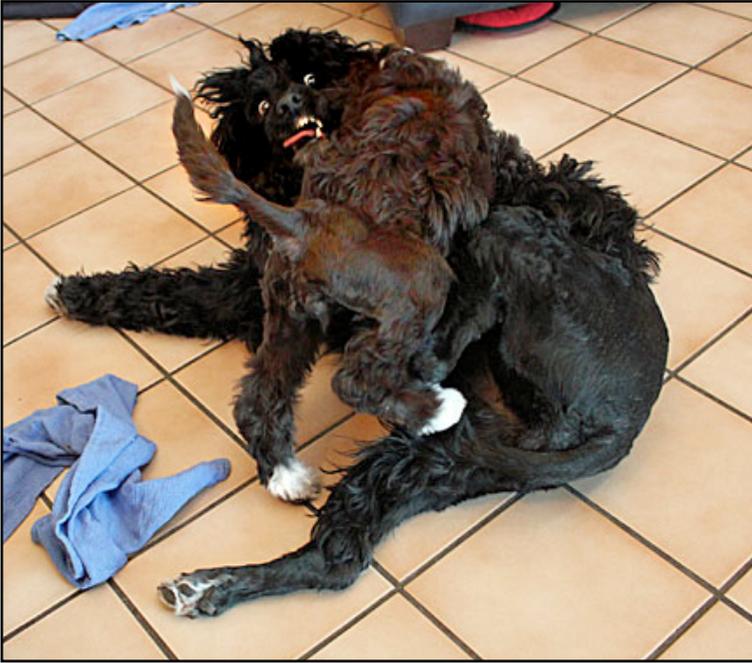
And sister not only keeps better control of her teeth after that, but also glances at mom occasionally to see if there might be a tight neck or a lip curl in there anywhere. And, since mom's final correction was effective, if there IS a lip curl later, sister will back off immediately. Note there was never any "bite" from the corrector. The whole thing is smoke and mirrors, actions and noises.

What this boils down to is that if you've done the yelp, bump, and isolation, and the pup continues to use her teeth inappropriately, your effort was seen as playing. Try harder.

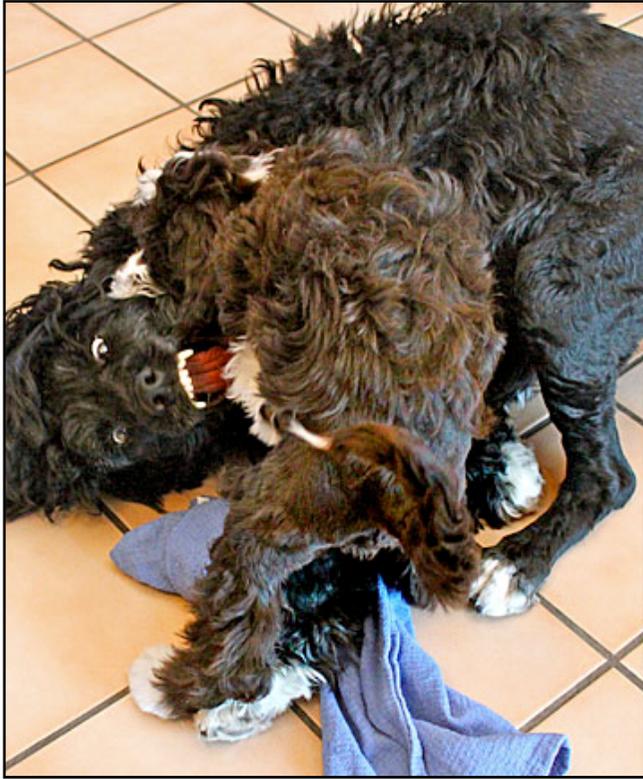
Here's a demonstration of a very effective yelp and bump:



a) Stitch uses a very long tug toy to convince Syn that it's safe to play with her. She adds to the assurance by using silly faces, getting down to her height, and looking at the pup out of the corner of her eye.



b) Stitch rolls "submissively" on the floor, lets her tongue stick out, and makes big whale eyes. Argh! Syn has her by the throat! Really, this is the same expression my brother has on his face when he's wrestling with his kids.



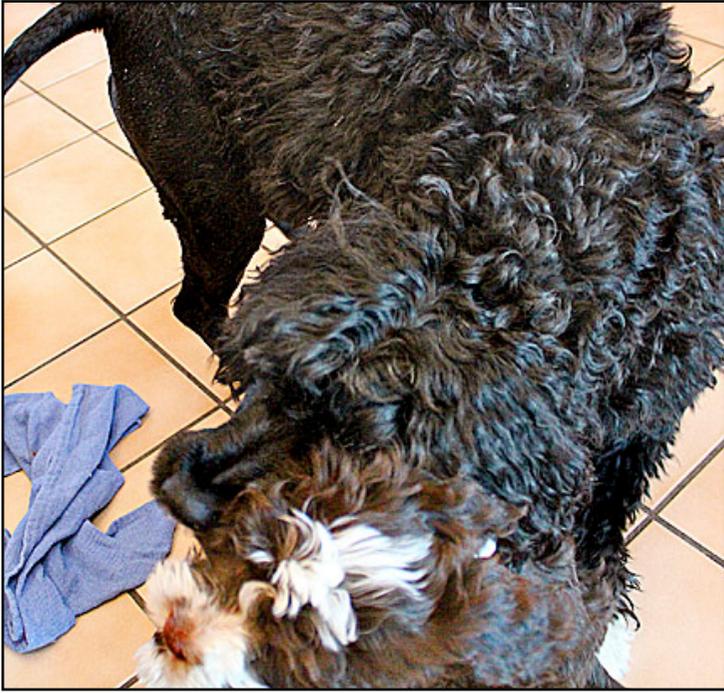
c) Syn has completely accepted that Stitch is good to play with. Stitch waited a long time for this new toy!



d) Uh oh! In exactly what circle of Hell did Syn think she could grab Stitch's tail? Stitch's face has changed completely. Her nose is crinkled, her tongue is pulled in away from her teeth, her upper lips are pulled sharply away from her upper teeth, and she's glaring right at the pup. Syn hasn't had much time to react yet, but she's letting go and has pulled her ears back.



e) Stitch is still coming. Syn is retreating as fast as she can. It doesn't look good. Compare Stitch's open, happy face in the a), b), and c) with this angry snarly face. Is the pup going to die?



f) Syn sees her life flashing before her eyes, but Stitch is a reasonable dog. Her intent was only ever to bump her muzzle into Syn to tell her that "nobody touches the flag!". Syn has certainly learned the lesson.



g) Stitch takes pains to emphasize that the correction was for touching her flag, not for being near her, by picking up the nearby rag and once again inviting the pup to play with her. Syn believes her, and they play again.

Preparation for Life

- a) "what behaviors does your dog need to be trained in and reinforced regularly in to help them deal with these types of situations*
- (b) how you would go about teaching these behaviors and providing a reasonable level of generalization in them and*
- (c) what tools/assistive devices, might you use to either help you work in this process, or, help your dog find comfort in these stressful situations and*
- (d) what proactive steps you can take to prepare yourself, your veterinary practitioners, and your assistance dog to best deal with this type of serious veterinary care."*

Excellent questions. Some of the things that I have always considered essential are:

I can open the mouth, hold it open, play with the teeth.

I can spread the paws, jerk the toenails around, brush them, paint the toenails.

I can raise the tail, lower it, pull it off to the side, put in a thermometer, express the anal glands.

I can look in the ears, stick my fingers in the ears, clean the ears, pour stuff in the ears, massage the ears.

In short, I can pretty much do what I want with the dog - strange positions - specifically, I teach my dogs to be right upside down on their backs, and relaxed, and lying on either side and relaxed.

Combine this with handling and the table training, and you can pretty much do anything at all with the dog.

Going off with other people - while I seriously subscribe to the idea that we should find vets who understand what a working relationship is, and that includes the fact that I am going to be there for whatever happens, the hard truth is that the more severely ill the dog is, the more likely she is to be in a college or other facility which does not make exceptions for working animals and working relationships.

Whether or not ***I*** am comfortable with my dog having to be without me, I have to train her to be comfortable with other people - eating and drinking from strange dishes - part of being comfortable with other people, and crate training. I not only include strange dishes, but strange places, strange food, and strange water. Having nursed many dogs through serious illnesses, now that I'm thinking about it, I would buy a jar of baby food once a month or so, and give it to the dog as a special treat so that if she needs it, it will be familiar.

Puppy Perception

"...pups are coming to class for socialization. Even when they first come in the door, Brodie (in ex-pen or crate 20-50 feet away) notices, starts a low growl, snarls and lunges if they get close."

In a seminar once we were using Scuba on her pause table as a target for impolite dogs, approaching her on leash, rewarding the dogs for making appropriate responses to her. This, BTW, works extremely well for dogs who are not sure how to speak Dog.

A clever participant pointed out that Scuba's reaction to the impolite dogs approaching her depended entirely on how she perceived the HANDLER. If the dog, for instance, was only a little out of control but the handler appeared frazzled or inept, Scuba's threshold of tolerance was up to 20' away from her - cross that line and she started lip-lifting, growling, glaring, etc. OTOH, if the handler appeared calm and in control, even if the dog was ready to go off or bouncing up and down, Scuba's threshold was as close to her as 4'.

Puppy Selection Criteria

As a (retired) breeder, I have some small additional comments.

"saying "I need a dog who can do Service Work" will not give them nearly enough information."

Absolutely. Even if the breeder HAD an idea what "Service Work" was, there are so many kinds that it still wouldn't help much. While you're working on what you want, set priorities. That is, I MUST have sound running gear, clean coming and going, decent and BALANCED angulation front and rear. I MUST have a bitch. And I MUST have the appropriate brain (suitable description follows). I MUST have a true topline.

I WANT a bitch between 30 and 40 pounds. I WANT a black with some chrome. I WANT a good tailset. I WANT a bitch I can show in dog shows. I WANT a curly.

The MUSTS rule out inappropriate dogs. The WANTS simply help decide between two or more appropriate puppies. What I said was something like "If it doesn't have good running gear, don't even put it on the plane, because it's coming back." We talked a LOT more, and eventually I got my clean, balanced, appropriately angulated bitch with the brain I wanted. I also got 45 pounds, black with some chrome, eh tailset, too large eye, too narrow head, and a wavy rather than a curly. In other words, totally perfect.

The moral is, be absolutely adamant in what you MUST have. Be lenient on what you WANT. If you can "give" a little on what you thought you WANTED, but don't get suckered into taking a pup that doesn't meet what you NEED, because it is available, or cheaper, or closer, or whatever, you will get the dog you should have.

"I know of a breeder who advertises that all of the dogs that she breeds are OFA tested. What she neglects to mention is that they didn't pass."

One of the most useful questions I ever asked a breeder (I don't know why I was smart enough to ask this question when I was only 18, but I've been asking it ever since) was "If you didn't have ANY dogs, but I knew what you know now, where would YOU go to get a dog?" This is a good question because you're not asking anyone to badmouth anyone else, to say WHO neglects to mention they didn't pass;*/ , you are asking for one or two names of people they trust with dogs they think are good. You will find that the same names keep coming up again and again.

Setting Limits

"...nipping and growling is when I pick him up, or when I am holding him, and he is doing it a lot to Summer as well. It seems to me more like it is just something he doesn't want done to him and so he is making sure we know about it"

When you say "nipping", I assume you mean he puts his teeth on your skin, not that he's doing his best to draw blood.

And by "growling" I assume you mean that his voice is deep - git yer filthy hands off me, dipstick! - as opposed to high - ack! you're killing me here! ??

If he's growling and putting his teeth on your skin, make your hands go absolutely silent and wait for him to stop. When he does stop, do what he wants - play? Give him a treat? Put him down?

Pick him up and hold him just off the floor. Hold him as long as he fusses. When he relaxes and goes silent, tell him he did a good job and put him down.

Also, it would probably rest your mind to read Stitch's blog, particularly this part:

<http://www.sue-ch.ca/page24/blog/files/archive-sep-2004.html>

In this first week I had her, I talk about how Stitch, Goddess Of The Known Universe at 7 weeks, meets the line I draw and learns not to cross it. Try not to think of him trying to be The Boss, just think of him as a little kid trying to adjust to a new playground. Are there bullies here? Will everybody give me their lunch money? Do I have to look tough in order to keep my own lunch money? Who are my friends? Will I have enemies?

And let's get that little fella into your classroom so he can start learning how his new life works!

Can a Puppy Be Over-Socialized?

"...exposing a pup/dog to as many people and environmental conditions as possible"

WITHIN THE PUP'S ABILITY TO COPE.

"allowing a pup/dog to visit at will "

I'm very adamant that visiting is something which happens when the pup has earned it and I've agreed. One of the most important things a service OR sport dog ever learns (IMO) is that the handler controls access to the wonders of the universe.

Teaching a Puppy to Eat

*"Is it safe with such a young puppy (she is 12 or 13 weeks. I can't remember at the moment) to do Sue's strict teaching-a-dog-to-eat plan?
Is there some way I should modify it for the little one?"*

Yes, it's safe. Remember, you are never depriving the dog of food, you're only telling her that when it's available, she better eat it, because it won't be available until the next scheduled meal. How to modify it for a baby? The regimen is described for adult dogs, with two meals a day (I also believe in two meals per day rather than one, fewer oral problems, calmer dog, etc). For a baby, you should be feeding more often - probably 4 times a day, at that age - so do exactly the same thing, but your scheduled meals are closer together. You've got a big advantage at this age, the dog hasn't spent a great deal of time being trained to eat improperly yet.

"We have to put water in her food because she doesn't drink enough if given only dry "

The only time I feed dry kibble is when I'm using it as treats. Kibble in a bowl always has water on it. I used to think polydipsia-polyuria was a normal part of life, but in the 20 years I've been adding water to the kibble just before I feed it, I haven't seen it once, thank goodness.

"they also always want each other's food. "

That's where Zen comes in, and the Teaching Your Dog To Eat routine. If the dog leaves her OWN dish, a) she will NEVER be allowed to go near the other dog's dish, and b) since she walked away from her own food, it isn't there anymore either. Once you've taught floor Zen and watched the dogs eating for a couple of weeks, it becomes part of life - never ever go to another dish if another dog is eating from it, and never leave your own dish while there's food in it.

We were at my mom and dad's for Christmas. They have two aged Mini Schnauzers. Stitch came too. After dinner, I put the big turkey platter on the floor so the dogs could lick the grease and little turkey bits off it. I very carefully put it down in the middle of all the dogs, and they all dived in. It no sooner hit the floor, however, than Stitch levitated backwards from it as if she'd been shocked. She just realized that she was eating off another dog's plate! How rude! It took some fast reassurance on my part for her to understand that EVERYBODY was intended to eat off that one plate.

"I used to prefer 2 meals a day, but if offered twice, Molly skips the second meal and we kept having to reset - even with smaller portions. We found that for her it seemed to work better with one morning meal.

With that, she eats regularly and maintains a breed-appropriate condition. If I am feeding 3-4 times a day and the puppy walks away from her dish without eating anything, when is she next offered a meal?

With a grown dog it isn't for 24 hours."

OK, I understand that your dog only wants to eat once a day. I'm OK with that, but I didn't say withhold food for 24 hours, I said don't feed the dog anything until her NEXT SCHEDULED MEAL. I generally divide a pup's 4 meals into early morning, lunch, supper, and near

bedtime. By that reckoning, if she didn't eat breakfast, she wouldn't get any snacks or training treats until her meal at lunchtime. If she didn't eat her bedtime meal, she wouldn't get any food at all until her breakfast. And the meal I gave her after she walked away from one would be very small, so she's hungry when she gets to it, she scarfs it down and wishes there was more, and she's hungry again for the next meal, in which, since she was successful last time (ate the whole thing, polished the dish), she'll be offered a little more than "very small" - but I'd still take 4 or 5 meals to work back up to the full meal.

"I'm sure part of the issue is working out how much is "enough" for her."

That's a big advantage of cutting what she DID eat in half if she doesn't eat successfully. If she successfully eats 3/4 of what you THINK she should be eating, but won't eat more than that, the third or fourth time you cut her back, you should definitely be starting to think that 3/4 of what YOU think she should eat is actually the right amount for her.

This is especially important for puppies - at one point Stitch was eating THREE TIMES as much as Scuba, then when she suddenly stopped growing, she was down to 3/4 of Scuba's meal for almost two years, then Scuba got old and needed more food to hold her weight, and Scuba's now getting twice as much as Stitch is. In the winter, if we're active, Stitch needs half again as much as she does during an active summer, just because of the cold weather.

Be thankful we can talk about AMOUNT of food with dogs! Llamas don't increase the amount they eat, so for long cold winters, we have to change the amount of NUTRIENTS to keep them warm, rather than the amount of FOOD.

Tethering

"Tethering is simply keeping the dog on a leash all the time so that you can supervise the dog all the time. It can be attached at a buckle collar (most common) or any collar. Of course you can release the dog to play and run, etc., but at moments when you can supervise."

This is certainly my idea of tethering. Most new puppy owners want to give a puppy pretty much free rein of the house - BAD idea, like turning a toddler loose in a store and expecting him to behave as an adult would. Tethering is for housebreaking, for bonding, for keeping a puppy safe and with his "pack" while he learns what is and is not acceptable behaviour. I'll be getting a new puppy in September, and that puppy will be a) tethered to me, or b) in a crate for rest, or c) outside in the yard with the other dog, running around, or d) out on the bald prairie with me learning that the tether is more an emotional thing than physical.

The tether doesn't mean a chain-gang for the entire puppyhood. It means keeping the puppy safe, out of trouble, and with his family. For me as an owner, the tether will mean that the puppy is close enough to me a lot of the time that I will quickly get to know how the puppy says she has to go out, that she needs more exercise, that she's tired and grumpy, that she's hungry or thirsty.

I've had many adult dogs as well (rescues and dogs back from unsuccessful owners), and I can't think of a better way of bonding than to tether the dog to me. It gets the dog past that "where am I and why am I not at home?" stage faster than anything else I've tried.

The Dog That You Deserve

"I was thinking about the people who want the same yet later cannot manage or use all the drive and energy their chosen dog possess. I have met some who are in search of the "best", a search that never ends."

Alas, so have I.

Here's the scoop, people.

You get a dog. You do something with it - train it, compete with it, work it, love it - whatever you want to do with it.

When you want another dog, you show the breeder what you did with the first one, and a good breeder will help you choose a second one **THAT YOU DESERVE.**

I know a woman - bought a "show dog" (a Chihuahua). She did nothing but complain about the quality of that dog for 6 months, then sold it and went to buy a "better" one. Since she had done nothing with the first one and spent the whole time she had it badmouthing the breeder she got it from, the breeder she went to next didn't sell her the best one. She complained about that dog for 6 months, sold it, and went to buy a better one. And since she'd done nothing with **TWO** dogs, the third one was worse. She went through 8 dogs in 4 years and wound up with a dog I'd be embarrassed to walk down the street with, let alone show. And she got exactly what she deserved.

As a child, I also bought a "show dog" Chihuahua. She was awful, I got royally screwed, and I was told she was an excellent brood bitch. Well, that part was right at least, although now I know **MUCH** better than to breed an awful dog. I bred her and kept a puppy. He was also awful, but I showed him. Later another breeder said "He's awful." and I said "Yeah, but got his Championship, and we do tracking, and he almost got his Utility degree." And she sold me a **MUCH** better one. Cheap, because I had proven that I would do something with the dog.

That's from the breeder perspective.

From the owner perspective, this puppy is MY "best" - at the moment, from this litter, of this breed, etc. Not best, but POTENTIAL best. And potential is all you ever get. MY potential best is a tough dog to live with initially. She's opinionated and adamant and could be described as "hyperactive" and "too dominant". My husband has a scar on his face from a dogbite he got as a child, and MY potential best usually scares him a bit with her adamant opinions and willingness to back those up with attempted bullying. Breeders are always THRILLED when I choose MY potential best because they were worrying about which of their nice gentle pet people was going to get saddled with this monster.

Which is the point I'm trying to make here. Someone asked me why *I* got the pick of this litter. One answer is "because MY pick is going to be trained, competed with, worked, and loved". Another answer is "I didn't get THE pick, I got MY pick. Trust me, this puppy is not YOUR pick, which you would realize the first time one of her canine teeth slid under your toenail and she barked at you for yelling at her."

Most of the people picking up puppies from this litter had read Stitch's blog, which was fun for me. One of them said "This is the famous Stitch? I pictured something.. with horns... "

There Is No Boss

"I am confused though of how you handled getting her to realize you were boss"

I didn't even think about getting her to realize I'm the boss. Forget about it. There's no "boss" involved here. There's only a baby trying to find out the limits of who she is and what she can do to control her situation. I took liberties with her because she was so young - growling

back at her, as her mother would do, to let her know she had exceeded the limit of acceptable behaviour, and touching her on the neck rather suddenly (which is to say my touch said the same thing the growling did, NOT to say that I was whapping her one upside the head for being "bad"), again, as her mother would have done - and, as you saw, as Scuba was already doing, with good success.

Positive training IS what we do, and it IS extremely successful, with a couple of yahbuts: yahbut, not when the "bad" behaviour is self-rewarding, and yahbut not when the behaviour needs to stop, like, right NOW. Biting people (NOT play-biting among consenting beings) IS rewarding if it makes you do what he wants you to do (unhand him), and it's gonna stop right now because dogs who actually bite people, yes, even tiny dogs who actually bite people, die. I'm sure that I could have taught Stitch not to bite me positively, but given that I could stop the behaviour by using a punisher that she totally understood (as witness her response to the same punisher from Scuba), the behaviour ceased completely (the over-the-top behaviour) after the second punisher, and that the residual behaviour (play-biting a bit too hard) was gone by the end of the day with no more extra punishers than a brief snarl from me and making my hand go silent for a moment, it was successful. And basically, the entire huge correction consisted entirely of me growling at the pup, holding her off the floor for several seconds, and trying not to laugh, none of which violates my sense of what's acceptable in the beating-up-dogs department.

"Getting him into a classroom would be wonderful"

I meant the Training Levels classroom - YOUR classroom. Start training right now so he can start gathering a bagful of GOOD behaviours to get what he wants from you.

Training A Puppy

"wait until he is 8 wks old to start training"

PFooey!

I had Chihuahuas for a long time. Yes, a Chi puppy is MUCH younger than a pup the same age of a bigger breed - for instance, my Giant Schnauzer pups were demanding Real Food at about 2.5 weeks, while Chi pups weren't ready to start eating until around 5 weeks.

Nevertheless.

In the bad old days, conventional wisdom was not to start training a dog until it was a year old - that's how old it was when it was considered strong enough mentally and physically to handle the rigours of, basically, beating some civilization into them.

After a while convention figured out that they could actually learn something at 6 months, so we didn't start training them until they passed that magic age.

BUT what we're doing with clicker training and the Levels isn't harming the dog in any way. The pup will do what the pup wants to do. If the pup is too tired to learn, or too young to think, or too full to consider another bite of food, well, then training is done for now.

Your pup is learning every second he's awake, **RIGHT NOW**. He's going to learn a) whatever happens to cross his path, or b) what you want him to learn. The choice is yours. In other words, **YES! TRAIN HIM NOW! JUMP IN WITH BOTH FEET! EE HAH!**

For instance, the nipping. This certainly isn't going to wash a 7 week-old pup out of Service Dog school, but you **DO** need to figure out what he's doing. Is he nipping because he's afraid of you? Because you tried to pick him up? When you get near his food? Does he seem to be having a good time when he's doing it?

Without having seen the dog or knowing anything about him, I'd suspect that, as a Chi, he's very very young to have left his littermates (if any) and mom, and he's just doing what pups do - looking for someone in his family to tell him when he's reached the limit of acceptable behaviour.

Training

Jane, you sent a very long post yesterday talking about all kinds of adventures at and after training class with 11-week-old Binky. It sounded like a lot of fun for you, and lots of successes as well.

I need to caution you, however. For me with an adult dog, a training session might last for 10 minutes. There might be three or even four training sessions in an hour, with a break between each one.

But a baby puppy like Binky - I wouldn't work that baby more than 5 minutes at a time, with a relaxation break of at least 5 minutes in between. In a 1-hour training class, I'd be working that puppy in 5-minute stretches with breaks for maybe half an hour. Then I'd sit out and watch the class for 15 minutes, and then give her another 2 5-minute bits, and then the class is over. That's enough concentration for one day. If I was going to train any more that day, it would be at least, say, 5 hours later, after naps and food and free play, and would involve, again, 5-minute sessions with lots of time to relax in between.

What you're going for, with such a young pup, is overwhelming her. Flooding her. You said she was accepting things later because she was tired. Please don't put her in that situation. If she's tired, you're going to teach her to just shut down, glaze her eyes over, and stagger around after you. You have HUGE expectations of this puppy, and you really can't afford to shut her down. You have kids. Think of one of your teenagers as a toddler. You want the kid to be a nuclear physicist, so, at the age of 2, he's got an hour of astronomy at the university, then a

short drive to another hour of trigonometry with a tutor, then a 10-minute nap and a cookie and back to the university for an hour of calculus. And so the day goes. Jane, even if he appears to be having a good time, how long do you think he's going to last before he starts getting "tummy aches"?

Jane, please think about your puppy. She IS a toddler. By all means work her as much as SHE wants to work, but never for more than half an hour at a time, and even then, work in 2-5 minute sessions with long breaks in between. Any ONE of the things you described yesterday would have been plenty for a such a baby.

When to Begin Teaching Self Control

"I have recently be re-thinking at what point we should begin to train pups/dogs for the self control needed for public access."

Good points, all. Granted that you are correct, there IS frequently too much pressure put on young dogs to perform in ALL venues, so don't think for a moment that I'm arguing against this point.

OTOH, there are far too few dogs being brought up with the entire idea of self-control. "Oh, he's only three months." "Oh, he's only a year." "Oh, he's only five, he'll have plenty of time to learn to walk on a lead and not jump on people when he's..."9 what? Twenty-seven?

IMO, self-control is the foundation of civilization. This does NOT mean asking too much of puppies (or children), but it DOES mean using good foundation behaviours right from the beginning. I do NOT expect a baby puppy to walk on a loose lead for an hour at a fair, but I DO expect him to walk on a loose lead from the house to the car, and it's up to ME not to put him in a position where he can't control himself enough to give me a loose lead. Or carry him.

I don't expect a puppy not to greet people, but I DO expect him not to chew on people, not to bowl people over, and not to put his paws on people. To this end, I'll have him meet people who will teach him what I want him to know, and people who can't help with that simply won't get to meet him.

IMO, there's never anything like "he can jump on people until he's 8 months, then we start training". The kid isn't free to screech in movie theatres or throw food in restaurants because he isn't twelve yet. It's my job to teach him not to screech and not to throw food, and to keep him OUT of those places until he understands the rules.

Relaxation

Relaxation. A big topic. A big, important trick, for pets, for show dogs, for competitive performance dogs, for service dogs.

I teach baby puppies to relax "in hand" by simply not putting them down until they are hanging totally inert in my hands. This is generally easy for them to do when up high and away from their sibs, but when you start to put them back in the whelping box, they usually start to struggle in an effort to get down faster. It's important to pay attention. A little struggle will usually result in me stopping and just holding them at that level until they stop. A big struggle results in me standing back up and taking them further from their families until the struggling stops. Thus they learn to hang inert coming up off the ground and going back down to the ground. Once upon a time, a billion years ago, this resulted in very large dogs (105 lbs) understanding immediately that they had to be absolutely "silent" in their bodies when strapped to me to rappel in and out of helicopters.

I teach slightly older puppies to relax on tables. Important for any dog that will ever go to a vet for an examination, any dog that ever needs to be examined for any reason (important for my SD Scuba when she

found her first large patch of goat's head thistles in New Mexico!). First I make the dog totally comfortable on the table. I feed the pup her meals on the table. I put her on the table regularly and pet her and play with her gently on the table. I teach her to sit and lie down on the table, where it's easier for me because I am closer to her, not bending over, and can see her better than if she's on the floor. Thus she learns to be very confident and happy on the table.

Along with this I teach her the dangers of getting off the table. In my life, dogs are NEVER allowed to get off a table without an express invitation. While working on getting the dog totally comfortable on the table I scare them a little bit about the edge. With the pup on leash, I am reinforcing them for being on the table and in the middle of the table, for sitting and lying down on the table. I'm teaching Table Zen by showing the pup her food dish but not letting her have it until she's relaxed and "centred" on the table. On the very odd occasion when she thinks about dropping a paw over the edge of the table, or about getting down, I gasp loudly and act very relieved when she pulls herself back to the centre of the table. Eventually we work up to me pulling her gently toward the edge of the table with the leash, then clicking and rewarding when her opposition reflex helps her resist the pull and stay in the centre of the table.

When she's comfortable on the table, I put her on the table and start teaching her different ways of being lifted. My favourite way for adult dogs to be lifted is to grab a large handful of neck scruff in one hand (or grip the dog's jaw and throat with that hand) and put my other arm under the dog's belly. This allows me to lift even very large dogs off a table and put them down on the floor without bending over. NOT particularly useful for lifting a dog UP, but good for moving over and lifting down. So with the pup on the table, I start Assuming The Position and putting a tiny bit of lift on the scruff and belly, then clicking for her relaxation. By the time I am lifting her up or over off the table, the dog is totally relaxed, not grabbing for the table edge or struggling at all.

Another table manipulation I teach is for the dog to allow me to wrap one arm around her front legs just below her chest, the other arm

around her back legs just above the hocks, then lift slightly, tip her over (legs toward me, body away), and lay her down on her side on the table. The first few times I do this, I try to have a helper standing by to assume control of the dog's head as she goes down, while I maintain control of the feet. If you've prepared for this by teaching her to be comfortable on the table, to accept your scruff lift, etc, and if your technique is good in that you roll her onto her side rather than lifting and flipping her down, there really shouldn't be any struggle at all, but if she's mildly alarmed by it, your helper controls her head so she can't bang it around while you maintain control of the front and back leg closest to the table. If she can't lift her head and can't get that bottom elbow under her, she's basically going to stay on her side. Now you can start massage/petting/TTouch - rub her tummy, rub her ears, massage her legs, whatever she likes best to make her comfortable lying on her side on the table.

Meantime, I teach "Go To Mat" in the living room, although I find I like a dog hammock better than a mat for this "trick". It seems that off the floor is easier for the dog to understand than on a mat on the floor. I won't go into teaching GTM, everybody does it, but I try to teach it as many ways as possible, by luring, by waiting, and by shaping. When shaping, I work the pup to go to her hammock, climb up on it, sit on it, then to lie down in it. Then I either tie her near it or get a helper to supervise her on it while I start working another dog. The pup is ignored if off the hammock, but as soon as she climbs back onto it, she's peppered with treats. Thus she learns to get on her hammock, lie down, and stay there while exciting things are happening - other dogs are being rewarded, doorbell's ringing, I'm leaving the room, etc. I find the GTM behaviour far superior to putting the dog in a crate. In a crate (which the dog should also learn, BTW), the CRATE is controlling the dog, so the dog has no responsibility for relaxing or behaving. On the mat or hammock, the DOG is controlling the dog, the responsibility is hers, and that's what she's thinking about.

Using chair seats, coffee tables, pause tables, open car doors, the hammock, grooming tables, etc, we gradually get the dog calm, confident, relaxed, and controlling herself in hundreds of different locations.

I'd like to teach the dog to relax on her leash, but so far, by the time we get to teaching that, I've made the retrieve into such a default behaviour that it isn't worth the time to get the dog to lie on something she wants to badly to pick up and give to me.

While I'm working on the computer, I have a bucket of dog food on the desk next to me. Anytime I see a pup lying down in my vicinity, I click and toss a treat to her. Thus she learns that the living room/computer room is not the best place for playing rough games. I might go so far as to say that walking into this space makes the dog sleepy! I have to add that this is transferred as well to exercise pens, since as I'm keyboarding, I'm looking at a very enthusiastic and bored Giant Schnauzer with a broken leg who has now spent 3 weeks in a very small ex-pen in the living room without whining anytime except when her meals are coming.

I have several different cues. **DOWN** means to fold up everything and lie down. **LIE DOWN** means to give me a standard competition obedience down, over on one hip and with one front paw tucked under. **HIT THE RACK** means to get up on something like a table or chair, or to get in a crate. If the dog is already in a **LIE DOWN** and I ask for it again, I'll get an over-on-the-side flopout down. Then if the dog is looking around, I can ask for **PUT YOUR HEAD DOWN**. **THERE DOWN** means to hit the ground when in motion (**THERE** being a **STOP** cue, followed by **DOWN**). **GO LIE DOWN** is a more general cue meaning Get Outta My Face And Quit Wandering Around Bugging People. After a **GO LIE DOWN** cue I expect to find the dog lying down, but **WHERE** she lies down is her choice, as long as it doesn't involve being close enough to me to keep poking me asking for pets! **GLD** allows me to tell a dog who is "working a room" that she's pushing the limits of being allowed to stay and she'd better cool it or she'll be out in the yard all by herself.

From all these cues and behaviours put together, the dog learns to relax when in any down position. Then you get into more specific situations, such as the tucked-under-the-seat Down in the waiting area at the airport, the outright crash under the table in restaurants, the

immediate flakeout on the floor of an aircraft or on the floor of a car or truck, etc.



RECORD KEEPING

Sue's Training Journal Example

"I need something to help me gauge how many reps I'm getting in a day"

I do have one in my seminar handouts. It goes like this (for instance):

Behaviour: Go in crate and lie down

Steps: Reps Success

Look at crate/10: 3 7 9

Step toward crate/5: 2 3 3 5

Arrive at crate/10: 5 8

Head in crate/10: 6 10

Paw in crate/10: 8 2 paws in crate/10: 7 10 Dog in crate/10: 9

10

Sit in crate/5: 1 3 5

Down in crate/5: 3 5

Down count 1 Down count 2 (progress to Chutes & Ladders)

That is, I'm going to click her for looking at the crate. I'm going to give her ten opportunities (that is, I'm going to give her 10 chances of 1-second each - I want her to look at the crate IMMEDIATELY after getting a treat, offering me the next look right away rather than staring at me, sitting, whatever). The first time, I get what I would consider three successful reps out of the ten times I give her. Evaluate: is this a reasonable place to start? Yes, she just hasn't quite figured out what's going to make me click yet, but this is an attainable goal. Try another

ten. Seven successes. Evaluate: going well? Yes. Attainable? Yes. Move on? No, I won't move on until she's got 80% right.

Try another ten. 9 right, 90% success, we'll move on to the next phase - asking for a single step toward the crate. Now that she's looking at it, she's already started leaning toward it, so I'm thinking this will be an easy step, we'll go with five reps at a time. First five, she looks five times but only steps twice. Evaluate: reasonable? Yes, she'll get it. Another five: three right. Evaluate: going well? Yes, she can do it at this level. Another five: three right again. Evaluate: if she doesn't get better in the next five, I'll cut my criteria back, possibly to **LEANING** toward the crate. Another five: five right, 100%, she's got it.

Move on to the next phase - arriving at the crate. Five wasn't maybe enough for her to figure it out, we'll go back up to ten repetitions. First ten, five right, hey, good start! Second ten, eight right, 80% successful, super. Let's move on.

Head in crate - first ten reps, six right. I'm shaping! She's being shaped! Ee hah! Second ten, ten right, 100%. She's starting to actively look for what she's doing to make the click happen. This is great!

Paw in crate - she gets the first one wrong, only arriving but not going further. The second one she puts a paw in and gets a click. The third one, she touches the crate with her nose and gets nothing. Fourth, a paw, and no more mistakes - 8/10 correct.

etc.



SERVICE DOGS

We Go for a Walk in the City

You can't IMAGINE what combination of excellent weather and excellent medication that takes, but away we go.

There is a huge park in the middle of the city with walking trails all the way around it. After weeks of incredible cold, there's a group of walkers about every 100', and every third group has one or more dogs. The trails are a minimum of 6' wide. Stitch is curious and interested.

We stay in the car until there's a long empty stretch, then start out. She's not exactly walking on a loose leash, more sticking with me in a strange place, but I have plenty of chances to reward her and she soon hits her stride about 2' in front of me. She checks back in frequently. It isn't easy for me to remember to click when she's looking ahead of me rather than when she's looking at me. I guess I make about 40% looking ahead and 60% looking at me.

She starts checking the peemail and following footprints that go off the main trail, but always keeps the leash loose. This would be a no-brainer - except I walk slowly and pretty soon people start passing us.

We pull over to the side each time. I let her look but pull her back when she jumps at them, giving her a very short loose leash as soon as I can. The first three times she's too excited to think about food, but the path is wide enough that she gets no reinforcement for lunging and she's

eager for the treats as soon as the people are past. The people are excellent - obviously there are enough dogs out today that people have had their "dog fix" and don't need to be bothering us when we clearly are working on control. When the fourth group goes by, she stands with the leash loose, knowing she can "look with her eyes but not her paws".

Dogs take longer, but when the tenth one passes us, she's controlling herself. Mostly. Some of them aren't under any control at all except for the leash, and they're pretty attractive to her. By the 15th bunch, dogwalkers are starting to comment on how well behaved she is, and telling me they wished their dogs were that good.

Carrying Oxygen

I went to sleep thinking of harnesses and packs, woke up the same way. I wouldn't imagine a Groenendael would have any trouble carrying 5 to 10 pounds if reasonable built. The hitch weight on my dog cart is about 6 pounds, and my 40-pound Portuguese Water Dog has no trouble with it at all. My 10 yo 70 pound Giant Schnauzer doesn't appear to notice she's hitched, just goes about her business.

My first thought was - don't they have little carts for oxygen tanks that could be changed to fit the dog?

One possibility. For carrying, either a padded pannier on one side of the pack saddle, with a corresponding (exactly the same) weight in the other pannier to balance it.

Another possibility, a foam piece cut on the bottom to match the dog's back, and on the top cut to hold the tank, so the tank has no actual contact with the dog's spine. Some horse and llama packs have an X of wood at each end of the pack saddle so the spine is up in the middle of the X with no weight on it at all. Then appropriate straps to hold the pack to the critter and the load to the pack. A useful design of many

packs is that the panniers, with a strip of cloth in between them to make one unit, attach with Velcro and snaps to the pack saddle, so you can strip off the load when resting without having to totally undress the animal. Outward Hound makes very usable, comparatively cheap dog packs like this in two sizes, with a breast band and two cinch straps, and they're generally available at PetSmart, dog show vendors, and places like that, if you want to look a them.

Educating the Public RE: Service Dogs

"I like to imagine that all the outreach all of us do, all the explaining and sharing of service dog etiquette and info - is going to make it easier on the next generation of service dog users."

I know that in the five years I've been using Scuba in public, I've seen some remarkable changes. Minneapolis airport comes immediately to mind, since we go through there quite often. The first few times, the people checking tickets would look at me like I was stupid, make shooing motions with their hands, and say "You can't have that DOG here! He has to go in a KENNEL in CARGO!" And the passenger-type people were all over her. Now the staff is all well-trained and I can hear parents as I go by: "No, dear, that's a SERVICE DOG. He's WORKING. You can't pet him. Isn't he marvelous!"

About two years ago, though, we went through there the last day they had civilian security people in airports. We came up to the security gate, the guard looked at the dog and opened his mouth to tell me how to go through (leave the dog behind, come through, call the dog through), then saw it was Scuba and said instead "Oh, you know the ropes here, go ahead". As Scuba came through, he said, "May I touch the dog" and because I had said three or four times in the last few minutes "No, she's working", I said it again, probably in a rather surprised voice, as I would expect him to know better, and we walked

on. It was maybe a hundred feet further on that I realized he had wanted to EXAMINE her... in his capacity as a security guard. Oops.

Flying with a Large SD

This is where the booking agent at the airport can make a huge difference.

I'd be surprised if having a service dog in an exit row is legal, whether or not you're sitting on the window.

I've had airline personnel tell me all kinds of silly things - the dog needs to be seated somewhere where there are three oxygen masks but only two seats! Well, great, but most planes haven't been changed in that manner, so forget that.

I've had some tell me the dog has to be on the window, others on the aisle. I had one bozo insisting that the dog HAD to be under the seat in front of me with "the other carryons".

As has been pointed out, some bulkhead seating is terrific - as much room as there is in first class, lots of space for the dog. Unfortunately, some bulkhead seating is facing a solid wall. In this case, even if there's more room for your knees, there's less room for your feet and the dog. Even without the dog, I'd get awful cramps in my legs from not being able to stretch them out.

I've found a couple of planes that have, right in the back, one row of seats right in front of the LAST row where the plane has started to narrow toward the tail. At this point, there's room for 2 and a half seats on each side of the aisle, but of course they can't put half a seat in. The row in front has three seats, the row behind has two, but THIS special little row has two and then a HUGE space between the

"window" seat and the window wall. It's perfect for my 40-lb dog and would do very nicely for a much larger one as well.

And if this space isn't available on your particular plane, the exit row isn't viable, and the bulkhead is a solid wall, short of bumping to first class, your next best bet is to simply take a regular window seat and beg them to keep the seat next to you unassigned - which they will always do unless the flight is right full.

LLW and SDW Defined

I've got three distinct "walks" in my vocabulary. LLW (Loose Leash Walking) is just that - walking, leash loose. Doesn't matter if the leash is 50' long or 6" long, it's loose. By my definition of loose, the snap is hanging down, supported from the collar, NOT supported by the leash. For us, this is a default behaviour, when the leash is on, in the absence of any other cue, we're LLW. LLW doesn't imply any body position. The dog can be sitting, standing, sniffing someone's crotch, eating my shoes, peeing on a bush - as long as the leash is loose. And one more thing - not crossing back and forth in front of me.

Heeling is a very strict, obedience-trial competition behaviour. Heeling means the dog's head-to-shoulder area is even with my hip, the dog is as close as possible to my left side without touching me, her spine is facing the same direction mine is, and she's watching me constantly. This is a very difficult behaviour and not something I'm going to get for more than a few minutes at a time.

The Service Dog Walk (SDW) is also a distinct entity. The dog is close to me but not touching. Her body is aligned with the direction we're going, so her hips are not swung out into the aisle. She may be directly beside me, she may be slightly ahead of actual Heel position - my own default SDW is about 6" ahead of Heel position so I can see the dog's head out of the corner of my eye when I'm standing up straight,

walking, and looking where I'm going. From there the dog can also see me out of the corner of her eye, so doesn't have to be constantly staring at me or swiveling her head to find out where I am. When I stop, the dog stops - whether she sits when we stop or continues to stand depends entirely on what I want her to do. Our default is to remain standing. SDW is done entirely on a loose leash. In very crowded situations where I have to really watch where I'm going, I like to put a tiny bit of pressure on the leash so we have a bit more of a connection, but even so it's clear that the leash is only a connection, it isn't controlling the dog in any way. SDW is a default behaviour when the dog is wearing a leash and a vest. Our SDW is much more controlled than LLW, but not nearly as precise as Heeling. All three of these behaviours, however, start from a loose leash.

My Service Dog Myself

by Diane Shotwell

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I would like to speak a bit on how I "see" my service dog. Having this on going debate about being separated from a service dog for a person with disabilities on multiple lists has made me think strongly about how I can make others understand what being partnered with a service dog is truly like for me.

So many I interact with on a daily basis see my service dog as something I "bring along with me". This is so much different than how I see my service dog. My service dog is a integral part of "me". My service dog is my left arm that I can't extend and have limited use and creates a great deal of pain when used. My service dog is my neck were cervical injury and impingements create extraordinary pain and limits my movement to turn my head. My service dog is my legs that I use to lift me from a seated position when I no longer have coordination or strength to do so. My service dog is my back that used to bend to allow me to do so many

"simple" things that I used to be able to do without a thought. My service dog is my feet that won't fall to the floor properly or balance me so that I can walk without stumbling. My service dog is my emotional strength and guide that helps me venture past the threshold of my room to navigate a world filled with fear, overwhelming number of obstacles, well intentioned persons, and gives me the independence to do what I need to do to truly LIVE the best life I can live. My service dog is so many parts or "ME". She is my neck, my legs, my back, my arm, my feet, my balance, my spirit, my soul, my will and ability to surely live.

So when someone asks me to leave my service dog behind...they are asking me to leave "ME" behind. That I am not welcome or unsuitable be among them. They are asking me to not bring my legs, arm, feet,

Is this an emotional issue? You bet it is... When a person touches or interferes with my service dog they are touching my body, pulling on my cane, restricting my reach, violating "ME". It is so hard to help able bodied persons to understand this point. My service dog, myself...I have been able to feel made whole and abled by my service dog. I have been so blessed!!!

Blessings, Diane & Raven

Please Don't Pet Me, I'm Working

Scuba and I were in McDonald's at Wal-Mart this afternoon. As I was eating, a young man about 6 or 7 years old started asking me questions about Scuba. We had a nice chat and then he asked if he could pet her. I said no, and proceeded to explain that she was working, showed him her cape and patches saying not to pet her. He put his hands carefully behind him, got down on the floor in front of her, and rubbed noses. She licked his nose. He petted her muzzle with the sides of his face. He lay down in front of her on the floor and rolled over on his back. Scuba rolled over on her back and they looked upside down at each other.

Through all of this he kept his hands securely locked behind him, not petting her. Very cute.

Public Access Work-Out

Stitch and I go to Wal-Mart. I borrow their electric scooter, and we go off into the wilds of the store to find some unoccupied aisles - not easy as we're getting into the Christmas season.

Stitch rides at my feet on the scooter until we find an empty aisle, then I tell her to get off and we start practicing walking politely beside the scooter. I've brought a sample bag of Temptations cat treats - dry and very small but seemingly utterly delicious - to keep her focused in this very distracting situation.

I'm clicking for maintaining the desired position with her nose even with my knee. This isn't HER desired position, she'd rather be up front leading, but pretty soon she gets it. I put some effort into remembering to click when she's looking where she's going - I don't want her to spend her entire Service Dog career with her head cranked around looking at me.

When she's getting pretty good at maintaining position fore and aft, we go to the end of our aisle and stop just out of traffic so she can watch everyone walking by. This is tough. She wants to visit and sniff, sniff and visit, but she's boxed in on the left by shelves, and on the right by the scooter.

The leash is short enough to keep her out of the intersection, so she's got no real choice but to maintain position and watch the crowd. She really gets into this when she realizes she has no choice but she's going to get clicked for doing it right anyway. Wow!

When she's able to watch the people and hold position and still know what I'm doing - that is, when she's stopped drooling like a hick in the big city - we go back to our quiet aisle to work on some jobs. I brought a sock to drop, but just in case she won't pick it up, I start with the end of her leash. It takes her a few reps to decide that "Get That" might mean the same here as it does at home, but once she gets it, she... um... gets it. And gets it. And gets it. I drop the sock, she grabs it and gives it back. I toss the sock here and there and she gets it every time.

We go to another quiet aisle where there was a bit of packing foam on the floor, and I ask her to get it. Nope, can't, she'd have to get out of Heel position to do that, and she doesn't recognize it, so it doesn't have any inherent pull on her like the sock does. It's OK, you can do it, Get That. No, really, you CAN do it! So she goes to it - but it doesn't smell like me, so I didn't drop it and obviously wouldn't want it (good grief, I never worked on her picking up something I didn't drop first!). With a little more encouragement, though, she picks it up and gives it to me. I make a big fuss.

One more thing I've noticed. She's holding front-back position very well, now we need to work on a swing Finish to keep her close to the scooter and not glomming her butt out into the aisle. Between her butt and the scooter, people are starting to avoid the aisle we're in. She HAS a swing Finish, but not with me in the scooter. And, apparently, not in strange places unless I pivot to my left. I can't pivot left in the scooter, so I back up slowly instead. That does it, she scoots right in, and we spend the next 15 minutes working on better and better Finishes. By the end, when she gets too far out to the left, too far forward, or her butt starts drifting out, I just back up slightly and she corrects herself. I'm thinking next time we do this, I'll borrow the manual wheelchair so I can back up and pivot more easily.

Finally, we start going down aisles with one or two people in them and working on crotch-diving. Really, she's not THAT bad, she just wants to sniff their knees and packages as they walk by. At first I lure her past people, giving her a click and treat when each person has successfully past us without her turning her head toward them. Soon she figures it

out and I can pass people leaving her to ignore them on her own. I'm adding a cue I've used all my life - "Mind Your Business".

And we go home. Very good session.

Training to Walk in a Mobility Harness

"This harness isn't working, and now I understand why--it's made for the dog to want to pull really hard. "

The thing is, the dog can only pull if it's pulling AGAINST something. If there's nothing to pull against, it stops. If I wanted less pull in this harness that I'm using, I'd put a leash on the front ring AND hold the handle on the back. Every time the dog put too much pressure on the handle, I'd drop it and use the leash on the front to bring her back to start again. And I'd click a lot for the CORRECT pressure, and have the dog turn back to me to get the treat after the click.

Curling Up in Small Spaces

"My thought is that she is mostly likely to feel comfortable sleeping if she is able to see things approaching."

I'd turn that around and say she's more likely to feel comfortable sleeping if she's doing a job she's been trained to do. Teach her to curl up in a small space - I put a blanket around a kitchen chair. The blanket touched the ground on 3 sides and made a little cave. Then I taught her to back up into the cave. Once she was good at that, we increased the time and I started rewarding her for putting her head down, and pretty soon she started just going to sleep.

Once she could back into the cave in front of me, I started having her back under my legs when I was sitting down in various directions.



A few different ways Stitch is able to tuck herself into small spaces, out of the way and safe from getting stepped on.

Disabled Handlers and Competitive Obedience

"How do other competitors feel about competing against someone for example in a wheelchair?"

Disabled handlers are encouraged to compete in almost every venue. They must be able to get around on their own, so I think probably someone else pushing a wheelchair would not be acceptable, but electric chairs/scooters are. I have myself competed with canes and crutches.

As an instructor, I have had wheelchairs in the class situation and have instructed handlers in chairs to a) volunteer to make themselves available if any of their fellow competitors want to practise anything with their dogs near the chair, and b) speak to the judge ahead of time to find out if s/he has any concerns.

As a judge, CKC rules specifically mention disabled handlers and encourage the judge to (NOT change the exercise - the DOG must still perform the behaviours) change the way things are done to facilitate the handler. For instance, if throwing is a problem, it specifically mentions in the rules that the handler might tell the dog to stay in front of the jump, go around the jump and place or toss the dumbbell, then come back to the dog and send the dog. Figure 8 posts may murmur to let blind handlers know where they are. I worked with many deaf people both as a judge and an instructor.

I have a blind friend who has earned several awards in Rally-O, and another who has very successfully competed all the way through Portuguese Water Dog water trials.

Back to chairs - the judge is enjoined to determine heel position in discussion with the handler before the round begins, so the dog may heel to the handler's knee, hip, wheel hub, whatever as long as the dog finds a position and holds onto it. I have seen a paraplegic get High In

Trial. Don't know how others felt about it, but the applause was deafening!

Escalator Training

"I don't know of anyone who does this."

The Seeing Eye trains their dogs to do escalators. They say they have never had any trouble. My dogs, however, are hairy, and while I will do the sliding walks, I won't do escalators.

One of the first things I would teach would be to have the dog totally comfortable on all manner of moving things - wheelchairs, mats being pulled, wheelbarrows, dollies, electric carts - whatever you can find to train on.

Then I'd make sure the dog had a good response to a cue to get on and get off the item, and to stay on the item until told to get off.

Then I'd make sure the dog knew to remain in the stand position while travelling on the items.

Then I'd find a moving sidewalk and teach him to go on that.

And THEN I'd put him on escalators that were not turned on.

And THEN I'd put him on an escalator that was moving.

Expectations of a Service Dog in Public

"What have others done to train their dogs in public etiquette?"

Of course, I'm the Queen Of Self-Control (for dogs at least!). Yes, a service dog goes with you everywhere, but at the same time I think it's unfair to have your dog "in the faces" of other people, especially people who don't like or are afraid of dogs. So part of what I want from a dog is what **I** need, and part is, IMO, common courtesy to other people. What I expect of a child in public, I pretty much expect of a dog in public.

I expect the dog not to be underfoot, not taking up any more space than it needs to. This doesn't mean that the dog has to be hiding under my skirt, but, especially if it's a large dog, that her body is in line with my body or wheelchair. By that I mean that her butt isn't swung out taking up the whole aisle in a store, and she's walking close to me. By the same token, I expect a child to be walking near his mother, not swinging a baseball bat around his head, and I expect people to park their shopping carts over to one side so I can get by. Common courtesy.

I expect the dog to be under her own control. By this I mean that the dog isn't well-behaved because **I** am controlling her. If I drop the lead, the dog might stop, pick it up and hand it back to me, but otherwise my dropping the lead made no difference to how she behaved. The lead wasn't keeping her beside me, keeping her out of people's crotches, or keeping her quiet. I don't expect a child to be kicking people in the shins or digging for spare change in the fountain just because mom let go of his hand.

I expect the dog to stay away from food. Whether it's food at a buffet, or food on a counter near a cash register, or food on the lower shelves in a grocery store, I expect the dog to stay away from it. I don't want to buy an apple that some kid has been licking, and I don't want to buy a peach that a dog has been drooling or shedding on.

I expect the dog to ignore other people and dogs. "Oh can I pet your dog?" isn't an invitation for the dog to jump on people, nor is walking near a dog an invitation to be crotched. I don't mind Scuba perking an ear to say "Oh, mom, look! There's a guide dog over there!", but I DO expect her to keep working in spite of it. If I want my dog to be able to visit those five kids at the airport, I'll take off her cape, thank you very much. Until I take off her cape, she's on duty, and duty means paying attention to me and not to others.

I expect a dog to be clean (guess that doesn't come under the heading of training, but I think it's important anyway). I resent having to sit beside a filthy child, I resent having to sit beside a baby that desperately needs changing, I resent sitting on a plane next to a guy that doesn't understand what deodorant is for, and I resent having to smell dirty dogs. And I LIKE dogs. And kids. And sometimes even guys.

In short, I guess I want people to be very impressed with working dogs. Impressed not only with the work the dog does, but with the general behaviour of the dog. "Golly, Marsha, I didn't want kids allowed at the opera either, but Donna's two kids come every month. They really seem to enjoy the music, and they're very well behaved. They don't interfere with MY enjoyment of the music at all! So I guess kids at the opera isn't a bad idea after all!"

I'm thinking of my Scuba and Debi Davis' Peek at Cirque du Soleil last month. Yes, we have the right to take our service dogs with us. But those tickets cost \$125 a crack, and we do NOT have the right to interfere with anyone else's enjoyment of the performance. (Scuba and Peek, BTW, unlike the human audience, appeared to think CdS was extremely boring. They both slept through the entire performance).

Foundation Behaviors and Service Dog Requirements

"Do I let him be a puppy or try working on the foundation for a SD requirement"

Yes.

The way I look at training a puppy - and here's the difference, in my mind, between "foundation" behaviours and "SD requirements" - is that there is a core of civilization behaviours that every "professional" dog must learn. Focus on handler. Self-control. Retrieving. Walking on a loose lead. Being excited to learn. Entering a new situation looking for what will work and what will not. Come. Sit. "Table" training - whether you call it Go To Mat, Stay, pause table, stay on leash, Settle, whatever. Riding politely in vehicles. Eating what is put down when it is put down. Eliminating on lead. Allowing touching, including tooth brushing, toenail clipping, etc. Polite greetings.

From the foundation behaviours, or the core of civilization, I see ALL jobs radiating out as from a central hub. I've often said that a mature dog with an experienced clicker trainer and excellent foundation behaviours should be three weeks from a beginners title in pretty much ANY dogsport or job.

Scuba, for those of you who haven't met her, is the poster child for this philosophy. We practised lots for her pre-beginner water title (Junior Water Dog) because I'd never seen a water trial, but when she passed Junior and was invited to try for Apprentice Water Dog the next day, she learned the Apprentice behaviours OVERNIGHT. We were asked to do a Newfie water and drafting seminar, so in a week she learned the behaviours necessary for a drafting test. Not perfectly, by any means, but by my philosophy she still had two weeks left to practise them ;*D. She earned her Herding Started title with three weeks of training. These things are possible because of the foundation behaviours and attitudes that the dog already knows. How to learn. How to control herself. How to stop doing things that aren't working to get her what

she wants. So if I'm asked "Can that dog bring you a wheelchair?" the answer is (and proved to be) "Yes. That sounds like a '7-minute' behaviour." Can that dog go where you're looking? "Yes. That's a 20-minute behaviour." Can that dog weave between your legs? "Yes, that's a 2-minute behaviour."

Do I let the puppy be a puppy or work on foundation behaviours? Of course. Toddlers don't have to do calculus or work from 9 to 5 every day and golf on weekends, but they DO have to be polite to people or they are removed from the situation. Mine learned to spell in Ameslan while I was driving the car. Oh, look, Wendy's! That's W, E, N, D, Y. See how my fingers make the W to look like the first letter in WWWWendy? Can your fingers do that? Let's make a song about Wendy's!

And quit work-play before the puppy does. ALWAYS.

Good Enough?

"So my mutt rescue herding dog has no hope of being perfect like Scuba and Stitch.."

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA. It is to laugh.

But the real answer to your statement is that Scuba and Stitch are not, never were, and never will be perfect. What they are is as good, I think, as they can be, given the training they've had and the mental and physical capabilities (or lack thereof) of their handler.

In public, their public-access behaviours have to be virtually perfect, as Service Dogs and the people who use them walk a precarious line between dog-haters and politicians (an ugly place to be!), not at all helped by the people who pass off their untrained dogs as Service Dogs in public places where "normal" dogs are not allowed.

"I can see how some service dogs' service demands more than others. "

Yes. My SDs do a lot of public work, since at home I can generally just drift to a stop, and if the laundry doesn't get done or the phone doesn't get answered because the dog isn't performing, so be it, but in public I'm frequently too tired and sore to pick up my car keys, which I drop because I'm tired and sore. Or my wallet. Or the stuff I just bought. Or my purse. Or my suitcase. I generally sort days into how much money I wouldn't pick up if the dog wasn't there. Some days are \$5 days, some days are \$100 days. Still, my dogs aren't detecting seizures, nor are they dialing out for an ambulance, or bringing me the call button that I dropped to summon an aide.

"How does a dog of yours "wash out"? (But dogs don't wash out of the levels do they?!)"

Dogs come in smart and dumb and skittish and slow and panicky and some dogs, like some (recent) people will get the wrong idea no matter how well something is explained to them. IMO Giant Schnauzers are incredibly intelligent. They're called "The dog with the human brain" and they're a thrill to work with. That said, I had one given to me that all and sundry called "Slick the Brick" or "Hey, Slick you Doorknob, how ya doing?" Slick was beautiful, a consummate showdog, benign and gentle and kind. Totally strangers would look at his face and say "What a sweet dog!" - which is not normal for a big old German working dog. But it took me 6 weeks to teach Slick to sit. When he knew something, it was ingrained forever, but he really was dumb as a post. He washed out of every dogsport except conformation, and was super in public because he just walked wherever the leash told him to with a sweet smile on his face.

So yes, there are dogs who aren't smart enough to handle all the Levels. There are dogs who can't take that tiny amount of pressure. There are dogs with such a long history of bad training that they'll never be able to trust a human. In general, though, it's PEOPLE who wash out of the Levels. Some because they can't be bothered training their dogs,

some because their lives are too insistent to leave time for training their dogs, some because a Level (say) 2 dog is beyond their wildest dreams and they're totally satisfied.

A dog of mine washes out of anything when a) she can't or won't learn the job; b) she can't or won't perform the job; c) getting her to do the job costs me more than I can afford or more than the job is worth to me; d) learning or doing the job costs her more than I'm willing to ask her to give.

My Giant Schnauzer, at 11 yo, still lived to run agility, but she knocked down every bar jump and started looking like she was throwing herself over the jumps. That's costing her more than I'll ask her to pay. She can run fun matches with the bars on the ground and everybody cheering.

Scuba, at 11 yo, might still be going with me to seminars, but after 3 hours of work, she'll sleep the rest of that day and most of the next. So do I ;*), but that decision is MINE. Two days of sleep for 3 hours of work is more than I'm willing to ask of her.

Stitch is a bit leery of small children. This won't wash her out of SD work because it's a BIT leery, she can handle it, and one of these days I'm going to work on it long enough that she'll start dreaming happy dreams about seeing kids.

Handling the Public

"How does one handle the situation when you're busy walking in a store and someone starts to call the dog to them?"

I say "Scuba, mind your business, dear!" Mind Your Business is sort of a Watch cue for her, so that takes care of her. Then I look at the person, smile, and say "Sorry, she can't talk right now, she's working." If

they seem to not have a clue what I'm talking about, I can continue "lecturing" Scuba: "You have a very important job, you know, and you have to REALLY concentrate! What a good helper you are!" This has two benefits - it gives the people a little more information, and it keeps Scuba focused on me. And it doesn't get me involved in a long conversation with people when I'm tired and achy and all I wanted to do was get a few groceries and go home.

Hidden Disabilities

" I guess I'm really insecure about how we're doing since I do not know other SD teams. And since Bill is not "certified" the teams we meet are actually pretty outraged that I'm using him particularly since my disabilities are not visible."

I have to answer this post because it's an interesting problem and because so few people know how to spell "trouper" and you did!

Competition heeling has NOTHING NOTHING NOTHING ZERO NADA NOTHING to do with a SD, any more than the ability to do weave poles has anything to do with a SD. NOTHING. Here are the walking positions MY dogs need to know:

LAZY LEASH - don't care where the dog is, as long as the leash is loose and she's not crossing back and forth from side to side. This is relaxed, pleasurable. If I want her closer (eg if we're crossing a street or passing someone), I shorten the leash, but it remains loose. Dog doesn't have to look at me at all.

SERVICE DOG WALK - for me, that means her shoulder to ribcage is even with my leg so I can see her without having to glance down at her. It means she can see me out of the corner of her eye without constantly looking at me. Most of her looking is where she's going, as it should be. When she's really on the ball, she swings her head over

every few steps and touches me gently on the knee with the side of her muzzle, so I know she's there. Again, the leash is totally loose UNLESS we're in a very crowded place, then I either ask her to drop back behind me or I put an ounce of pressure on the leash just to maintain a higher degree of contact so I know for sure she's not tripping someone or getting kicked.

HEEL - competition obedience behaviour, which I'm teaching her because she's going to be doing competition obedience sometime. Also Heel on the right because she needs that for Rally. This is a COMPETITION ONLY behaviour, has NOTHING to do with service dogs OR pet dogs. Heel requires the dog to be as close to your left leg as possible without touching, spine facing the same direction as yours, head to shoulder even with your hip. This is a 2 - 3 minute behaviour at MOST, it is NOT a 10-minute job. My dogs can do SD Walk for half an hour without difficulty, but if I asked for heeling for that length of time, I'd get pretty lousy heeling because heeling requires intense concentration on NOTHING but heeling.

Agility walking, herding walking - dog is with me, paying attention to me, but rarely if ever actually staring at me, she's committed to the sheep or obstacles she's going to take next and only looking to me for an indication of what direction we're going in.

Lyssa, many of us have hidden disabilities. If your dog is not a real service dog, not doing you a service that you need, shame on you. If your dog IS a real service dog, doing something that helps you cope with your disability, then stand tall (or as tall as possible ha ha) and just get on with it. If someone asks what my disability is, I reply that I only discuss my medical condition with my doctor. If they ask what the dog does for me, I'm happy (usually) to discuss her many amazing jobs. For me, the fact of hidden disabilities means that I take great pains to ensure that my SD is always clean, always presentable, always on her best behaviour, always unobtrusive, and always always dressed in her SD cape. I want people to identify her immediately by her dress and demeanour as a SD. If they mistake her for a pet, it's because they weren't paying attention. Sometimes people say "Oh, are you training her then?" and I just say "No, she's working."

It sounds to me that by announcing to your instructor that Bill is a SD, you've scared the instructor. Now he is "responsible" for teaching your dog something important, and he doesn't know anything about the job.

Sounds like it's time to sit down with the instructor and tell him what YOUR priorities are. If Bill was supposed to be a herding dog, it would be ludicrous for the instructor to be insisting that he focus his eyes on you constantly. The instructor doesn't KNOW that this criteria is wrong for a SD as well.

Before you talk to him, it would be wise to write out your criteria for the things he's teaching:

Heeling - shoulder to ribcage even with my hip, looking where he's going, leash totally loose, backing to retain position while turning left and staying in tight while turning right.

Come - coming fast and direct to Heel position on my left side, NOT stopping in Front position.

Stay - DownStay is what I want. We will never practise a SitStay.

Stand For Examination - this is very important, but I need him to Stand For Exam while he is examined all over, including taking off and putting on his SD cape, having the examiner open the pockets and feel under it. And I won't be on the end of the leash, I'll be right beside him.

Those are just suggestions. Write out your own criteria so you have it clear when you're talking to him.

And remember that ANY kind of competition is a hobby. Your dog has a Real Job. Nobody would say "I can't drive a taxi because I collect stamps". Stamps are a hobby. Driving cab is a job. Bill has a job. My dog has a job. I DO teach competition heeling, but it's a HOBBY. My dog has to be very, very good at her JOB before I decide to let her have hobbies. For sure I am not going to teach her heeling until she's very, very good at my definition of Service Dog Walk. I'll teach her to

Watch, to Lazy Leash, to Down and Go To Mat, to Retrieve and bring to my hand - all the SD behaviours she needs to know, and then, if we need something to do, we'll branch out into hobbies.

Leash On - Leash Off

"I guess I'm actually presenting 2 questions here - training off leash and testing off leash. The dogs are all compatible and the trainers are all "in the game" - Thoughts???"

Sure, go for it, as the dog is able to concentrate and stay in the game. Be warned: dogs worked with leashes off are NOT doing the same behaviour as they are with the leash on! I recently realized that Stitch, at 18 months, has a problem that she freezes when I put the leash on her. So now I'm working her through that.

"These dogs are in a program that will eventually have them working with the disabled, so it is entirely possible that their future handlers will not have the physical ability to use the leash for anything except to basically keep them "connected"."

I'm not in any way trying to say that you need to use the leash, just that, say, one day a week, you should work with the leash ON the dog. Use a 4' leash and let it drag. One of Scuba's best "tricks" is picking up her leash, which I am constantly dropping (being is it's so terribly important for keeping her under control ;*/), and untangling her legs from it before she hands it to me. I never would have thought of that - she taught herself because she's a person who likes a deep pet/hugle, but isn't in to little tickly things happening on her.

Levels and Service Dog Work

"Do you think any dog can be trained to respond like this via the levels or do you think some dogs have a temperament that makes it just not possible? "

That's a very long and involved discussion which has been going on for centuries, and will continue for many more.

No, any dog cannot be trained to be a Service Dog and to be superlative in public situations any more than every kid with the right education can work with string theory and nuclear physics.

I put a great deal of expertise and time into searching for that ONE pup which has a good chance of becoming the "physicist" that I need, and I'm always cognizant of the possibility that the ONE pup I have chosen and have spent a year or longer training will flunk out. If I've spent a year training her, and felt the possibility was there strongly enough to have bothered training her for a year, she's likely to be a great pet, and would probably be pretty darn good at most dogsports, but she can still wash out as a Service Dog. I've had dogs wash out of obedience, wash out of conformation, wash out of sled racing, wash out of scent hurdle racing, and wash out of herding.

That said, I'm very confident that you can give ANY dog the absolutely BEST chance it could possibly have by a) teaching it with operant conditioning; b) dividing the teaching into very small, manageable steps; and c) given the dog reasons she can appreciate to learn and perform. The Levels provide that, if you follow them.

Looking back over the last (gosh, it can't be!) 48 years of dog training, I can certainly see problems I've had that were produced by the methods I was using, and problems that wouldn't be problems now because I could have solved them where there was no way to fix them back in the "good old days" of compulsion training.

Misc and Making a Plan

"I've been told it's TABOO to go anywhere and not take your SDIT or SD. But I miss my family"

Well, sometimes Life just interferes in the Best Laid Plans of mice and people. I'm not going to take a SDIT to get a CAT scan, for instance, and I wouldn't take one to my in-laws regardless, because they'd hate her and life would be even more miserable. So go visit your family. Personally I think SDs should know about boarding kennels too, before a boarding kennel would be a big hairy horrible thing.

As to training the dog when she is in a situation she knows about and is reacting badly, sit down, write out your plan. What EXACTLY do you want? And don't write out impossible things like "I want her to behave", and don't write out four hundred things either like "I want her to walk in the door on a loose leash, stand on her head, wag her tail clockwise, count to a hundred with her left hind foot, tuck in under the couch, ignore the other dogs, and make supper". Write out ONE behaviour.

Write out what YOU are going to do. What treats are you going to use? How are you going to help her perform that ONE behaviour? Simply wait for it? Lure it? Shape it? What about setting factors? Will she be half an hour hungry or eight hours hungry when you get there? Pottied? Family informed of their duties? Got your clicker? Treats arranged? Short leash? Long leash? Sit in the kitchen? Living room? Ask for the other dogs to be put away? Ask no one to touch her or look at her? Sit in the parlour all alone while you train her and then put her out in the car? Everything else under control?

Now go do it. ONE behaviour in ONE visit.

Next visit, either write out what you are going to do to repeat the behaviour from the first visit, or write out another plan for a second behaviour.

Multiple Jobs

" We need him to not have that drive and speed of going to obstacles when he needs to be careful with me and slow and steady."

My dogs do "everything" - drafting, herding, rally, agility - and service work. I just make sure that I have a really good response to the vest - that the dog knows when she has the vest on, that's her ONLY job. When the vest comes off, she's a different person entirely.

Need Service Dog Help

"I posted a while ago about my now 3 month old Lab/Shepherd mix who is supposed to become a service dog

We have been doing level 1 and she is doing really well as long as I have the clicker and the treats. I stopped carrying the treats on me and started to put them on a shelf or other places. Angel shows absolute no interest if she does not see the treats on me. I tried the Level 2 "Sit". But she does not get it. How long do I use the clicker and treats for an old behavior and which part do I quit first, Clicker or treat?

I also received finally her vest and started to take her to stores. But she barks a lot (in a friendly way) at people or other dogs. She still wants to play a lot. Any advice on socialization?

Also, how fast do I need to work? For example, I keep 10-15 sec between commands. Is that too slow? And how many commands can I teach her at the same time. I did the Come Game for a week and she started to get bored. So I did the Come Game and sit together for 2 days and after that added another. Is that correct? She needs a lot of input otherwise she loses interest very quickly."

"Level 1 and she is doing really well as long as I have the clicker and the treats"

Just as I'd expect in Level 1. This is where you are just BEGINNING to explain your relationship to her. Carry treats in your pocket all the time, carry your clicker in your other pocket all the time. Once in a while, I'd click and treat a behaviour ten times in a row, then put the clicker and treats in my pocket and reward the behaviour one more time from my pocket, then go back to clicking and treating.

"I tried the Level 2 "Sit". But she does not get it."

Doing it without the treats on you is the TESTING behaviour, not the training behaviour. These Levels were written for an average of three months' training per Level, so at this point you're about 5 months away from having her ready to test the L2 Sit.

"I also received finally her vest and started to take her to stores. But she barks a lot"

You already had suggestions on this - she is much too young to be a Service Dog In Training at this point. She shouldn't be in dog-restricted stores now at all, let alone wearing a vest. The vest says that she is capable of doing some of her Service Dog behaviours, and knows a lot about people and places and how to behave, and is now ready to start perfecting the minor details. Have you read Stitch's blog?

<http://www.sue-eh.ca/page24/blog/files/archive-aug-2004.html>

She didn't start wearing her In-Training vest until she was about 18 months old. By then she was between Level 4 and 5, and had been many times to work at the dog park, at pet stores, in parking lots, in Home Depot and other stores where "normal" dogs are allowed. The first day she wore her In-Training vest, we went to Wal-Mart, where I borrowed a wheelchair and we went to a completely empty dead-end aisle and worked there, then left.

"She still wants to play a lot. Any advice on socialization?"

Of course she does, she's a baby puppy. Socialization - dog park, puppy classes, puppy parties, puppy play dates, and other normal-dog events.

"I keep 10-15 sec between commands. Is that too slow?"

Yes.

"I did the Come Game for a week and she started to get bored."

Not bored. Uninterested. 10-15 seconds between events? Severe lack of information happening here. That's 4 to 6 events a minute.

Scuba is a 9 year old Level 7 dog. For her, I can leave 10 seconds between clicks and have her stay In The Game.

Stitch is a 21 month old Level 5 dog, and she learns best with 1 to 3 seconds between repetitions. Average 2 seconds per rep, that's THIRTY repetitions in a minute, as opposed to your reported average FIVE repetitions per minute. Your pup needs a TON more information than that in order to stay in the game!

"She needs a lot of input otherwise she loses interest very quickly."

Yes, and so far she's not getting enough. Watch how many camera changes there are on Sesame Street as opposed to the evening news - new brains need lots of stimulation!

No, You Can't Pet My Service Dog

"I have gone as far as refusing to let people pet him and it has not gotten us very far, they always try to sneak a pet in when we are at checkout."

This is a big problem with having a service dog. When Scuba and I first started going out in public, I was befuddled, but I gradually realized that this isn't a situation that's helped by befuddlement. I haven't been really bothered at ALL since I stopped fuddling. I treat it pretty much as if somebody asked if I would take off my shoe so they could practise tying shoelaces. Sort of a gosh-I-wish-I-could, but-circumstances-don't-allow-me-to-do-that situation.

I usually say something like "No, she's a working dog and she has to concentrate. I'm sorry." I don't think this has so much to do with what I say as how I say it. No, you can't. End of story. Once you allow one person in a situation to pet her, you've lost the battle. Why can't everybody?

When I'm in a waiting situation, like at an airport, I occasionally meet a child so fascinated and well-behaved that I WANT to let her pet. I then make a production out of taking off her vest (NOBODY pets the dog when she's wearing her vest), and give her a "command" like "OK, Dude, Go Talk To The Lady".

I'm sure that Debi Davis would handle this in an operant fashion (gosh, that woman DOES wear off on people, doesn't she?!), maybe like this: GOSH! I'm glad you asked! Unfortunately, no, you can't pet him, he really needs to concentrate on me, but you CAN help me train him! That would be SO GOOD of you! If you would just stand THERE, and snap your fingers a couple of times, then I can reward him when he doesn't look at you! WOW, that was GREAT, you did SUCH a good job of trying to distract him! I really appreciate your help!

She's going to make me a better person in spite of myself!

Non-Barking Alert

"So, my question is what is an EFFECTIVE alert that ISN'T barking?????"

Congratulations on the Giant Schnauzer! I had 17 generations of them before I got old enough to need something smaller.

I've always liked one of the alerts used by some search & rescue dogs - they wear a harness with a dowel attached by a line. When the dog finds a person, he grabs the dowel and takes it to the handler.

Please Don't Pet

"I find sometimes the reaction with kids and adults, is that they feel they have been scolded..."

When I say "Not when she's in uniform, but thanks for asking" it diverts "blame" to the service cape. Sure, they could pet the dog, *I* would LOVE them to pet the dog. The DOG would love them to pet the dog. Golly gosh gee whiz, but it's the stupid uniform that prevents it. Better luck catching her when she's not wearing it!

I have never had a bad reaction to this phrase. Once in a while someone replies with "Can't you take it off her?" but then I say "But then she wouldn't be working, and I need her help. And then she'd be 'just a dog', and dogs, of course, are not allowed in (grocery stores, whatever)".

Public Access Training

"I'm looking forward to going shopping tomorrow!"

Be careful with that - if you want to go shopping, go shopping, but if you want to go training, go training. I thought of this when you said another person was going with you - what's the other person going to be doing while you are waiting for attention? Be sure that you write down what you are planning on doing, so shopping doesn't become the priority.

When Four Eyes Meet

"My suggestion is divert this attention away from the other dog. You might try talking to your dog, giving him a treat, or both owners walking their dogs on the left to keep them away from each other."

Again, that's good management, but it isn't training. Most guide schools use traditional training, which includes correcting the dog for thinking about another dog. Which makes the dog think that he'd better get his licks in sooner and harder next time, since he saw the dog and got hurt. Training involves telling the dog that he IS capable of seeing another dog and continuing on with his life in a relaxed manner. This is not a breed-specific item in any way. Giant Schnauzers can get huffy with other dogs in the worst way - in fact, most dog owners are concerned about having their dogs around Giant Schnauzers, but I've had many Giant Schnauzers who just rolled their eyes when confronted with all the bravado and posturing of a poorly-trained dogs. "Gee, fella, didn't anybody ever teach you about MANNERS?"

"By the time we got our dogs, they were well trained including obedience training."

I have a huge problem with that statement. Giving a "well-trained" Guide Dog to a client when the dog is willing to get in fights (and it sounds as if the dogs were more than willing, they were actively seeking fights) sounds to me like a lawsuit waiting to happen. If I couldn't stop a dog from thinking about fighting with ANY other dog before the client showed up, that dog would be a washout. In fact, willingness to get in a dogfight, whether a guide dog, service dog, obedience dog, agility dog, rally dog, herding dog - whatEVER, indicates to me that the dog isn't NEARLY ready to be doing any kind of work at all, since he doesn't have the basics. I'd consider Loose Leash Walking to be very close to the beginning of what a dog needs to know about life to be a guide dog.

SD and Tricks

"Does any one have a good one two liner that is informative and not too mean for when people ask what "tricks" my Service Dog can do?"

The dog doesn't know the difference between a "trick" and a "job". Neither does the public. Tricks are things the dog does so people can appreciate her, how smart she is, and the enormous amount of training that went into getting her where she is.

So here are my SD's tricks, and they are ALL useful in her "real" job:

shake hands, left or right on cue
touch my hands with her nose, left or right on cue
touch my feet with her paws, left or right on cue
look at me, scan in front of her, look at me, scan in front - on cue
put her head down
cross her front paws
retrieve my shoes from a pile of other people's shoes
pull off my socks
brace

stand from sit or down on cue
sit from stand or down on cue
down from sit or stand on cue
back up
retrieve her leash
retrieve my car key
find/retrieve the tv remote
put the laundry in the washer
take laundry from washer, put in dryer
take laundry out of dryer, put in basket
bring basket
retrieve credit cards from tile floor
retrieve a dime from floor
refuse food offered in hand, or on floor
bring her dish to be fed
put her dish in basket after being fed
pick up toys and put in toy basket
pick up pop cans and put in recycling bin
pick up paper trash and put in trash
spin left or right on cue
look left or right on cue
retrieve left or right or up or down on cue
stay in left heel position while I sidestep to my right
stay in right heel position while I sidestep to my left
heel on the left or right side
come front
finish left or right, swing or go-around
jump anything
go to mat on any mat and stay there, or no mat at all
untangle her leash from her feet before handing it to me

So when people ask me what tricks she does, I tell them she can do the laundry. They all go ooh and aah, and then I say that she isn't THAT great, she's lousy at separating colours, and she isn't allowed to iron any more because she burned two shirts last week.

Or sometimes I toss a defunct credit card on the floor and get her to pick it up, and when they ooh and aah, I tell them that I'm very careful never to let her out the door with the car keys AND a credit card.

Both these "tricks" emphasize the fact that she's a working dog and that she's better trained than any dog they ever imagined, even Lassie.

People aren't asking about tricks to insult your working dog, they're asking about tricks because they want to relate to the dog. I NEVER interact with people if I don't want to, but I think that part of my job is to educate people about SDs, so if I have time and I'm in the mood, if they ask about tricks, or ask what she does to help me, I'll drop my car keys, or my backpack, or her leash, or just take a step backwards and sideways, and then they get to see her doing something marvelous.

Ooh. Aah. Wow, did you see that aMAZing dog?

Levels and SD Work

"The levels you have listed on the webpage are geared toward sporting events. What would your suggestions be for assistance dog behaviors when using your level system? What would you add that is not already there? What have you found is the time involved to teach each level?"

I use some sporting behaviours to help the dog and handler learn the necessary basic behaviours (duration, self-control), but I can't see anything as a detriment to service dog training, or something that the service dog wouldn't be able to use. The swing finish, for instance, IS definitely a sport behaviour, but I've seen MANY questions on assistance dog lists about how to get that butt in square with a wheelchair so the dog isn't blocking the entire aisle at the grocery store, and the answer is, teach it the Finish.

I worked through the Levels ahead of ourselves on Retrieve with Stitch, as I want to be able to take her places by herself and I need Scuba to pick up things I drop. Now that Stitch can pick things up, Scuba can stay home when we're going to train.

I thought of the return-around-behind on Stays, but what that teaches the dog is that when I ask for a Stay, I'd like a Stay, whether I'm in front of her or behind her or over there off to one side of her.

The Contacts behaviours are to build confidence in different surfaces, teach the dog where her feet are, and get some Distance other than going around poles. Not to mention that agility is probably THE most disabled-friendly sport there is, and dogs don't have to be registered to participate. L5 Contacts require a two-obstacle course, which has come in handy for me a gazillion times. Fine to say there's always an elevator with escalators, but sometimes it's a mile back THAT way, sometimes it's out of order, sometimes I'm missing my plane... and I do NOT want Scuba doing escalators. I can put her on a Stay at the top of stairs, take the escalator down, and when I'm nearly at the bottom, cue her to do the stairs and we meet at the bottom.

Front, I guess, isn't really necessary, but it really helps to have worked on it when you're ready for a delivery on a Retrieve. I certainly wouldn't have any trouble with a trainer modifying the definition of the Front - facing my left shoulder, butt straight ahead of me, for instance, to facilitate a retrieve delivery later for a person with only a good left hand.

Heeling is a competition behaviour, but there have been many times when I was out with my SD that circumstances required more of her than good LLW. When there's a lot of commotion, scary stuff happening or really delicious or attractive stuff happening, being able to ask for total attention gets her nose out of other people's business and allows me to get out of the way without having to think about what her nose is doing.

Scenting is a competition behaviour, but when I dropped my keys in the winter trash in the gutter, Scuba burrowed straight in under the

gum wrappers and other junk and brought me the keys. We would have been there for half an hour if she was going to pick up everything there and bring it to me. Or she could have lost interest if I kept telling her "not that" every time she picked something up. If I was training a SD, I probably would stick with my objects vs other objects rather than using scent articles - for instance, my key ring in a bunch with other people's keys, empty coffee cups, etc.

If I wanted the dog to push buttons, I'd go through the Target behaviours all the way to L7 pretty quickly, and add in a button target instead of a blank wall.

Jumping is a competition behaviour, but between the Jumps and Go To Mat, I've got a dog that I can glue to a chair for hours. In fact, in the middle of an asthma attack, she once spent three hours curled up on a chair in my cubicle in the emergency department, out of everyone's way and minding her own business.

That takes us through L5. With Stitch I'm adding some bracing to her StandStay and LLW, though she's small and I only occasionally need a touch to remind me where my balance is.

SD Behaviors 2

"Teach this old dog some new tricks!"

OK, you ol' dog, here goes. I think you're trying to lump EVERYTHING you know about each behaviour into one explanation. Let's lump it a bit in a different direction. Don't think so much about your methodology as about whole groups of knowledge. Maybe another way to look at it would be - describe the behaviour you want using behaviours from the Levels.

Under for tables and restaurants - Go To Mat, Down, DownStay, Zen - in fact, given GTM, Down and DownStay, and Zen, the only thing left to teach for Under would be putting the cue on it and showing the dog how the four Levels behaviours apply to tables.

Back-up, Forward, left and right - You're right, I would shape these, but it's easier to shape a dog who can play 101 Things To Do With A Box, and who can make eye contact.

Side, working on my right side - Watch, swing with the pivot, Loose Leash Walking - wherever you put the leash, the dog is responsible for keeping it loose, so if the leash is short and on your right side, so is the dog.

about which is like a spin but is used to help me examine the dog or brush/wash the other end of the dog - I use this a lot, too, usually on a table, so I'd say the table stays, and I teach it with targeting my hand to come around.

Closer for when I am in a crowd or need to reach a back pack - Come, Stand, StandStay.

Paws-up for just two paws on a counter - hand target, Stay.

Pull or Tug (by mouth) - Retrieve.

Through, go through a door way in front of you and wait for you to join them -<< - Distance - go around a pole or go through a door, same techniques. Distance Stand, StandStay.

Phone -<< Retrieve.

Go To or *Take To*, carries something to a care taker or husband or child - Retrieve, Target.

Wait at a door of a home, store or vehicle - Distance, Stand or Sit, Stay, ZEN!

Put, put an item in a basket - Retrieve, Come, understanding that the click ends the behaviour.

Enough, already. Now, let's take one of these behaviours: let's just do Back Up. Now, again, don't think about method of training. Think about levels of criteria. Can we divide backing up into, say, five levels of difficulty, and use those five levels to explore the possibilities of backing up? Let's make a list: backing up right in front of me. Backing up beside me (that would be heeling backwards, hmm?). Backing up 3' away from me. Backing up 10' away from me. Backing up from a Down. Backing up from a Sit (give me those two, I don't think backing up from a Stand would be too difficult, especially since we already taught the Stand by asking the dog to back up). Aiming the backing up - through a door perhaps.

And now we'll divide them up according to difficulty:

L2 - back up right in front of me. That's the easiest one. L3 - back up in front of me from a Sit. Backing up 3' in front of me. Back up 2'. L4 - back up in front of me from a Down. Backing up 10' in front of me. Back up 4' L5 - backing up beside me, because now the dog understands the swing Finish and we can do the backing-up and side-stepping doodles. L6 - Aiming the backing up. This really isn't that hard, but it might be scary for the handler, so we'll leave that 'til last.

So now we've got the criteria for each Level, **THIS** is where I start writing down the methodology. Your turn.

Oh...

And these three more:

****Back Up**, handler in any position, stationary or moving -

****LLW** on right, and a swing finish into heel position on the right -

****move**, get out of the way -

SDW or Heel?

"I am training my dog to be my SD. Do I want him to have eye contact in a heel, or would eyes straight forward be better for him? I will not be showing him or work in obedience or rally, so what do I do for the heel for us?"

Good question. "Heel" is a very specific competition behaviour which most people teach with eye contact. "Loose Leash Walking" or "Lazy Leash" is a commitment from the dog to keep the leash loose but with not a LOT of commitment to a specific position or style of walking - that is, the dog can be sniffing the ground as long as she keeps the leash loose. My dogs also know "Service Dog Walk" which I define as shoulders or ribcage in line with my hip, and the dog looking where she's going but keeping an eye on me as well - either by slanting her head toward me so she can see me at the same time, or glancing at me frequently, or - my two Portuguese Water Dogs both taught me to reward them for lightly brushing my knee with their muzzles every third or fourth step.

You don't need your dog to make eye contact in a Service Dog Walk, and indeed, probably DON'T want her to, since it's not an easy or comfortable position to maintain for long periods of time. I would still teach her to make eye contact while heeling. There are many times when we're walking through a crowd or threading through a complicated maze-like area or through a bunch of kids playing on the floor or some such when I want her REALLY paying attention to me, concentrating totally on me, NOT walking in a relaxed and comfortable manner but being really on the ball, and that's when I want her to be able to heel with eye contact.

It isn't at all difficult teach a dog both ways. I start out by rewarding heeling when we're training heeling, and rewarding Service Dog Walk when she's wearing her vest. When she's good at both, I occasionally ask for (and reward) heeling when she's dressed. That way, it becomes clear to the dog that they are two different behaviours, like Sit and

Down, and I don't need one when I'm asking for or defaulting to the other.

Sending A SD to Get Help?

"In addition I would like suggests on possible "signals" my SD could give to my husband to let him know that this is a "help needed" situation and not a "lets Play" thing."

Interesting questions. Many Search and Rescue dogs wear a small toy sort of thing on their collars (sort of like a tiny retrieve bumper or a rolled-up facecloth). When they find someone (and ONLY when they find someone) they grab the thing parade it in the handler's face for treats and all manner of good things. I've seen the drug dogs and agriculture dogs at the airport slam into a happy sit the instant they detect something (so if you're at the airport and a loose dog sits beside you, you in trouble, Jack!). Personally I think a sit is way too generalized/common and probably quiet for what you need, but the collar tug might have possibilities. Then again, if your husband is sleeping, you might think about the dog tugging his sleeve or barking. Or maybe hanging cowbells on doorknobs all over the house that the dog could ring.

These wouldn't work for strangers though. What just flashed through my head was a good solid handle coming out of a pocket on the dog's cape. Something goes wrong and the dog is taught to pull the handle and give it to someone - anyone. Attached to the the handle and tucked into a pocket in the cape is a fairly solid cloth (canvas?) with words printed on it - "HELP, call 911, get a doctor, my mom needs insulin" - whatever. If this is practised enough with various apparently disinterested people, it should be very reliable in emergency situations.

Service Dog Tips

*"Ok then can someone give me some tips on not licking when petted?
How to stop it?"*

I institute the "Big Prize". You don't lick, I keep petting you. You lick, congratulations! You win the Big Prize! What's the Big Prize? You get to do a Down Stay over THERE for 1 minute. The choice is yours - lick or don't lick, I don't care.

The first time I did this was with Scuba sitting on the stairs and barking at the cats outside. I told her to come to me and lie down, then released her. She went back to the stairs and a couple of minutes later she barked again. I called her and told her to lie down for a minute, then released her. She went back to the stairs and didn't bark for another couple of minutes, then barked - and in the middle of the bark she visibly startled, glanced at me, and started coming over to lie down. That was 5 years ago and she hasn't barked on the stairs since.

"Should we be rude when people are rude and just walk up to the service dog without asking and pet the service dog?"

No, of course not. Rude has nothing to do with it. You just have to get the idea into your head that nobody is going to pet your dog when she's working. Will you lend me \$100? No. Will you trade shoes with me? No. Can I use your toothbrush to clean my car? No.

When a child asks if she can pet my dog, I say "No, she's working right now, but thank you so much for asking!"

If an adult asks, I say "No, not when she's in uniform, thanks."

If someone reaches to pet her without asking, I just change direction and step directly in between my dog and them and say "Sorry, she's working right now."

"Or what do you do when someone starts with the baby talk trying to distract a service dog from doing his or her job?"

If I'm feeling crabby, they get the scum-stare.

If I'm feeling particularly Canadian, I just say "Please don't try to distract her, she's working."

Or, even better, I make eye contact with the dog and say "Aren't you doing a GREAT job of paying attention! It's a tough job, isn't it, and you're SO GOOD!"

"People asking am I training my service dog for the blind that one really gets me."

"No, she's mine. She's been working for me for 6 years now."

"When people ask what is wrong with you that you need a service dog."

There are two good answers to this question. The crabby one is "That's a very personal question. I'll keep that between me and my doctor."

The Canadian one (since I keep saying that, how do you get a Canadian to apologize? Step on his toe.) is "Oh my, there are Service Dogs who hear things for the deaf, and other ones who predict seizures up to 20 minutes ahead of time. Why, dogs are even being trained to detect cancer!"

Or you could just walk on. Maybe you're deaf, who knows? I don't think we have the right to be rude to people, but I don't think we have to answer personal questions just because somebody asked us, either.

"When you tell them that you have invisible disabilities and you will leave at that, then they say well then what does the dog do for you "

I never say what kind of disabilities I have. If I feel like answering somebody who asks me what the dog does for me, I make a joke out of

it - "Picks things up, totes and carries, makes the bed, does the laundry..." which immediately takes their attention off me and they start exclaiming over how incredible the dog is. Then if I want to continue the conversation one more step, I said 'Ah, she's not that great. She burned two shirts last week so she's not allowed to iron any more" and then we walk away.

"What is angulation in the rear?"

An elephant's back leg, viewed from the side, is perfectly straight. A German Shepherd's back leg is very bent - THERE is the heel, HERE is the knee. That's angulation. An elephant's back leg is supposed to be straight, but for a dog, it puts the knee ligaments at risk.

"It is what I have not been able to accomplish to teach the dog, not what the dog doesn't know how to do."

It's basically a matter of risk management. Stitch was sitting on a set of aluminum bleachers when a soccer ball landed 3' from her with an enormous clang. She has equated that noise with the noise of the teeter going down, and now she's reluctant to do teeters. OK, my excellent Service Dog, agility dog, rally dog, obedience dog, water dog, draft dog is going to need a few weeks dedicated to reteaching the teeter. I can certainly live with that, it's a momentary aberration. She's been at Camp Pendleton with mortar fire and was just fine. BUT if she had, from the beginning, been afraid of things that moved and afraid of things that made noise, I'd have looked at her and decided that she was just going to be too much work to bother starting.

And it's 100 times easier to teach a dog to stop licking when she's being petted than it is to convince her not to snap at little kids. Licking I would have put in my "teach her not to do that next week" column, but if I had caught her snapping at little kids, she'd have gotten a 1-way ticket back to Michigan.

Service Dog Walk

"Would you please describe Stitch and Scuba's "service dog walk"?"

Heeling: walking at my side, leash loose or no leash, dog watching me all the time, precision, shoulder even with my hip, automatic sits when I stop. Fast, abrupt motions.

LLW: appearing to pay little attention to me, walking near me, usually out in front of me a bit intent on where we're going or sniffing casually as we walk, free to wander anywhere except right across my path, must maintain approximately on my left side (to avoid catastrophic collisions).

Service Dog walk: on my left side, hip to waist even with my hip, glancing at me now and then but generally looking straight ahead, leash "tight" with a quarter ounce of pressure on it, movements calm and slow, stand at halt, head in casual walking position, no sniffing.

I use the SDW anytime she's on duty, in stores and restaurants, walking from car to store, etc, especially when there is any other person around.

Service Dogs in Hotel Rooms

"Some hotels will not allow a dog to stay in the room in case you have accident and can't get back to the dog"

I do have a comment on this situation. I've been going to dog shows all my life and have had to help hotel managers get dogs left alone out of hotel rooms on numerous occasions. Leaving a dog alone in a hotel room is a B*A*D idea. I don't go down the hall to get some ice and leave a dog alone in my room. THIS is when they'll start barking - possibly for the first time in their lives, and believe me, even a dedicated dog fancier is going to complain to the manager when a

"perfectly behaved" dog has been yapping in the room next door for an hour. Also I believe SD access involves something about the dog not being an ACTUAL nuisance, so IMO a SD could legitimately be asked to leave if it was barking.

Then there's the ate-the-bedspread, ate-the-door, pooped-all-over-the-room-from-anxiety problem. The dog is in a strange situation with none of the support of familiar smells and rooms around him, if he's ever going to eat his way out of a soft crate, this will be it. Hotel bedspreads (she said, speaking from experience with a puppy who ate a hole in one while I was sitting right beside him) cost upwards of \$200 each, and you will be held responsible for cleaning, repairing, replacing.

If I absolutely HAVE to leave a dog alone in a hotel room - a seasoned, well-trained, travel-wise dog - I go first to the front desk and leave a note:

My name is Sue Ailsby. I'm staying in room 236. I have a well-trained dog in a kennel in my room. From 6 PM to 7:30 PM I will be in your main restaurant. If there is any concern or complaint about my dog, please let me know and I will return to my room immediately.

Small Dogs as SD

"What could a Pomeranian do as a SD?"

My 2.5 lb Chihuahua could CARRY an 8-lb schutzhund dumbbell - not saying it was easy for him, his back legs were off the ground trying to balance it, but it was his choice. My 40-lb Portuguese Water Dog frequently drags my 80-lb Giant Schnauzer around the house and yard. Small dogs are usually one big muscle from nose to toes. Poms look fluffy, but they're just as athletic as other small dogs (BTW, the standard weight of a Pom is 3-7 lbs. There's no such thing as a Toy

Pom - though I have seen some GIANT Poms ;*/). That tiny Chihuahua could jump up and hit me between waist and chest high. Getting on the couch was a no-brainer for him.

Don't think I'm advocating having a 5 lb dog carry 10 pounds, but if the dog is decently put together, bringing a phone and picking up stuff that drops certainly shouldn't be a problem. I've checked all the stuff that Scuba picked up for me in the last 24 hours - papers, a fork, a spoon, three crushed pop cans, a magazine, four pens, my watch, a potato peeler, my wallet, my Palm in its leather case, four dog pans, a leash, a brush, my socks and shoes - the toughest thing there would be the shoes.

And if you want to know more about little dogs as service dogs, do a search on Debi Davis. Her Papillon is WONderful!

Taking Your SD on a Plane with You

"You took Scuba with you. How did you prepare the airlines for that? "

I'm, Heaven knows, not an access expert. Hopefully someone else will jump in with that information.

Going on a plane is no different for a SD than any other public access. There are lots and lots of people, crowds, hurrying, etc at the airport. There are the security gates which require the dog to either be physically examined or do a stay and then call through the gate - or both, if the security machine is set low enough that the dog's collar rings set it off! There is getting on the plane and settling down in a very small place, staying calm and quiet during takeoff and landing, not bothering the person sitting next to you, and not eating your pretzels.

Many airports have transportation carts - like golf carts - to carry you between gates, the dog must ride confidently on them, and people to

push your chair between gates if that's how you're traveling, so the dog needs to be OK with a stranger pushing.

The dog must be able to void on command, as it isn't good enough for the dog to say "Don't have to right now, thanks" when you know you've got a 4 or 5 hour flight ahead of you and she doesn't know that.

The puppy went in a carry-on bag under the seat in front of me - that WAS a problem, as the airline (Northwest) said that space was taken by the SD. I had to go through several supervisors before I could convince someone that the SD did NOT fit under the seat in front of me, no matter what their regulations said, and that there was no difference between me taking a laptop or backpack or the puppy in her carrier. Several suggested I ask a fellow passenger to put the puppy in front of his/her seat, and that would have been a very good solution - prior to 9/11. I really couldn't see me wandering around the airport asking someone to take a bag they hadn't packed... I could easily see me getting arrested and the puppy being subjected to a cavity search! At any rate, eventually I found the right supervisor, and she put in my file that the puppy AND Scuba would be with me. I think for my own peace of mind it might have been easier to have the puppy in cargo - I had nightmares for several nights before we came home. We were on the plane, Scuba was urking up grass, and the puppy was screaming for all she was worth. Everyone on the plane was glaring at us and muttering about the damn dogs. Finally I gave the puppy a couple of pretzels to shut her up, whereupon she got diarrhea and blew it all over the floor and the aisle, and kept on screaming..

As it was, Scuba was her usual brilliant self and the puppy was so quiet I checked her a couple of times to make sure she wasn't dead. I'd taken a meter of fake fur with me and put it in the litter's box for a day or two, then into the puppy carrier, so it really smelled like home. Then I'd played with her until she was well past wanting to play any more. During the flight, she was cuddled upside down with her fuzzy toy in her arms and didn't wake up and whine until the last 30 seconds we were on the plane.

Bear in mind, it isn't any cheaper to have the pup with you than it is to have her in cargo.

Teaching Closing Doors

"He has target training down, and we tried doing that (touch this spot on the door). What happens is he runs up to the door, touches it with his nose"

You need one more behaviour - "punch", or hit something with the PAWS. I teach this by asking for a nose-touch to my hand again and again, then I put my hand over a chair or coffee table or something low like that so that the dog must put his front feet on the chair to get his nose to my hand, and asking for a nose-touch to my hand. Then I click when his paw touches the chair instead of waiting for the nose to touch my hand. This luring with your hand also produces a very nice signal for the paw-whack, which will help him translate the behaviour to walls.

When you've taught him to paw-whack ten or fifteen horizontal things like chairs, just walk him up to a vertical surface like a wall and use your hand lure to help him figure out how to put his paws on the wall.

Once they understand how to whack walls, they can start closing doors.

Or, you could simply shape the dog to touch a target on the floor with his paw, then transfer the target to your door.

Teaching Lights

"She will touch it with her nose quite well both for "light" and "dark" but she isn't bumping it hard enough to actually get the light to turn on or off"

I have three suggestions. First one is, put a toggle switch in a board so you can have it at the dog's nose-height for training. That way you're dealing with the actual behaviour rather than with the associated height, wall, etc. With the switch starting at nose height, it's a lot easier to concentrate on specific qualities of the behaviour like pressure, angle, etc.

Second, there are lots of different kinds of switches, and they're pretty easy to replace. Is there a kind that would be easier for her?

Third, there are "kid switch" additions that you can add to a standard toggle switch. Some of these have two strings hanging down, one to UP the switch, the other to DOWN it. Some of them have a straight extension rod that must be lifted up or pulled down. Maybe one of them would help.

Teaching Watch Me When You Are Blind

"What behaviour could you teach to a working guide dog that a) does not really hinder the flow of work (as putting head in hand) b) can be taught and maintained by a blind handler"

It just occurred to me that a behaviour my SD taught herself might be useful here. She knows how to touch my hand with her nose, and she also knows how to lay her head in my hand BUT what she taught herself was for when we're walking. When she's in Service Dog Mode, and we're walking somewhere, particularly when there are high distractions and she's concentrating very hard on her job (at that

moment that means staying by my side, watching for dropped things, walking v-e-r-y slowly when she'd much rather be doing weave poles around people), many years ago she started gently touching my left knee with her nose. This is a fleeting thing, doesn't impede my motion at all, but it tells me that she's right with me, On The Job, no need for me to think about what she's doing in this crowded situation, or keep the leash tight enough to know where she is, or keep twisting to see her. She does it in cadence with my footsteps, 2, 3, 4, Touch, 2, 3, 4, Touch.

So maybe you could teach a nose-to-knee brush instead of Watch Me.

Training Dinosaurs

"Why hasn't someone clicker trained a guide dog?"

In fact, the Seeing Eye has turned out at least one clicker trained guide dog. The idea that an animal needs to be hurt in order to be reliable is a dinosaur, but once you've got a dinosaur following you around, it can be extremely difficult to get rid of.

Also there are very clever Training Levels list members who are clicker training their own Guide Dogs.

Training in Public

"It is exhausting to be in training"

I did a training session for Wal-Mart employees, telling them about what SDs do, how to tell the difference between a pet and a SD, and how they should treat SDs and their handlers. I said that it was difficult to train in public because people kept wanting to talk to us - one of the

employees suggested that I go to Customer Service and they would announce "We're pleased to have a Service Dog In Training in the store today, and we invite all our customers to help with the training by ignoring the dog and trainer. Thank you!"

And they did, and it helped a LOT.

Training SD to Do Nothing

"If you teach a dog that sometimes they can be protective and others not how would you train that?"

As someone who has had and trained personal protection dogs, I gotta say, I haven't met anyone with a SD (including myself) who has the time or energy to maintain a decent SD AND a decent and safe guard dog.

Owning a dog that is trained to respond to danger is exactly like owning a gun. The dog must be constantly worked, "cleaned", practised, and it must be kept secure when not in use. Owning a trained PPD means you go through the day thinking "I have a gun in my pocket. Is someone going to grab it? When can I use it? Is that kid going to set it off?" And that is with one exception - the PPD has a mind of its own, which can drift, get lazy, get over-enthusiastic.

Yes, I would trust a trained PPD more than an untrained dog in virtually any situation, as I know exactly how far the dog can be pushed and what it's going to take to push it, but again that's a case of the dog being worked constantly, and also a case of the dog responding to appropriate cues, NOT a case of the dog making decisions for itself.

A friend of mine, as a teenager, set her pjs on fire one morning. Her mom called the paramedics, who came, but couldn't get into the house because of her German Shepherd who was, naturally, extremely upset

about the commotion and wasn't going to let those weird bad guys in the house with stretchers and big bags etc. My friend's mom was a polio survivor and was not capable of restraining the dog. Finally she went in the bathroom and screamed until the dog came in with her, then she slammed the door shut. So while her daughter may or may not have been dying, and the medics were loading her in the ambulance and taking her to some hospital somewhere, her mom was in the bathroom with a hysterical GSD. We found out later that if she had been alone or if her mom wasn't so smart to get the dog away from the door, the police probably would have shot the dog to get into the house.

The bottom line, then, is that if I have a dog that must be with me in public, and there is a good chance I'm going to be incapacitated in public, I need that dog trained to do NOTHING or trained to do something useful, like pulling a card out of a pocket in her cape and handing it to someone.

Vest/Non-Vest

"Should a dog be taught that it only needs to carry out the duties of an assistance (or service) dog when wearing certain apparatus?"

Of course not. My dogs are taught the "certain apparatus" as a cue to default behaviour. When the vest is on, the total Service Dog package is happening - no talking to other people, no gawking around, no heeling, no sitting when we stop, no looking for things to jump over or go through, no formal fronts when delivering items, no nose-bunting anybody's hand for pets, just total concentration on the Job. When the vest is off, in the absence of any OTHER cue, they are free to lie upside down on the couch, check out what hubby's doing in the kitchen, ask little girls to pet them, slide down slides at the playground, or run with other dogs at the dogpark. This means that *I* am

responsible for telling them when the Job is everything and when the Job is just something.

For instance, Service Dog means calm, relaxed, focused on The Job but calm. Rally Obedience means up, excited, waiting for a treat, prancing, ready to jump or come or swing. When we come to the end of the Rally test, I still ask her to pick up her leash.

I'd liken this to my husband, a surgeon. When he's on call, we do nothing. We don't go to a restaurant, we don't go to a movie, we don't go shopping, we don't go for a walk, he's On The Job. When he's NOT on call, he's not going to walk by a little old lady who falls down and breaks her hip, or somebody choking, he's still a doctor, he's just not responsible for everybody every minute.

Vest = Working

"But honestly, what do you do with those people who start petting your dog while you are: a) Sitting somewhere waiting and your dog is obviously NOT working b) Sitting in public transportation"

This is not the way I think. If my dog is wearing her vest, she IS working, whether she's actively doing something or not. Wearing her vest means I need her now. When she's at home or someplace with "trained" people, like a seminar, she doesn't need to be wearing her vest to be working, but wearing her vest is like a fireman wearing his waterproof coat and big boots and hat - maybe he's just standing around having a rest and a drink of water, but he isn't buying groceries, he's WORKING.

What do you do with those people who start fondling your child while you're sitting somewhere waiting? Tell them to stop. Move the child. Move yourself. Put yourself between the person and the child. Call for help if you need it.

People have to control themselves in public. The fact that a guy is a NICE guy, that he means me no harm, that he LOVES to do it doesn't mean he can take off my shoes and fondle my feet in a waiting room. I'm not going to sit there with a smile frozen on my face and hope he stops if he tries it.

Is a guide dog for the blind not working because the guy isn't going anywhere at the moment? Is it OK to pet this dog and distract it and teach it that every time it goes out in public it's going to be petted and THAT is what it needs to be looking for all the time rather than paying attention to its job?

Again, if my dog is wearing her vest, she is WORKING. My husband is allowed to pet her when she's wearing her vest. Period. I can be polite about not petting my dog if people are polite about trying it (and I ALWAYS thank a child who asks - No, I'm sorry, she's working and needs to pay attention only to me, but thank you SO much for asking!), and if it's a long wait, and they were polite, I might take off her vest eventually and give them all a few moments of free time, but I can also be adamant if they weren't polite about it.

Vest Zen Translates into Everything Zen

"The arousal is so high before getting the cape off, that if I remove the cape while she is still aroused, she then pairs that with the behavior."

Certainly. The most important part of removing the cape is that the removal is a reinforcer for being under control, not for being out of control. Keep yourself under control, the cape may come off. The cape comes off, you may get to visit. Act silly, the cape will NEVER come off. The cape doesn't come off, there is ZERO possibility of visiting.

I didn't consciously teach this, but it's there in spades nevertheless. Scuba is a fruitcake about chasing the wild cats in our yard. When she comes out the front door without the cape on, she is under control but quivering she's so desperate to chase those cats. When she comes out the front door with the cape on, she doesn't even glance into the yard.

Wearing the Cape

"The only time I put a cape on my dog is when she is out training for public access"

The cape becomes a cue for the way the dog is to handle herself in public situations, thus the cape doesn't go on until AFTER the dog has the behaviours, then the cape really does become the cue for the department.

That said, my Stitch sort of hates surprises - I gave a little clinic on carting last month. She did the job, with some coaxing, but not the way she can do it, and I was quite unhappy with her performance - or lack thereof. It made me smack myself upside the head and ask myself why we didn't practise for a few minutes the day before the clinic. I KNOW she hates surprises!

The point of that paragraph being that before I started introducing Stitch's cape to her as a potential cue for her service-dog-in-public behaviour, she wore many other things to get her used to wearing things - a walking harness, a sled-pulling harness, a water-trial harness, a bandana, a bandana tied around her neck AND around her waist, a t-shirt, a set of bat wings left over from Hallowe'en, a leash tied around her neck and waist, a big ol' fleece dogcoat left over from Giant Schnauzers. She wore these things as a matter of course, walking around the house, playing and eating in them.

Wheelchair Heeling

"Sue how can I get Jewel to walk nicely beside my manual wheelchair?"

A very nice lady named Pat Robards once sent me a clicker that she had changed. This was a LONG time ago, and I'm still using it. She cut away most of the box, leaving the bottom (the part with the printing on it) and the part that holds the metal. She put a bandaid around the metal (I think there are two pieces of metal there, and they're sharp). This left the metal sticking out. I can use this clicker in my mouth. I can hit it with my fist. I can step on it with my toe. MUCH more versatile than the "natural" clicker!

OR you could simply use a word instead of the click. Walking beside the chair isn't a precision behaviour, a word (I use YES) would do just fine instead of a click.

As for the food, you could spit it at her. You could wear a skirt and put some food in your lap, then flick a piece at her every time you said YES. You could get someone else to push while you trained. You could (I dunno whether you could or not, but the possibility is there) fold up the footrests and move the chair with your feet - even around in a circle could get the job started. You could rig up something on the footrest so it would hold food, then cover the food with your foot and let her have a mouthful after the YES. You could rent an electric chair or scooter for a couple of days (I LOVE those things!).

If you're still walking, I found that loose leash walking or heeling translate brilliantly from walking to wheelchair. Scuba required ZERO translation time. One day someone asked me if she could heel to a wheelchair. I said "I dunno, try it" and the answer was yes. I got her used to the chair first by having her bring it to me, sit in it, etc.

Which Side? Left or Right? Why?

"A dog should work on both sides of you!"

A clever answer. I've been amused by this discussion as so much of it seems to be focussing on what is "correct". There **IS** no correct side for a service dog to work on. Trial handling has nothing to do with service dogs. Here's the story:

Most men are right handed. Right handed men wear their swords on their left sides. It is very difficult to mount a horse with your sword in the way, so horses came to be handled on the rider's right side and mounted from the horse's left.

From there, there are two reasons that dogs go on the left. First because, obviously, the horse is on the right and you don't want the horse walking on the dog. Second, because most men are right handed and carry their guns in their right hands, and you don't want your best dog walking around with your gun pointed at him, so the dog goes on the left.

That's the answer. The only reason that dogs go on the left is tradition, and it was a tradition of **WHAT WORKS**.

Obviously there is **ZERO** reason to train a dog to walk on the left side "because that's correct". If someone doesn't know whether the dog would serve better on the left or right, either let them experiment with a dog that does both, or have a person pretend to be a dog for a couple of hours and experiment with the person. I would train the dog to go on the best side for the person **FIRST**, and then teach it to go on the opposite side just in case.

The Levels - for Service

"I thought this group was for training and training help?"

Yahbut - The training we're doing on the list is mainly based on the Training Levels that are on my website. These are a coherent set of training sessions that take you from the dog (and handler) knowing, basically, nothing, to having a dog that knows how to learn and also knows many, many of the behaviours and attitudes that he'll need in any situation he might encounter. Very specific behaviours that a dog would need for very specific sports or jobs are usually related to the Levels, but are generally outside the scope of this list. Sit and Down, how to teach them, how to add the cues, how to proof them, are definitely part of the Levels.

The questions you're asking - for instance, how to get the dog not to lie down at the register - indicate that you probably haven't read the basic Levels information that this list is based on. We think you'll have a much better idea of what to do and how to do it after you've gone through that information.

I have a 9-yo Service Dog (Scuba) and a year-old Service Dog In Training. The SD went all the way through the Levels several years ago, and the SDIT is working on Level 5. My SD is currently getting ready for a Draft Test. Many of the Levels behaviours that she has learned were enormously useful when working toward the Draft Test - walking near me, stand, stay, allowing herself to be handled, sidestepping, for instance - but other things she needed to know, like pulling, centering the cart when going through narrow spaces, and not walking close enough to me to run the cart into me, are not part of the Levels, though the attitudes she learned through the Levels enabled her to learn the whole thing in about 6 training sessions total.

My SDIT, besides continuing to work on her career, is also getting ready for her first obedience trials, her first Rally trials, her first agility trials, her first water trials, and a conformation show. Most of the conformation, obedience and Rally behaviours are built into the Levels

(heeling, eye contact, comes, fronts, finishes, heeling, sit, stand, down, stay, sidestepping, attention to other people, being handled, gaiting without looking at the handler), as are some of the agility behaviours (attention, working as a team, following my body language, contacts, sit, stay, come), and some of the water trial behaviours as well (retrieve, stay, come, go to platform). In each of these jobs, however, there are specific behaviours that, while not part of the Levels training, are greatly helped by the what the dog has learned in the Levels (conformation - looking at the judge as he walks by. Agility - jumping, weaving, following body language at a distance, commitment to obstacles. Rally - right finishes, left about turns. Water trials - swimming, applying Loose Leash Walking to swimming with the handler, carrying the bumper, boarding the boat).

It's the same with their "real" jobs - Service work. A lot of what they do is part of the Levels - sit, down, stand, stay, loose leash walking, heeling, coming, retrieving, go to mat, eye contact, Zen, for instance. And some things are not part of the Levels - bracing, for instance. **BUT** again, the Levels help a lot. Pottying on cue is part of the Levels. Working it to the point that a Service Dog requires (where the dog will go whether he needs to or not, and can then hold it for, say, air flights of up to 7 or 8 hours at a time) isn't, but you have a foundation to build on. Lying under tables in restaurants isn't part of the Levels, but is made up of behaviours the dog has learned in the Levels - go to mat, down, stay, Zen. Whether to sit or down at a register, or whether to stay up at the counter or back off when handing money to a clerk, are specific behaviours not part of the Levels. **BUT** again, these are advanced skills which build on the basics the dog learned in going through the Levels.

What we're trying to say is that you should read through the Levels, develop an understanding of the organization of them and what your dog will learn as you go along.

Playing Tug

OK, back to the subject. Some dogs are good at natural fetching - I don't call a natural fetch a "retrieve" because a retrieve is a trained behaviour. Fetching is good, fetching is fun, but it isn't in any way, shape, or form a trained retrieve.

Now, tug. Scuba is a natural tugger. Stitch, while a rowdier dog in general, just never seemed to think that tug was a polite way to interact with humans, so she never did it. Or maybe she asked me to play tug, but with the bad disk in my neck, I couldn't do it, so she stopped asking.

For my girls, who are Service Dogs, a trained tug is a necessity - they tug to retrieve heavy things. They tug to open doors, to pull off my socks and shoes and jackets, etc. They need to be able to pull things when cued to do so. So I taught each of them to pull - NOT a natural play tug, but a trained behaviour. I did this by first teaching the Levels Retrieve, then gently pulling on a soft item the dog was supposed to be holding, and clicking any resistance she gave me. That progressed very quickly to her understanding that she was to pull back on the object.

Once the dog understood the trained pull, we just started playing with it a bit, and she soon discovered that tug was a wonderful way to play with people, and now hardly an hour ever goes by without her dropping some likely toy in my lap and hoping I'll initiate a game of tug.

Wheelchair Pulling

Forget the wheelchair. Teach the dog to pull, then transfer it to the wheelchair. Put a dish with a treat in it somewhere, take the dog away from it, turn around, encourage him to get back to the dish. When you've done this five or six times, you can put a tiny bit of pressure on the harness and he'll pull into it to get to the dish.

Then tie a small motorcycle tire to his harness with a long line. This is enough weight to let him know he's pulling something, but enough drag that it won't run up and hit him when he stops. By now you should be able to use the pulling cue.

Then a heavier tire. Finally, the chair. Start each time with the dog pulling toward the dish, then you can start going for walks. I'd take my new sled dogs around the block and leave a treat on the sidewalk in front of my house, so they'd start pulling when they thought of the sidewalk and treat. Pretty soon they'd LEAVE the house pulling, thinking four blocks ahead to getting back to the treat.



TRAINING MECHANICS

COME

The Come Game

"Is the "Come Game" simply someone holding the dog and then the dog coming back to the handler. "

Hi, guys! Before I comment, let me say that the levels are what you want to make them, what I say is just how *I* do them.

What you describe - someone holding the dog, calling back to handler - is a pretty standard come. The Come Game seems to be a lot more fun for puppies - and especially for families with puppy and kids.

Two people (or ten people, or whatever) stand opposite each other at whatever distance the puppy can handle. Each has a clicker and treats. Person A looks at the ceiling and stands quietly. Person B calls the puppy using anything they have to - kneeling, patting the floor, showing the treat, making the puppy call, whatever - EXCEPT saying Come. As the puppy approaches Person B, he clicks and drops or puts the treat BETWEEN HIS FEET and stands back up. Puppy eats the treat. Then Person B looks at the ceiling and stands quietly while Person A calls the puppy, dropping the treat between his feet when the puppy is coming.

When the puppy eats one treat and immediately starts back to the next person, that person can start telling the puppy what the cue is - COME!

This great game teaches the puppy a) to listen for who's calling him (as no one else will pay), b) to respond to being called by going to the person, c) to look DOWN between people's feet when approaching them rather than jumping up on them. This is a great game to play with kids and puppies because it gives the kids something positive they can do with a puppy, and because usually a puppy will start volunteering the come to the child before the adults, so the child will be the first person who is allowed to use the "C" word - why? Because the puppy likes YOU BEST!

Once the puppy's used to coming to get a treat between your feet, you can NOT drop the treat. Puppy comes, looks for the treat, doesn't find it, next natural thing to do is to look UP. Nose goes up, butt goes down, and the puppy is sitting. Voila! I've had pet people take the game a step further on their own -pretty quickly they have to be able to touch the puppy before the treat drops, then to hold the collar for a second before the treat drops, then to snap the lead on and off first.

That's my version, anyway.

The Come Game isn't a recall. It's a game played between two or more people to make coming fun withOUT a stay or control. With control, it's just another recall. And one point of the Come Game is that it goes on and on, it isn't just ONE. So, without the control and on a continuing basis, you can see the dog volunteering to come to people without being specifically called. And see what behaviour the dog's going to give when he gets there again and again.

If I absolutely couldn't find anyone else to play with, I'd play by getting the dog to come, click and drop a treat between my feet, then toss another treat out as far as I could away from me to get the dog away and give him another opportunity to offer me a come.

"I'm still stuck on the recall game - this is a much harder game for us than the recall itself. Hollie is very uncomfortable around people she doesn't know, and even some she does"

AHA, isn't it great when you try something that looks really simple and it turns out to be something you really needed to work on! (Well, maybe better when you tried something really hard and it turns out to be really something) I've played the Come Game with dogs so suspicious of humans that we initially had to be content with clicking if they flicked an ear in the direction of the caller, then we'd chuck a rather large bit of wiener at the dog. When he picked it up, the next person would start trying to get an ear flick. Pretty soon we could start clicking the dog for turning his head toward the caller, then we started tossing the treat just short of the dog, so he had to take a single step toward the caller to get the treat. Finally he started making a step when he heard the call (but by golly, I'm not going to let you catch me!). After the third session, he was quite willing to come, sit, and allow the caller to grasp his collar in order to get the treat.

CONTACTS

Contacts Explanation

""Dog walks a flat board with a click on or immediately after the down contact. This is an optional behaviour..""

Can someone explain this to me?"

In Agility, there are some obstacles that require the dog to walk the whole length of them. One is an A-frame about 6' high, one is a dogwalk, which is a narrow up-ramp, a long horizontal ramp, and then

a down-ramp to the ground, and one is the teeter, which is a narrow up-ramp that tips (obviously) into a down-ramp. The last 2 or 3 feet of these ramps are painted bright yellow. These are called "contacts" because the dog has to put at least one paw on the contact to get credit for the obstacle. This was because in the beginning, dogs found it more exciting to simply jump the last bit - resulting in some dogs actually hitting the top of the A-frame without touching the up-ramp at all, and then hitting the ground without touching the down-ramp at all, a dangerous practise. So now there are contacts, and these three obstacles are called Contact Obstacles. Some agility venues also require an "up contact", but most focus on the down contact.

Many, many fads of what to have the dog actually DO on the down contact have come and gone. These are some choices:

Two-on Two-off, or 2o-2o - the dog puts its front feet on the ground, and leaves its back feet on the down contact. This is very common, and works well, is easy for the dogs to figure out. My problem with it is that fast dogs hit 2o-2o the same way they used to hit the ground - from the apex, and I don't like the look of the small of the back when they hit it. Slower dogs, not-particularly-competitive people, fine.

Stop on the contact - with a down, or a sit, or just a stand - also fine, but the first time my Giant Schnauzer tried a Down on the contact in a FAST run, she did a somersault and I thought I killed her. Again, slow dog, non-competitive, fine.

Stop AFTER the contact - with a down, usually - probably my favourite right now. Dog runs the contact and then lies down ON THE GROUND after it.

Bait target after the contact - dog runs the contact and touches nose to ground after the contact. Also fine, criteria can get fuzzy pretty fast if you're not careful.

Running the contact - Helix and others are training the dogs to run the contact with their heads down - very nice, probably hardest for the

handler, and you have to pay attention to your criteria or you're liable to lose it.

So those are your choices and MY comments on them. Which is why that particular Levels behaviour is so fuzzy - if you don't know anything at all about agility, just do it as described, it won't hurt anything. If you DO know something about agility and have strong feelings about one of the other contacts, go for it.

"I take it from your description that it doesn't have to be all 4 paws, 2 will suffice, right? Also, in competition, is a down at the end required?"

One toenail will suffice, but going for more paws ensures the judge will actually see what happened, especially with a small, fast dog. A down is not required at all, in fact if you're going to be competitive, a down would take MUCH too much time. The down would really only be there as a threat - if you don't touch that contact, bubba, you're going to do contact Downs in your next gabillion runs, so there! - really, to keep the dog wondering if he's GOING to have to do one or not, so he slows down a bit and actually touches the contact.

"The main problem is the terrible shape that *I'm* in!!!"

Agility is an incredible sport for old, out-of-shape, and disabled handlers. I absolutely cannot run with my dog, so I teach her to do distance work. In agility, that means instead of everybody saying "Oh, poor Sue, she can't run with her dog!", everybody says "Wow, that woman has GREAT distance work! I wish *I* did!"

Contacts

I've been thinking about contacts for several weeks, as I become more convinced of the viability of running contacts. I especially don't like the A-frame with the dog stopped on it, or 2-on 2-off. I don't like what this, done at speed, does to the dog's body. Help me out here, Maureen. What I'd like to see is some proof that the dog is capable of running the contact and slowing down or stopping after it, or running it with head down (as I think Helix is teaching), or some other indication that the dog has a specific behaviour to offer in relation to the contact that is going to prevent him from jumping it when the board is raised. With the clicker hidden under the contact surface, for instance, I'd see the dog rather deliberately placing one or more paws in the yellow to make the click happen - something I wouldn't expect to see if the dog was just running the length of a flat board and getting off.

"She seems to understand the go from one side to another but only jumps when the jump is a bit higher. Is this acceptable for the test?"

A broad jump board is from about 3" to 8" (?) off the ground, depending on the board (8 to 20 cm), I wouldn't expect any dog to jump a board flat on the ground, raising it up a bit is perfectly acceptable. And a big dog may well not jump to get over one board - with one board, I'd be happy if the dog went from one side to the other, didn't step on it, and didn't knock it over. When he understands the criteria of "go from one side to the other, don't go around, don't step on it, don't knock it over", jumping it comes naturally when you increase the width in the next level.

"Emily is not allowed the above 2 exercises as this board is too slippery for her, but she has no health issues (HD and PL free) that allow her not to jump"

I didn't understand what you said here. The broad jump board is too slippery?

"When I use the 2 inch hurdle she will walk "

Again, I wouldn't really expect jumping from a large dog here. The criteria is to go over the board, between the uprights, not break the board, and not push it around. Adding the retrieve to this WILL get you a jump, as she's going faster, but it messes up your explaining between-the-uprights, not-pushing-the-board, not-breaking-the-board, etc - all things she'll learn better when going slower initially. So I wouldn't worry about jumping, just teach her to go through the motions without killing the equipment - that's the point of this behaviour at this Level.

"I feel it is not needed for her to stop as she will not in the agility course either but continue to the next object to take"

As I said, I want to see some kind of indication that the dog recognizes a deliberate behaviour necessary on the contact. The natural running stride of a Pyr will take her easily right over the contact once it is on a raised A-Frame or dogwalk.

More on Contact and Distance Work

" Ok, so what amount of duration do you build up to before making your Get Lost turn away?"

I don't really think of it in terms of duration. Maybe 10 seconds would be enough. What's important is that you can get the contact, click and toss a treat, the dog runs for the treat and comes back IMMEDIATELY looking for the contact. So you can click 10X for the dog ACTIVELY seeking contact (not just showing up on your doorstep eventually), then FROM CONTACT, instead of clicking, turn away. And if the dog's ready to do this, he'll sit for a moment thinking Hey, Stupid, we were playing contact! Where are you going? And then he'll get up and come around to remind you that you were playing contact. And after a bit, he won't LET you get away, but hang on and move with you as you start to turn.

Up Contacts

"How can I teach a dog to go up a contact, hitting the correct area and from a straight on approach as opposed to jumping on from the side?"

I made very sure my dogs never met a side entry until they'd been working for nearly two years on straight ones. Occasionally I put a target plate in front of the contact, or put a treat in the crack between the ground and the up contact so they have a reason to go there. Not often enough to make them search, just enough to make them think about being there. If I click the approach, that tells them there's a treat waiting for them there and they hit the right spot to get it.

CRATE

Crate Training

"The floor of the crate I currently have is 17"x10". Is the crate I have now too big to teach crate manners?"

There are several ways to make a crate smaller. You could put a cardboard box in the far end and tie it through the window to the end so it won't move. You could put a large plush dog toy in the far end and tie it there so the pup not only has a smaller space but something friendly to snuggle up with. You could put the crate on it's back end with the door up in the air and lift the pup in and out (tie the crate to something solid so it doesn't fall over). It'll only take a couple of weeks for the pup to either learn to be housetrained or outgrow one end of the crate.

Crate Training 2

Another thing I forgot to say about crate training - crate training is THE best opportunity for you to practise/learn pure shaping, and for the dog to learn the principles of operant conditioning, and for the two of you to practise clicker training together. Shape the puppy to look at, walk toward, step into, turn around in, lie down in, put her head down in, the crate.

When she has learned all that, she'll be ready to start building up the time she can spend in the crate hoping for a reward.

DISTANCE

Freeshaping the Pole

OK, there are three ways to get a behaviour - first, wait for it. When I'm waiting for a behaviour, I do a lot to set the dog up to succeed. For instance, I might put the pole in or near a doorway so the dog has little choice but to go around it. Or I might walk near the pole so the dog naturally walks around it.

Or, you can freeshape it. The trouble most people have with freeshaping in the beginning is not clicking enough. Click, for instance, X10 for glancing in the right direction. X10 for taking a step in the right direction. etc. If the dog is pawing the pole, you need to click BEFORE he gets that close to it, focusing him on the space beside the pole. I might do a bit of luring during this by tossing the reward to the other side of the pole, or turning my body to face the other side, thus drawing the dog into the correct position.

Finally, luring. And luring doesn't have to be following a treat. It could, as I said, be following the front of your body, it could be following a stick or your hand.

Teaching Left and Right

Going clockwise or counterclockwise around something is, for me, a matter of body language, something I use in agility, but I'm not heavy enough into highly competitive agility that I've ever bothered putting a word on it.

To use left and right as modifiers, I started this way:

I taught the L1 Hand Target. Then I hold my right hand to the left of the dog's head (dog is facing me) and get the volunteer Touch, so the dog is turning her head to the left to touch my right hand. When she's got it, I give it the cue Left.

Then I did the same thing with my left hand on the right side of her face, so she has to swing her head to the right to touch my left hand. The cue is Right.

When she's good at both, I put both hands up, one on each side of her face. I generally have to cue Watch to keep her from randomly bopping whichever hand she pleases.

Then I cue Left, Touch or Right, Touch.

This has hopelessly confused many people. One woman finally said "Oh, oh, I get it! You're telling her Left to touch your Right hand so nobody else can give her orders!"

Then I had her sit facing me. I sat down and put my feet on either side of her and got her to whop my feet with whichever paw was closest to it, eventually cueing Left, Touch and Right, Touch.

Then I had her sit facing AWAY from me and put a treat out about 2' to her left, and another 2' to her right. Then I cued Left, Get It or Right, Get It.

Then I put out pencils instead of treats and again cued Left, Get It or Right, Get It.

All these cues presuppose that she responds correctly to the modifier before being cued to do the actual behaviour, thus she has to look to her left on the cue Left before I cue Get It to have her do the Retrieve.

We then proceeded to Left, Spin and Right, Spin.

Now, facing toward me or away from me, we're working on agility equipment: Left, Go Through or Right, Hup.

This winter we'll be working hard on really getting this down pat, because for Draft Dog Excellent, she has to speed up, slow down, stop, turn left and right, and go straight ahead, pulling her cart, with me walking behind the cart.

I expect it might also come in handy in water trials on the 75' reverse retrieve if things go bad and she gets off course. Or if I send her from the boat to land to get a line and she can't find the line on shore. Should we ever get to Courier Level.

There's a Directed Retrieve in American Utility obedience where you very carefully pivot the dog into position, carefully signal the correct glove, and then send the dog. I've had visions of merely standing still and cueing Left, Get It. Or, more realistically, not signalling for the Directed Jump, just saying Right, Hup. Should we ever get to Utility again.

Distance and Agility and Herding Commands

"I have some questions about the "going around the pole" exercise for beginning distance in Level 2."

1) I am going through and training "the levels way" with a crossover dog who already has obedience and agility experience. She already does distance work, but I've found real value in doing the Levels exercises. So in sending her around one pole, do any agility people have any suggestions so as to keep this from confusing her weave entries? I'd like to send her around the pole both ways. "Around" and "about" are already in use as cues so I am planning on using the herding commands "come by" and "away," neither of which we use (yet) in agility. But who knows, they may come in handy later. (And see below...)

Does anybody have any caveats? Maybe this is different enough, but I don't want to weaken her weave entries, which correctly done always have the first pole on the dog's left. I'm using a toilet plunger (dedicated to dog training--never used!) for my pole, and that's how I started out with weave entries.

2) I've read the instructions very carefully, but I don't know what the dog is ideally supposed to do after going around the pole--her default seems to be return to me. Is this the intent, or does the behavior include the dog continuing on in its new trajectory after going around the pole? (Sort of like using the pole to sling it into orbit.) Or should I get back to walking forward and have her join back up with me? I specifically want to use the herding commands correctly if I am going to use them at all. That is, if I tell Summer "Away" when we are approaching a pole, should she properly go counterclockwise around it and keep circling to come back to me?

Thanks for even reading these questions! I know I make things harder than they need to be sometimes. "

Part of the answer is "of course she'll be confused until she's done enough to get them both straight - didn't the Sit interfere with the Down?"

The other part is "are you crazy? You have a good weave entry? Don't do ANYTHING to screw that up!"

As Anna said, the best idea is to simply use a different object. A large pop bottle. A traffic cone. A garbage can. A stool. I would specifically NOT use the plunger, since that immediately draws her attention to the weaves.

If you're doing agility, think of going around the pole this way: If you teach the dog to go around a pole, and then attach another pole and a couple of boards to the first pole, you have a solid jump, right? And if you cued the dog to go around the same pole again, she'd have to take the jump, right?

Now, in agility, what do you want the dog to do after she takes the jump (goes around the pole)? Maybe you want her to continue in the same direction. Maybe you want her to return to you going in the same direction. Maybe you want her to come straight to you. Maybe you want to do a front cross and both continue back the way you came. Maybe you want to do a blind cross with her crossing behind you and use that to slingshot her off somewhere - possibly even back around the same pole in the opposite direction.

Usually when I'm practising going around a pole (or whatever), I just lure/cue the dog around behind me as she returns, so she's in a position to offer the behaviour again.

Or I could toss the treat out in front of her, keeping her out there near the pole, where she'll probably turn around and do it again in the other direction.

"I don't guess she would misinterpret and go around the whole jump. "

Certainly she could - and that occurred to me, but I chose not to say anything about it ;*) because you said you had a great weave entry. Anybody with a great weave entry surely knows how to use body language to tell the dog you only want THIS much of a go-around, not THAT much... and if you start by getting her to volunteer one pole, then that's what she'll be thinking about. If she ever DOES go around the whole jump when you believe your body language was clearly telling her to go around one pole, just don't click for it, and make sure she has the chance to get it right the next time.

Barrier Training

"If not, how should I go about keeping him in place, as from everything I've read, once the click sounds, he's done with the task, right? So, I don't want to click and then make him sit for something he's theoretically already earned."

You are right, once the click sounds, the job is over, so yes, it is OK if he crosses the barrier to come to you to get the treat. OTOH, where the treat arrives also sticks heavily in the dog's mind. My barrier training is frequently done behind a Dutch door between the kitchen and the "dog room", and I don't want the dog leaping the Dutch door to get the treat, so I toss the treat behind the dog. She runs to get the treat, runs back toward the Dutch door, and gets clicked for not jumping it. This also works brilliantly for a rope on the floor, or even an invisible line on the floor - toss the treat behind the dog and click the dog just before she gets to the line, toss the treat behind the dog - each repetition is now specifically clicking the dog for NOT crossing the line, rather than for doing a stay behind the line.

Cueing the Pole

"Are people putting a verbal cue on this exercise & if so what"

Not something I ever thought of. I guess my cue is "Go around".

Which leads me to a practical thought for using this - besides weave poles! I once was riding a bike down the street with a very well trained 110 lb Giant Schnauzer on the lead. At a pretty good clip we passed a sign post. She naturally went right around it, and I went left. I landed on my back on the ground and it was several minutes before I could get up. The Giant naturally lay on my chest and licked my face to help 8*/ . So we could teach the dog to Go Around, then "tangle" her up in a sign post, tighten the lead slightly to show her we had a problem, then cue the Go Around to help her solve the problem. A few of those and the dog will no longer allow herself to get on the wrong side of anything with the leash on.

Distance

"The levels behaviour Distance isn't just going around poles. "

Good post. None of the behaviours are really about the behaviours. Why teach a crate if you don't have a crate? Because of the many things you AND your dog learn from the teaching. For the poles, many - I dare say most - dogs can't do anything except Come if they're more than a step away from the trainer.

I have mentored several people who wanted to teach their llamas to retrieve - all of them thought the picking up and giving back wouldn't be too difficult, but "of course" the llama wouldn't turn away from the treats and GO somewhere to retrieve something.

Yesterday I was giving vaccines to my llama herd. When it was time to let everybody out of the barn, they were in a small pen right beside the door. To get out of the barn, they had to move away from the door to get out the pen gate, then turn around and file out the barn door. I think a dog is about the dumbest animal that still has the brains to move AWAY from something to get it - in tests, anyway, clicker training may have changed that completely - but many of them haven't actually noticed the possibility. Teaching them to go away from you to go around something in order to come back and get a treat can open up whole new possibilities to them.

Something as simple as this can be problematic for dogs who have had no practise in moving away:

Crumpled paper 5' to my right. Waste basket 5' to my left. Dog picks up paper, passes me, and goes to put the paper in the wastebasket. Tough when you've already taught a retrieve - the idea of taking something and moving AWAY from the trainer with it is counterintuitive for the dog, but for a SD especially, delivering things can be an enormously useful task.

Go Around

"How necessary is it for her to do this one?"

Not necessary at all...IF your dog will never ever be required to do anything more than 6" away from you. Let's start with dogsports and move on to real work. Conformation - requires the dog to standstay away from you. Obedience - requires the dog to go away from you to retrieve, to jump, to get into position for more jumping, and to do sit, down, and standstays. Rally and agility, to go away to jump. In water trials, my dogs have to swim away from me in a designated direction for 70', leave a buoy there, and swim back. In herding, they have to go around an entire herd of moving sheep in each direction. In

schutzhund they have to go away from the handler and search a field. In retriever trials, they have to go... I dunno, far far away. In draft tests, my girls have to pull a cart - in front of me, with me walking behind telling them to turn, or go faster or slower.

Now real work. They need to go away from me to retrieve what I drop. My wheelchair or walker might be on the other side of a table or in another room. Last week Stitch got off her mat on cue at the swimming pool, went around a barrier, got my glasses, brought them to me (I was in the pool), then went back to her mat. The place where I keep the dog dishes is on the other room from where I usually sit, on the other side of an island. Stitch has to go get them, and Scuba has to take them back and put them in their basket when they're empty. I dropped my car keys between the car and the curb the other day, Stitch had to crawl UNDER the car about 8 feet, get the keys, and bring them back to me. I ride a trike - before we start, I stand on one side and ask the dogs to go around to the other side to get hooked up to it. Now, that's just what I can think of at the moment, and that's just my dogs.

So the reason the Training Levels ask you to teach your dog to go around a pole 2' away from you is because that's the very first thing you can teach them to do AWAY from you, and it leads to a lifetime of away behaviours.

Distance Explanation

"When I am luring him, he would be crossing in front of me, correct? Is he supposed to completely go around the pail until he is back at starting position?"

If he went back to the starting position, he would have had to go all the way around the pail AND around you.

Do whatever feels right to you. There are three ways to get behaviour:

Lure - pull him around the pail - dog on your left, pail in front of you, use a treat in your left hand to bring him forward and around to your right, or use a treat in your right hand, reach across yourself and use the treat to pull him around the pail to your right side. How to get him back to your left side? a) as your left hand pulls him forward and around the pail, turn to your right, so he pretty much remains on your left side throughout, then continue turning until you are **BOTH** back in the starting position. or b) do the same with your right hand, turning clockwise as you lure him all the way around you and back into position to start again. or c) use your right or left hand to pull him across in front of you, between you and the pail, to get him ready to start again. or d) don't bother, give him the treat for going clockwise around the pail and then lure him back counterclockwise and give him another treat.

Shape - sit down with the pail in front of you, click him for looking at the pail, moving toward the pail, bumping the pail, until he's going around the pail.

Wait - set yourself up for success by getting him walking with you, paying attention to you, then move toward the pail so he has no choice but to go around it to stay with you.

Luring the Poles

Another cool way to lure the poles is to get the Get Lost game down pat - the dog makes eye contact, you click, contact click, contact click, contact and you turn your back, the dog comes around as you turn and holds onto your eyes - and then stand near a pole and turn. Then you can turn less and less, then you can move further and further away from the pole.

Nevertheless, I think this is a perfect behaviour to freeshape, even for dogs or people who aren't good at freeshaping yet, as it's a pretty simple behaviour and one that dogs seem to catch on to very quickly.

"Is there a good description of the get lost game anywhere?"

You guys are forcing me to write the book! The Get Lost game is the beginning of heeling for me. It's what I'm discussing with Stitch right now, where I teach her to find my eyes. Teach her to find and hold my eyes. Then click X 10 for finding and holding my eyes, the 11th time she finds and tries to hold, I turn my back on her. What I'm looking for is that the dog comes whipping around to find my eyes again. If she doesn't, I get hysterical, like I've lost her "Aaah, where's my puppy? Where is she? Aaaaah... click" and she comes around like "I'm right here, duh". A couple of those and when I turn she comes around with me, "Hey, we were playing Contact! Don't stop now!" and you have your first about turn. Turn and take a step and you can click the dog for being in heel position for a moment. Turn the other way and you can click the butt for moving faster than the front and you have the beginning of a swing finish. Stand beside a pole and turn, and the pup will have to go around the pole to hold your eyes.

"Is HOLDING the eye contact something new you have added to the Get Lost Game?"

Holding eye contact isn't new to the Get Lost game, but I frequently don't get to do more than mention it in clinics because I frequently don't get any dogs in clinics that are yet able to get contact and seek it again when they've lost it. Holding onto it is usually a very quick next step to having it, losing it, having it. That would be Ailsby's Principle Of Laziness - like holding onto the dumbbell rather than grip-spit-grip - it's easier to hold onto something than to lose it and have to find it again.

"Where is the pole? next to the dog? next to the handler? I'm not getting this one."

To use eye contact to get the dog around a pole, I'd get the dog in front of me grabbing contact, with the pole sort of poking into my right armpit. Then I'd turn toward the pole and past it so it was poking into my left armpit. Thus the dog would have to go on the outside of the pole in order to refind or hold onto my eyes. Then I'd turn back to the left so he had to go around the pole in the other direction. And I'd gradually move further and further from the pole as the dog successfully went around it.

" Ok, so what amount of duration do you build up to before making your Get Lost turn away?"

I don't really think of it in terms of duration. Maybe 10 seconds would be enough. What's important is that you can get the contact, click and toss a treat, the dog runs for the treat and comes back IMMEDIATELY looking for the contact. So you can click 10X for the dog ACTIVELY seeking contact (not just showing up on your doorstep eventually), then FROM CONTACT, instead of clicking, turn away. And if the dog's ready to do this, he'll sit for a moment thinking Hey, Stupid, we were playing contact! Where are you going? And then he'll get up and come around to remind you that you were playing contact. And after a bit, he won't LET you get away, but hang on and move with you as you start to turn.

"I don't know why we want going around a pole but I'll keep reading"

Going around the pole is my first step in weave poles. And my first step in showing people (and dogs) that the dog is capable of working away from the person. Many beginning agility people think they have to be standing on the dog in order for him to do anything, it doesn't occur to them to teach the dog to go away from them to do something. I was thinking of this this morning when Stitch was running back and forth over the contact trainer, generally with me 15' away desperately trying to get the treat down at the ramp bottom before she turned and ran

back in the other direction. So she'd be running north to the bottom of one ramp while I was running south to the bottom of the other one, and we'd pass each other in the middle - not a bad start on Distance work!

Not Targeting the Pole

"Using the cue for target might have sped progress up a little at first, I didn't want to fade it."

IME, targeting anything is quite a strong behaviour. I taught one dog to target a weave pole as a preliminary step to doing weaves, and it was a VERY big mistake. Took MONTHS to get rid of the targeting behaviour. From then on, I've been very specific about shaping going AROUND the pole, not AT the pole, right from the beginning

The Pole

There's another sport where targetting vs doing-something-else with a pole comes in. In the Portuguese Water Dog Club of America water trials, at the fourth (Courier) level, the dog has to jump out of a boat, turn around, get a rope attached to a buoy ball from you, then you send her out to a marker buoy 60' away. The point here, however, is that she has to go at least 10' PAST the marker buoy, leave her buoy ball there, and come back. At the end of the exercise, in spite of wind and waves and drift, the buoy ball has to still be on the OTHER side of the marker buoy from you.

Naturally, we train this on land first. We have stand-up land marker buoys that look like what the dog will see in the water. I've seen many people train this by first sending the dog to target the marker buoy,

then try to get her to go past the marker buoy. This seemed twisted to me. Why tell the dog to target the marker when you patently do NOT want her to stop at the marker? So I tried teaching the dog to target a tiny little floating toy, then in a large room, I started using the marker buoy to... MARK the direction to go to find the toy. I put the toy 2', 3', 5', etc until it was 15' past the marker buoy. We played catch in the yard, and the ball would always land at least 15' past the marker buoy, no matter where I put the marker buoy or what direction we stood from it. To my absolute amazement, this worked brilliantly. The dog ALWAYS went out past the marker buoy. She got the idea!

DOWN

Getting a Down

"I could wait until eternity and the butt never came down."

I have three suggestions.

LURE: First, find a chair, table, bookcase, whatever that is only about an inch higher than the dog's withers when he's lying down. Sit a couple of feet from it, and start tossing treats at it. Some of them will go near it, some of them will go under it. The farther the treat goes under the furniture, the more likely he is to lie down to get it out. You can do the same thing by sitting on the floor with your feet down and your knees up and lure him under the bridge of your knees.

WAIT: Second, get a good book, a bucket of treats, and a small room. You mention an RV - well, an RV living room is small. No toys or anything in the room. Nothing to do. Sit down, read your book. Read your book. Read your book. He won't sit forever, sooner or later he'll lie down. When he lies down, toss a treat at him. Read your book. Read

your book. Read your book. Sooner or later he'll lie down. Toss a treat at him. Eventually, he'll figure out what's causing the treats.

SHAPE: Third, get a clicker and a bucket of treats. Click him for sitting, toss the treat away from him. Click him for sitting. Click him for sitting. Click him for sitting. When he's sure that sitting causes the treats, start watching his head. When his head is straight up, don't click. Click when his head drops half an inch. An inch. An inch and a half. Click any motion of his front legs that doesn't involve his butt or back legs moving. Pretty soon he'll be lying down.

Handsignals

"What is the correct hand signal for down?"

A competition-obedience hand signal is described as "a single motion of one arm and hand returned promptly to a neutral position". Satisfy that requirement, and there is no "correct" signal for anything. If you're NOT in competition obedience, you can use anything you want. Lots of deaf dogs are trained using Ameslan signs.

The reason for the Hitler sign was that handlers were taught to hold the leash taut in the left hand (standing in front of the dog facing him), raise the right hand over their head, then slam the right hand down on the taut leash, thus correcting the dog into the Down. Thus the Hitler salute was a threat that the leash was about to be popped.

From our POV, raising the dog's head to get him to lie down is pretty silly, since raising his nose is how we taught him to Sit in the first place (I just put my hand above Scuba's head, this raising her nose, and told her Down. I told her 13 times before she looked at me to see what I was talking about and then started to lie down - but as she lay down, she lowered her nose, thus proving my point, that raising her nose to get her to lie down is counterproductive).

With that in mind, people are using all manner of downward hand swipes to get the dog to lie down. I tell people to go home, don't talk, play around and see what signal your dog will understand as a cue to lie down. Then if you're aiming for competition obedience, cut it back to a single motion of one arm and hand.

Sits and Downs

"One of the level tests, I have forgotten which one says something about doing a down from a sit. My question for Sue is: does this have to be a down from a sit or can it be a down from a stand?"

No. As you point out, sit from down is a totally different behaviour than sit from a down. Myself, I DO teach the action of sitting from stand and attach it to the word Sit, but soon after I teach the action of sitting from down and call that Sit as well. You could certainly put them on different cues, but my dogs have never had any apparent difficulty translating sit-as-action into sit-as-position. Scuba developed a little double-front-foot-stamp that she does when assuming a sit from either direction - sort of a visual cue to me that she knows what I asked for and is complying. I find this especially useful when she IS sitting and I ask for a sit - stamp- stamp, yep, it isn't an accident, she IS actually sitting, not just lounging there and hasn't bothered lying down yet. (You can probably tell that I would NEVER say "Good Sit!" therefore, because I want an actual response to the cue when I give the cue).

WHY teach sit from down? Well, Utility, of course, but that's a small part of it. I want the dog able to assume any position from any position, so sit from down, sit from stand, down from sit, down from stand, stand from sit, stand from down, sit from sit, down from down, stand from stand. I use this a lot for brain warmups before we do something complicated, and to focus the dog on me in strange

situations. If she can give me this positions, she's concentrating and ready to work. I'm trying to think of times when I've used sit from down in the last month. Putting on harnesses. Vet exams. Grooming. Do it because you can - maybe you'll like it. I consider it a basic.

Maybe just because it distinguishes "us" from "them" - after I taught my first clicker class, I thought I noticed something, so I tested it. I got all the clicker beginner class dogs in a down stay and went to each dog and said "SIT!" 5/10 dogs sat up. 4/10 dogs lifted their noses but didn't manage to lift their elbows. 1/10 dogs did nothing. This looks to me like sit is a trick involving lifting the nose - which works from EITHER direction. Then I went to three different traditional graduations and did the same thing. 18/30 dogs put their heads down. 12/30 dogs did nothing. OK, that makes me think of sit and down as stages of submission, sit being a one-stage submission and down being a 2-stage submission, so from down, when asked to submit further, they lowered their heads.

FINISH

Finish

" I am having a hard time understanding the Level instructions for finish."

Grab a broom handle, mop handle, baseball bat, or something similar. Hold it straight out in front of you, parallel with the floor, one end of it at your stomach and the other out in the air straight in front of you - so if you walk into a wall, the bat will hit the wall and then poke you in the stomach. Now put a coin on the floor. Stand on the coin. Do NOT take your foot off the coin. Turn left. Turn left more. Keep turning left

(do stop before you fall down). Notice that the close end of the bat is moving slowly and the far end of the bat is moving fast? That **HAS** to happen in order for the bat to stay sticking straight out in front of you.

Now move faster. Keep your foot on the coin, this is a **PIVOT**, not a hike. Chances are the far end of the bat will drop back a bit towards your right as you turn, but that's **OK**. Now stop suddenly. The far end of the bat will try to continue to move toward your left. Click that.

Now apply it to a dog. The dog is out in front of you, holding onto your eyes with her eyes. You pivot to your left, she comes with you holding onto your eyes. Her butt drops back toward your right a bit. Practise this until you can spin to your left and the dog is coming fast holding on to your eyes. Stop suddenly. Her front will stop because your eyes did, but her butt will keep moving. Click that, that's what you're looking for - her butt to be moving to **YOUR LEFT** (her right) while her front stays stationary or moves much slower. Click the butt moving faster than the front.

Keep clicking the butt moving faster than the front, again and again, and before either of you realize what happened, she'll be holding onto your eyes and swinging her butt right around into Heel position.

Finish 2

" With the finish exercise (left turn), what position is the dog in, front or heel?"

This is an extension of the Get Lost game, but you're turning counterclockwise instead of clockwise. For Level 3, the dog will be in front. We're assuming the dog knows nothing about heel position. If you click the dog for holding eye contact while you turn, then you slow down a bit when you get ahead of him (that is, he's starting to drop back a bit into what would be heel position but on your right side,

because you're turning too fast for him to stay totally in front of you), he'll be more comfortable straightening his body out. And if he's holding your eyes, he'll straighten his body by swinging his butt around. Click his butt for swinging, and you've got the start of a swing finish.

Now, I know you can teach a swing finish by walking the dog back, then forward and into heel position, but that "swing" (which isn't a swing at all but a walk-by) isn't useful in so many places - left turns, for instance. If you turn left, you can frequently run into the dog who has his head right there in great heel position (hence the German-Shepherd-left-turn which involves lifting your left knee high to shovel the dog out of your way). If he knows a real swing, you can cue him to pull his butt to his right, thus pulling his head out of your way, and he makes a sweet turn with you. Same for left about turns.

Also this swing, with a tiny bit more work, turns into the dog holding heel position while you sidestep to the right, pulling his head by the eyes and his tail by your swing cue. This is a Rally-O behaviour (and makes horse people drool).

Also this swing, with a tiny bit more work, turns into the dog heeling backward when you walk backward, and/or staying in heel position as you pivot briskly counterclockwise - a very cool trick and/or Freestyle move. Also very good for getting a Service Dog out of tight spots in crowds or just impressing the heck out of people who need to be impressed by your dog.

Swing Finish Questions

*"What specifically am I looking for here? Should she technically be *backing* into the position when I pivot left?"*

No. What specifically you're looking for is that she doesn't let go of your eyes. To learn this particularly swing finish, she **MUST** hold your

eyes as you pivot ccw (as she does when you pivot cw). What's happening is that the old swing finish is interfering with the new one. Concentrate on her eye contact.

Then, get a broom. Hold it with the tip on your belly button and the brush out in front of you. The tip is her eyes, **HOLDING** contact. Pivot ccw. Notice that the tip and your belly button are going slowly around, while the brush (her tail) is going around really fast. When you have her eyes glued to yours as you pivot, start clicking when you see her tail moving faster than her eyes are.

"Keeps her front feet in about the same position, but swings with her back feet to keep my eyes. "

That's it. Now all you do is click for the **MOVEMENT** of her butt going faster than her head, and she will automatically continue the movement until she works her way all the way around into Heel position.

Swing Finish

" Any suggestions or exercises to get that final tuck? "

a) Don't use the cue; b) click motion, not position; c) keep working.

Weight Shift during Formal Return to Heel Position

"Challenge - Potter shifts his weight to look around at me when I do a formal "return to heel position" at the end of the stay exercises. It's not a big deal when he's in the down (just a subtle shift of his weight onto left hip), it's a minor issue when he's in the sit (he often shifts his weight to his left side and lifts his right front paw to keep himself balanced) and it's a major issue when he's standing (he usually lifts his right front paw and steps it forward to keep himself balanced = deduction for moving during the exercise).

I've taught the circle return using 300-peck. The weight shift consistently occurs at the very moment I'm passing behind him because he's flipping his head around to make eye contact as I move into heel position. I need to teach him to keep his weight evenly distributed throughout the exercise.

My ideas:

- 1. Teach him to focus on a spot about 3 feet straight ahead when I'm moving around and behind him. Start with a big, visible target, get the "staring straight ahead" behavior on cue, and reduce the size of the target until it's "invisible". (I'm not sure how I'd eliminate the cue though.)*
- 2. Do some opposition reflex work and reinforce his efforts to maintain a balanced position. (I don't think this will work, but will give it a try if anyone thinks it's a reasonable and can give me some ideas of how to proceed.)*

I'd love to hear your thoughts and comments. Thanks!"

You've had some good replies. Let me summarize my thoughts on the matter.

1. You're lumping if you are not including the weight shift in your 300-peck of the return. By this I mean that if his weight shifts, he has failed to perform correctly, the click doesn't happen, you don't go any further, and you go back and explain what you're asking for again from the beginning. I'd go with the weight shift, but I'd CERTAINLY go with lifting a foot. A lifted foot is NOT a Sit-Stay.

2. A lot of training places want you to walk past the dog, walk around the dog, walk in front of the dog, walk up on the dog from behind, etc. Until your dog understands the job, these things are counterproductive. He needs to first trust that you're walking up to him on his left side, going right around behind him, and then coming up into heel position on his right side. When he trusts that this is what's going to happen, he doesn't have to watch you go around any more.

3. Practise a lot of DownStays with returns, they're a lot easier.

4. It's probably easier to teach this than you think it is. Try this. Walk toward his left side from the front ("returning to the dog"). Have a treat in your left hand hanging naturally at your side. When your left hand is in range of his mouth, click and give him the treat from your left hand. Repeat X10.

Next, do the same thing but don't click. Give him the treat and take ONE more step past him while he's eating it. Make it bigger than normal if you have to in order to get the chew factor. Repeat X10.

Next, do the same thing - give him the treat from your left hand as you go by, but now step completely around behind him and come up quickly on his right. You have another treat in your right hand, which you reach forward and pop into his mouth as he starts to turn his head to see you coming up beside him from the back. Repeat X10.

Next, do the whole thing, then stand for a moment in heel position before you click and reward the entire behaviour.

FRONT

Level 3 Front

"My dog is big enough that she can "block my view of line C" as the directions say but not be straight. I know she doesn't have to sit, but at this Level should she be straight? The test says "Dog hits centre line of Front-Ray 3 in a row/5.""

You're making it too difficult ;*)

The L3 Front is a step ON THE WAY to perfect. Hitting the centre line 3 out of 5 is better than hitting it once out of 5, not as good as hitting it and "sticking the landing". So at this point she really doesn't have to be perfect, she just has to know that she's aiming for somewhere in the maybe 8" space that means at least part of her body is covering the centre line.

" Usually her butt has overshot a little. But the line is still obscured and she is making eye contact."

That's fine. As you move on, your observation that her butt has overshot will be useful - you'll be clicking when her butt is in the EXACT right position, to mark it. When you think you've marked it plenty of times, you'll LET her overshoot withOUT clicking a few times. Huh? What's up with that? Where's my click? If you've done it enough, you might even see her moving her butt BACK toward the exact position, feeling for the click. This also happens with (where is it? Going to bed soonest and don't want to look it up) the Drop On Recall, where you're clicking her for hitting a certain distance from you as she naturally comes back toward you. Do it enough, then let her overshoot the line, and almost all dogs will actually back up trying to find the spot where you were clicking. OH! You mean STOP on the line! Not just

PASS the line! So you see, by then, it doesn't make any difference that you've been clicking for motion, because you'll be changing the criteria and clicking for stopping in the right position, not just driving by it.

OTOH, if you DON'T click for the extraneous motion now, she's going to stop short, and then you've got a big problem.

Front Ray and Bulls Eye

"Do I use 1 in each training session, or do both in one training session, or what?"

I've had good luck with doing one type per day. When the dog is getting really good at them, you'll see that her close exercise gets straight, and her straight exercise gets close. At that point you can start working both of them at once.

Front Ray Conversation

"So Spice and I started working on this today. At first I couldn't find the exact description of the Front Ray stuff - mainly because I was looking for a file called "Level Three.doc" (BTW - whoever did the first two doc files - THANK YOU - they've been a big help.) So after guessing and training it this morning in some weird Terri way, I went to Sue's website and re-found the behaviors description. OK - so what I did this morning was wrong I clicked when she stopped. Not while she was in motion.

Something I saw a lot of this morning when we were doing it the mixed up way was that she would orient with her nose pointed at one of my

hands and her body angled away from there. I eventually upped the criteria and stopped clicking when she was looking at my hands, and so then as she started to look at my face she did get a bit straighter. But I was waiting until she stopped and sat -and I know that Sue said if you click for stopping then the dog will always be crooked. Eeeeeek!! I've broken my dog!!

But the description brings up two questions from me:

1. The criteria says that "DOG must decide what is correct". If I am clicking the motion, then how is the dog deciding what is correct? What if she just thinks that walking across in front of me is the right answer?

(I bet Sue is going to start her answer with, "Breathe deeply Grasshopper.." ;)) 2. What does it mean to "block my view of the C line"? Does that mean if she has one paw on it then she's right (for that level) or does she have to swing her rear out enough that I can't see any part of the C line except what is between her and me? If she's standing sideways to me, but with some part of her body obscuring the C line, is that enough?

I must admit, I don't know how this is going to make for a straight front - but I believe in Sue's Levels, so we're trying it. I just want to make sure I don't do it WRONG! (There are a LOT of fronts in obedience... ;)) "

Breathe deeply, Grasshopper...

No panic allowed here. There are two requirements for a Front - neither of which include a Sit, as you don't want the dog sitting until the rest of it is perfect. Besides, Sit comes easy when the dog is in the correct Front position and looking up at you. Nose goes up, butt goes down...

There is a prerequisite to starting the diagram work. The dog must be fairly actively searching for your eyes - which is definitely one place that working an entire Level starts to pull everything together. If you've

been clicking for looking at your hand, stop now and do some more eye-contact work.

The two requirements for a Front, then, are the dog to come STRAIGHT and the dog to come CLOSE. There are two diagrams, each of which will contribute to the whole. When you're working on the ray diagram, you don't worry about close at all. You simply shape the dog closer and closer to the straight position, and let the eye contact pull the head in and the butt out. Dog standing crosswise? More work on eye contact.

The bullseye diagram in the next Level shapes the dog to come close, not worrying about straight at all. Gradually the dog will start to combine the two requirements into a straight, close Front.

Now, the breathing deeply part. These are shaping exercises. As such, you go an inch at a time. My diagrams usually only show maybe 5 rays, but there should be 19 in your diagram, so you can concentrate on bringing the dog to the centre an inch at a time - and always thinking about eye contact.

[sound of deep, steady breathing..]

"Sue - thanks for the reply!"

*OK - I actually went and did a second session a little while ago (before your reply came in) based on the notes on your website. Since I was clicking motion this time the rate of reinforcement was *much* higher and she really liked the new way of playing the game. Basically since she's already coming all the way in front, so I just clicked as her head crossed the line at C. Since there was no waiting, I found that she generally came around looking at my face, so the issue of looking at hands didn't come up. As she started to "anticipate" the click at the centerline, her rear starts to swing out (away from me) now as she comes in from one side or the other. If she comes in from the front then she's not always getting on the center line but if I didn't click then she would move to get to the center.*

Actually, now that I am typing that up, I probably should not have lumped and go back and start clicking as she gets to B from the side - that will probably help her more as she's coming in from the front. And that way I can click when she comes in from the front but is a few inches off to one side. Of course this all ties into my question of what does it mean to click at C line? Is it when any part of her body crosses (or is about to cross) C? Even with the criteria being the C line (instead of a wedge) she still always got a treat within 1-3 seconds of starting to head towards me. Since we're not doing the sits I would say the rate of reinforcement was around 1 treat every 4-5 seconds - and that includes her going to get a treat tossed about 4-5 feet away from me. She was really working fast. The only time she would slow down was the few times she didn't see where I tossed the treat.

I varied where I tossed the treat, behind her (in front of me), behind me, off to my left or off to my right. I couldn't really do angles because of where I was standing in relation to the furniture. Every handful of treats I would switch which hand had the clicker and which one threw the treat. Every couple of handfuls I would change what direction I was facing.

It was much more fun than the session this morning. I like throwing treats and seeing her trot quickly there and back."

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The L3 Front is a step ON THE WAY to perfect. Hitting the centre line 3 out of 5 is better than hitting it once out of 5, not as good as hitting it and "sticking the landing". So at this point she really doesn't have to be perfect, she just has to know that she's aiming for somewhere in the maybe 8" space that means at least part of her body is covering the centre line.

" Usually her butt has overshoot a little. But the line is still obscured and she is making eye contact."

That's fine. As you move on, your observation that her butt has overshoot will be useful - you'll be clicking when her butt is in the EXACT right position, to mark it. When you think you've marked it plenty of times, you'll LET her overshoot withOUT clicking a few times. Huh? What's up with that? Where's my click? If you've done it enough, you might even see her moving her butt BACK toward the exact position, feeling for the click. This also happens with (where is it? Going to bed soonest and don't want to look it up) the Drop On Recall, where you're clicking her for hitting a certain distance from you as she naturally comes back toward you. Do it enough, then let her overshoot the line, and almost all dogs will actually back up trying to find the spot where you were clicking. OH! You mean STOP on the line! Not just PASS the line! So you see, by then, it doesn't make any difference that you've been clicking for motion, because you'll be changing the criteria and clicking for stopping in the right position, not just driving by it.

OTOH, if you DON'T click for the extraneous motion now, she's going to stop short, and then you've got a big problem.

Sit at Front

"Sue, on reading the requirements for 'Fronts' I see no mention in the tests, for a sit in that Front. I guess we can do whatever we want here...and eventually of course we do need to add a sit...but were you thinking that dogs should be sitting before they pass each level?"

No, the Sit is a late addition to the Front. First get the Front really, really solid, THEN add the Sit. Too many people work on the Sit immediately and the dog, who was coming in nice and straight, Sits crooked and loses it. This also gives you more time to work on getting your Sit cue solid before you give the dog a chance to mess it up.

Training Front

"I don't understand why I have to start with the dog 5' in front of me. And the dog is trained to search me for eye-contact (heel and finish) so I think for learning the front I only have to learn the dog to stand straight in front of me? So I have to click only the backlegs pivoting until he is straight in front of me? "

The Front involves two different parts - STRAIGHT in front of you, and CLOSE to you. To work STRAIGHT, you start with the dog behind you and teach him to find the straight line in front of you by walking around and/or pivoting. To work CLOSE, you start with the dog away from you, and teach him to come closer. As you work both, the dog will start to overlap - Straight will become Close, and Close will become Straight. To test it when it's complete, you start with the dog away from you. The bold print at the top of the behaviour indicates the TESTING, not the training.

GO TO MAT

Go to Mat at a Distance

Go To Mat is an incredibly useful behaviour, and really, it's the same behaviour as Crate.

When a dog is tied to something or put in a crate against his will, it creates a lot of stress.

But when he's there because he **CHOSE** to be, whether he actually has a choice or not, he's totally relaxed about it.

Here's what I do with the situation.

Work for a week or so getting the dog really strong on Go To Mat - maybe Level 3, go 5' to mat and stay down on it for 1 minute.

THEN I tie the dog to something right behind the mat, so the dog can step off the mat but can't go away from it. Even better if he can't see me very well when he steps off the mat because the leash is keeping him cranked around a bit.

He's getting a lot of rewards for being **ON** the mat, and when he steps off, he gets nothing until he steps back on. No real choice, but he's getting lots of information about how good it is to be "voluntarily" on the mat.

When he's very, very comfortable with L3 Go To Mat, I bring in my other dog to sit beside me, and continue to work the dog on GTM.

Then I start giving, for instance, 3 treats to Dog1, 1 to Dog 2, 3 to Dog 1, 1 to Dog 2.

If Dog 1 is still (or again) on his mat, I ask Dog 2 to do something - Down, or Stand, or something else simple. Treat for Dog 2, 3 treats for Dog 1 still (or again) on mat.

Etc. Pretty soon we've arrived at one treat for Dog 1, one for Dog 2. Then I'm actively working Dog 2, and 5 treats for D2 and one for D1 still on mat.

Thus Dog 1 learns to stay on his mat, not because he's tied there, but because he's doing a job, he's In The Game, and he's actively working to get his treats.

This is an incredibly behaviour for learning to be calm at a distance, to continue doing the job even though it looks like mom isn't paying attention, even though somebody else is getting treats, even though another dog is moving around.

Duration Question

"Dog knows the cue of hit the rack, and goes to his mat. After you click do you try to throw the treats on mat, or can they come to get treat from you?"

Either way. If you're still working on getting "run 20' to your mat and lie down on it", you're better off to toss the treat OFF the mat or handing it to him so the dog comes off to get it, giving you another opportunity to practise going to mat. If you're starting to work on duration at that distance, you're better off tossing it ON the mat so he gets 100% of his information about staying on the mat.

Go to Mat

"I have a small situation with training this.

From the time we started learning this behavior, Lucky automatically started offering me a down.

However, said down isn't necessarily completely on the mat. His back end might be off it or his right side may be on the mat but not his left. So he's offering the more advanced part of the behavior by nature but not getting the clue that, while the down is fantastic and I love it, I want ALL of you on the mat first.

I'm not sure how to proceed here. Do I need to adjust what behavior I'm clicking i.e. he puts A SINGLE paw on the mat and I click that before he can offer me the down?

And, what are some good cues, when we get to that point? "Mat" has the potential for confusion with a family member and "Bed" is for his crate."

Raise the mat and eliminate all the problems. For instance, there are doggie "hammocks" that I love - essentially a dog bed on four little feet, so maybe 4" off the floor.

"But Sue, if you like to use anything available, including a leash, for a mat"

Raise the mat when TEACHING the behaviour, and when it's taught and you're generalizing the behaviour to your leash, facecloths, your gloves, etc, the dog will be working on the assumption that he's trying to put as much of himself on the "mat" as possible rather than on the assumption that any contact at all is acceptable.

Go to Mat Questions

"I have a question about mats. I have several crate pads and dog beds around the house and neither dog really has 'her own' bed. They share easily - whoever has it owns it. When shaping "go to mat" should I be using each one so that the dogs will simply pick one to go to when cued?"

That's what I do. When I want a specific one, I gesture toward it. I also use pause tables, chairs, stairs, coffee tables, boats, hay bales, llama and dog carts, and my jacket as "mats". A leash is a very handy "mat", but my dogs are so default to picking up their leashes that it would be difficult for me.

"Place" Words for Go to Mat

"What do I name the mats, would it be good to name them with room names?"

You're thinking things through very well, but just this once I think you might be over-thinking. IME, dogs (who are NEVER good at generalizing) are very good at generalizing the "go to mat" cue to mean "you're in my face, in my hair, and in my way, go away, park it somewhere, and leave it there until I'm done with what I'm doing".

I have a couple of "mats" that I expect the dog to stay on until I specifically ask her to come off - a pause table, for instance, which I frequently use to contain the dog while I'm working with another dog or a group; a chair, since I don't ask her to get on a chair unless I'm looking for some serious confinement. Other "mats" are just get-out-of-my-way mats, meaning that if I was cooking, she could come off her mat when I moved out of the kitchen.

These differences the dogs have pretty much picked up on their own, and given a "go to mat" cue, they will find the nearest (or their

favourite) "mat" and park themselves on it. If I was in the kitchen and frequently needed the dog to go to her crate in the dog room, I would have a specific cue for going into the next room and getting in the crate.

I have another useful cue, which is just "get out of this room", so if I wanted her on a generic mat in another room, I would cue "get out of this room" and then "go to mat".

Set A Goal

"Set a goal & c/t for doing it right- or is this lumping?"

My first reaction would be to raise the mat - perhaps make a platform of bricks with a towel on it, then gradually take away bricks and cut the towel down. Then I'd only click for the dog being totally on the towel. By raising it, you make it much easier for the dog notice why you're withholding the click. She could also "step on" any parts of the dog hanging over - by which of course I mean touch with her foot and apply just enough pressure to make the dog move the part, clicking when it moves.

The Criteria of the Mat

"Is any treat that falls on the mat fair game, even if she has to curl around and "almost get up" to get it?"

I think if your need to toss treats is so great, it's time to morph the criteria of the mat.

When I start teaching Walk*Ease, on OR off leash, the criteria is that the dog must be within 3' of me, thus the leash, if present, is loose. Most dogs make the criteria even tighter and think they must be looking at me. Gradually they realize that they don't have to stare, they just have to be aware. Then we start discussing "momentary" criteria - sometimes W*E means they have to be within 6" of me (lots of people around). Sometimes it means they can be 15' away from me (walking on the farm) - still aware, still walking with me, but further away. Once in a while it means they can be wherever they like as long as they still know where I am and will respond if I move away (dog park).

Take that idea to the mat. The initial criteria is on the mat. Then you add Down on the mat. Then you add some degree of Duration and Distance and Difficulty and Distraction. Now you can start adding momentary criteria.

When my service dog is under the table in a restaurant, there is no mat, and she is required to be down and refusing any food that doesn't come directly from my hand. It's still Go To Mat.

When I have visitors for 2 hours, the dog must go to her mat before the door opens, and she must stay on her mat while the visitors are present, unless I specifically release her. However, in that situation, I'm not requiring a Down. In fact, I'm not even actually requiring a Mat. If she has to pee, she can get off her mat, go outside, hang around a bit, and come back in - but if she comes back in the room, she has to be on her mat. She can be upside down on her mat. She can bring a toy to share her mat time. She can Sit or Stand or Down and she can change positions. The point is being under control and out of the way and amazingly, dogs get that.

I once had a Giant Schnauzer on a grooming table outside and at the end of a row of 6 exercise pens. Each pen had a dog in it, groomed up and ready for the show ring. In the pen furthest from the Giant's table, there was a water bucket. Across the aisle, maybe 3' from the table was another bucket belonging to someone else. I was off talking to someone, keeping half an eye on the setup, when the Giant jumped off the table into the first pen, jumped into the second pen, into the third,

into the fourth (these pens were 4' high), into the fifth, into the sixth - had a drink, and jumped all the way back and up on her table.

The water across the aisle was much easier to get at - just jump off the table - but not part of our setup. Going to it would have meant leaving the confinement of the area. She could have slid off her table, walked down the aisle to the 6th pen, jumped in for a drink, jumped out, walked back, and jumped on her table again. That would also mean leaving the area (even though she would have been 12" from where she was, she would have been walking down the aisle).

Back to mats. Once the dog understands that her job is to stay on the mat, I don't care if she doesn't stay in a Down, or if she gets off to chase a treat. The point she has to understand is that it's her job to be on the mat. The Down was in there in the first place, like the dog staring at you when walking on a leash, to get her to understand the importance of the mat, and how to relax on it.

HANDLING

Advantage of the Umbilical Cord

In re-homing adult dogs, I usually have the new owners come over, chat for a while, then give them the dog and its toys, mat, food, etc, and send them away, saying I want to talk to them regularly, but that I don't want to see the dog for two weeks (unless it isn't working out, of course). Used to be - they would (obviously reluctantly) bring the dog back in two weeks, obviously expecting the dog to be relieved to be "home" and to want to stay, followed by the dog excitedly greeting me, checking out the smells, then plunking down on the new owner's foot and asking if they were going to hit the Dairy Queen on the way

home. During this second visit, I would frequently notice that the dog had to go out, and mention this to the new owners, only to have them say "HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?". Since I've been recommending the umbilical cord for that two week period, I've noticed that new owners feel more securely that the dog is THEIRS when they come back, and THEY notice before I do that the dog has to go out. It helps dog and people understand each other to have to be closer together.

Another place it helps ME is in housebreaking - my house is an open plan, and my temperament is such that I get wholly-immersed in what I'm doing RIGHT NOW - if I'm on the puter, I'm on the puter and the rest of the world drifts away. If I'm doing dishes (ha ha ha), that's what I'm doing. Sorry, no matter how great I am at reading dogs and noticing things, this is my temperament. I simply cannot concentrate on something as mundane and boring as housebreaking for two weeks at a time without drifting off into something else. The umbilical cord means the pup (or adult dog) is within 6 feet of me most of the time - giving her zero opportunity to make an error in the house, giving ME zero opportunity not to notice or read her when she's telling me she's uncomfortable. I have the same problem with the llamas - when I'm at a fair with an animal in a pen, I'm there to sell people on llamas. I get talking to someone about llamas, and I neglect to notice the animal telling me he has to go outside. And bingo, we have an accident in the pen. I just came back from an 8-day fair, matter of fact, and had only 4 accidents in the pen, but as far as housebreaking is concerned, that's four accidents too many, and four that wouldn't have happened if the guy was on an umbilical cord instead of in a pen nearby.

One more place it really helps - an adult dog who is being rehomed has frequently learned to rely on himself because he's the only constant he has in an insane universe. Wandering around my house, he's slowly learning to trust me, but he's still relying on himself. Putting him on an umbilical cord shows him that *I* am important, trustworthy and reliable. He starts to rely on **me**. He starts to relax. Once the bonding has happened, he is still on an umbilical cord, but one of faith. Certainly it is possible to accomplish all these things without the use of the cord - but it's possible to teach a dog anything you want him

to know without luring, too. The "method" just speeds up the process. The umbilical cord is a tool. Like any other tool, use it to further the relationship. Use it to help you explain what the dog needs to know. And if it bothers you or you don't see the need for it, don't use it. All training is explaining, and explaining is a conversation between you and your dog. What other people do is only "method" and method is unimportant if your conversation follows the rules of operant conditioning and is understandable by both involved parties.

Handling

The best position I know for ear meds, tooth cleaning, and other things the dog doesn't want me to do with her head, is flat on her side. This is a trainedtrainedtrained behaviour so she's really good at it before I use it to restrain her. I absolutely insist that the behaviour includes the head DOWN on the table, if she lifts her head she's not doing the behaviour.

Lifting a Dog

My Giant Schnauzers weigh between 70 and 90 pounds, and my Portuguese Water Dog weighs 45. To get them UP on anything I don't want them to jump on, I ask for PAWS UP, which means they should rear up and put their front feet on the object (table, etc). Then someone boosts them with a hand between their back legs and they walk right up on it.

To get them down, many people want to grab them by wrapping one arm around the chest and one arm around the back legs just above the hock, but I've found that this throws the dog off balance and makes them feel like they are tipping over. It's something they should probably know, but it's not how I prefer to get them off something.

My preferred method is to grab a large chunk of neck scruff skin in one hand (or a collar, if it's a wide non-slip one), and put my other arm under the dog's belly. Then I lift the dog up. This requires a lot less strength from me, and allows me to put the dog on the floor without my bending over. My arm-under-belly is stronger than my hand-holding-scruff, so the dog's front end naturally sinks to the ground. When she's got her front footing, I let the back end down.

I didn't realize how trusting my dogs are of this method until recently at the vet college. My Giant recently had a TPLO (tibial plateau levelling osteotomy - knee fix - IOW breaking one back leg and putting it back together in a more reasonable form). When asking her to come out of the cage at the college, I had her collar rather forcefully in one hand and a towel wrapped around her belly to support her back end. Instead of hobbling out of the cage with that assistance, she dropped ALL her weight trustingly on to the collar and towel!

Riding On a Moving Object

"He's not ready to deal with movement yet"

I teach movement from puppyhood. When the dog is comfortable on a grooming table, I start moving the table slightly and rewarding calmness. By the time the dog's a year old, I can pick up the table and move it around the room with the dog on it. I table-train the dog - teach him Go To Mat on any number of objects, such as grooming tables, coffee tables, chairs, rocking chairs, teeters, boogie boards. I teach the dog to Go To Mat in a dog cart and then have another dog pulling it (there's a picture here at the bottom of the page:

<http://www.dragonflyllama.com/%20DOGS/Blogs/1year/Blog13mo.html>)

I teach the dog to ride on an ATV and in a wheelchair and in a wheelbarrow and on the electric scooter thingy at WalMart and on the transport carts at airports (in Minneapolis a driver asked me if she'd be OK on the cart. Said he'd had a guide dog the week before who panicked and jumped out as soon as the cart started). I teach them to ride in boats. My winter boat-training involves a coffee table with a rubber mat on it and a book under one leg to make it rock. By the time the dog gets to an elevator, it's a non-event.

Table Training

"I would say anything on wheels whether upright or scooter like should be introduced to the dog."

This reminds me of something I have always taught every dog I've had - that is, table training in all its infinite variety. By this I mean the ability to get on something and stay on it.

When I was a kid this was used to get my Chihuahuas up on top of a stack of crates at a dog show, where they could be safe and out of the way. Later, when I got Giant Schnauzers, they were taught to stay on a grooming table or on the top of a larger crate, allowing them to "wander around loose" at dog shows (as long as they stayed on the table) talking to people, sitting, lying down, sleeping, whatever they wanted.

When I started training my Portuguese Water Dog for water tests, I was a bit baffled by the "platform" on the test boat (dog has to stay on the platform under control between exercises), until Scuba's breeder said "The way I train this is to put a book under one leg of the coffee table and teach the dog to stay on the table" - OOOHHHHH, table training! No biggie!

So the point of "table" training is that the dog learns to sit on anything, whether it's rolling around, moving, etc. This means that she can jump on the trolley at airports and get a ride to the next gate. Yes, she can do a down-stay anywhere, but she's even more glued in position if I put her on a chair seat. In our barn, I tell her to get on the llama scale, giving her a 4X8' private area.

The reason I mention this is that when I first introduced her to wheelchairs, one of the things I did to get her relaxed around them was to get her lying down on the seat, and pushed her around the room.

Then we did some targetting of various parts of the chair, and by the time I asked her to retrieve it, she was totally comfortable with it. When I thought of introducing the dog to the Segway, I immediately thought of giving the dog a ride on it.

If anyone would like to send me a working model to help my dog learn to accept it, I'd be grateful...

ELIMINATION ON CUE

Elimination on Cue

Elimination: Several comments on teaching this. One is, this is a classic behaviour that requires a "limited hold". You wait until the dog really **SHOULD** have to go out, start talking about it - you have to go out? Are we going out? Oh boy, going outside! Take the dog out - on lead, off lead, on the grass, on the gravel - however you want the dog to learn to do this - go to your designated spot, give the dog **TWO MINUTES** to produce. If the dog doesn't produce, hey, too bad, back in the house. If you wander around sighing for half an hour, he'll

wander around for half an hour. You're there for a purpose. In the house, keep a good eye on him so he doesn't go in the house. Half an hour or so later, start the routine again.

Also, if you're trying to teach the dog to go in a different place or under different circumstances, do NOT under ANY circumstances take the dog back to the original place or original circumstances. Say the dog only goes on grass, off leash. Someone actually presented me with this problem. They had a sailboat and were going sailing for **THREE MONTHS**. So they were thinking they'd have to take an expense on the sailboat and go to shore ten times a day, set up the pen, put the dog in it, wait for him to decide to poop, then go back to the boat. Do you know that sled dogs learn to poop and pee while they're running? Like horses? They can't ask the rest of the team to stop running just because they have to go.

The biggest mistake people make with this behaviour is giving up. I think the dog only goes on grass off lead, and I wait 12 hours with no grass and on lead, he doesn't go so I take him back off lead to grass. Then I try again. I wait 18 hours this time, he doesn't go, so I take him back again. Then I try again. This time I wait 24 hours and he **STILL** doesn't go, so I take him back. Are you seeing what's happening? I'm systematically teaching him to hold it until he gets back to the grass. If I'd just said, the first time, sorry bud, no grass available, and rewarded him when he went, he probably wouldn't have held out for nearly as long as I've successfully taught him to hold out!

For dogs that are holding out on the pooping, my vet suggests a couple of cans of pumpkin. I bet if you mixed a can of pumpkin, some bran cereal, some milk and canned dog food, and didn't give up, you'd get results. There is **NOTHING** more useful than a dog that goes on cue!

Panda

This brings to mind one of the "getting hit by lightning" moments in my pre-operant conditioning days.

Someone somewhere had mentioned this new-fangled idea of getting a dog to ring a bell. This seemed like a fun idea to me, but I couldn't think of any way to do it. This is how crazy your brain gets when you train with coercion: I thought for several days and came up with the idea of smearing a bit of hot dog on the bell and going crazy with praise if my Giant Schnauzer puppy, Panda, ever managed to make it ring.

So that's what I did. I smeared a gob of hot dog on the bell. Panda licked the hot dog off. Hmmm. No ring. Try again. I smeared another gob on the bell. Panda licked the hot dog off and the bell rang. I went crazy with praise, jumping up and down, woo-hooing and patting her. I smeared more hot dog on the bell and stood back.

Panda was later to be known as a "Renaissance dog". She may have been as smart as Scuba - hard to tell with the different training methods, but I'm pretty sure she was.

At 6 months, Panda looked at me. She looked at the bell. She looked back at me. She pulled her paw back, whacked the bell into next Tuesday, and then looked at me again. "Is that what you wanted?"

Coincidentally, the next weekend Panda earned her Championship in 3 shows and got 2 legs on her CD. The next day she got run over by a car (we were walking together in a farmyard with 5 other dogs and 2 little kids. Panda just happened to be the one on the outside of the bunch when a salesman came whizzing around a corner of the barn) and broke her back. She spent the next 2 months on her side in an expen. I hung toys on elastic bands for her to bat with her paws, and hung a bell so she could tell me when she had to go out (which was a huge undertaking, what with carrying her, applying continuous traction, etc). So I think that bell saved her life. She turned out to be

Champion, Obedience Champion, Tracking Dog, on the national scent hurdle racing champion team, and the lead dog on my competitive sled dog team. Heart dog.

One of my first moments of being able to get past my education far enough to see a thinking person in a dog body.

A Pee-Zen Plan

"I was very tired and have health issues."

Well, it's a good thing you're a smart person then! Wouldn't it be great to be healthy AND smart again? Oh, wait, I don't think I was probably very smart when I was healthy, but it was a long time ago so I don't remember all that well...

Here's a plan.

Spend 2 days doing Zen in all the ways you can think of: floor Zen, hand Zen, food dish Zen, going-out-the-door Zen, toy Zen, dog Zen, people Zen - whatever you can think of, so at the end of 2 days, he's really, really got Zen on the brain.

On the third day, put the leash on and go to a place where there are TWO pee-able objects 2 or 3 meters apart. Maybe a tree and a bush, or two trees, or a fence post and your mother-in-law...

Walk him close enough to the first object that he's interested but can't get to it. Cue Zen. c/t when he stops trying to get to it. Work Zen on that object a couple of times, then walk him directly over to the OTHER object and tell him to pee on it. c/t

Or, do the same thing, but use the second object and permission to pee on it as the treat following the click (that was a good idea).

Pick a second set of two pee-able objects and do the same with them. Then give him a longer leash and go for a walk as you usually do. If, on your walk, you happen to see another two useful pee-able objects, practise pee Zen on them. If you don't, that's OK too.

When you see that he's getting the idea, start 300-Pecking the whole idea. pee-Zen TWO objects and cue him/let him pee on the third. pee- Zen THREE objects and let him pee on the fourth. And so on, until he's peeing on cue at the start of your walk, somewhere in the middle, and at the end, but not in between.

Using this plan, you're teaching him two things at once - you're working on DO NOT PEE ON EVERYTHING, and you're working on PEE ON CUE.

How does that sound?

"When should I start giving the cue? Normally I would say wait until the dog is very good in the behavior. With the food zen I started learning him the cue, when he almost all ways backs off when he saw the food, then I started naming it. "

The reason I wanted you to work on all kinds of Zen for 2 days was so he would be really thinking about Zen and the Zen cue. It isn't possible for us to train for every single thing that comes up. Eventually we have to rely on the training that came before and just expect that the dog has enough education under his collar that he can generalize. I've trained food Zen, floor Zen, people Zen, dog Zen, and all kinds of other Zens I can think of, but when a waitress dropped a plate in a restaurant recently, and the plate shattered and went all over the floor, I quickly cued Leave It and then Stay. It wasn't good enough for Stitch to come toward me, I wanted her to stand still - and that's what she did, even while the staff swept and mopped around her.

We've done squirrel Zen and cat Zen and white Muscovy duck Zen, but in her recent water trials, Stitch retrieved her buoy rope right out from under a flock of wild ducks. Neither of these events are things I could possibly have trained for. A Levels dog is a dog with a lot of experience in different behaviours, and a really good foundation of on-cue self-control.

*"When should I click? For what kind of behavior? Only backing off?
That's it? "*

HA - I can make it more complicated if you want me to...

"When I wait and back off (like describe in the levels) or stand still the dog comes back to me (I am practicing loose leash walking on and on)"

It doesn't matter if he comes back or just moves away from the thing. Click for moving away and if he comes back to you, that's fine. If he's willing to give you eye contact, then you're teaching him to use eye contact to ask permission, as Lauren described (Lauren who teaches marking with not marking).

From the Beginning

"We have a fenced in yard so we normally let him out by himself. "

Unfortunately Trainings Levels Rule #227 very clearly says "if you don't control the circumstances, you don't control what the dog learns". Your dog knows how to potty in the yard. If you want to teach him a completely different behaviour (going in one place), you're going to have to start from the beginning and retrain him. It's certainly possible - even easy, actually. I had 4 Giant Schnauzers in a small yard in the city when my kids were small, and all the dogs went in one tiny corner of the yard, which I eventually paved to make cleanup easier.

Teaching Toileting on Cue

" Then, how do you train your dog to eliminate on concrete? I'm sure there are many folks out there who want to know this!!!"

a) Put a bit of the dog's newspaper, or grass, or dirt, flavoured with urine, on the concrete, and take the dog there.

b) Put the cue on the behaviour when the dog is urinating in her regular spot, then stop taking her to her regular spot. Take her instead to the concrete, and give the cue. Do NOT take her back to the old spot at ALL until she is going happily on the concrete.

c) Getting a dog (or llama) to go somewhere strange before they have the behaviour on cue is an artistic matter:

1. don't stand absolutely still so the dog hunkers up, stands still, and looks miserable, this will not encourage "movement".

2. don't jump around and be a cheerleader and constantly distract the dog, she's there to do a job, not to look at you. Quietly encourage the dog to sniff, quietly give the cue (if you have the behaviour on cue), when the dog stops and stands, encourage sniffing again and/or move one or two steps to get her moving again.

3. don't go out and stand around on the concrete for two hours. Give the dog maybe one minute to "go", then simply take her back in the house. You are not birdwatching. Keep her **TOTALLY** under control (just like housebreaking), preferably leashed to you. An hour later, start asking her if she needs to go, when she says she does, take her back out to the new spot, and give her another minute. No go, take her back in the house for another hour.

don't underestimate the power of simply going for a long walk on concrete/asphalt and letting nature do the job for you. When the dog is desperate to go, point at the ground, quietly give the cue, but do

NOT take the dog over to the nearest tree or grassy spot. This is IT, Toots, concrete or nothing.

The Art of Houstraining

*"I'm *very* concerned that teaching indoor elimination could potentially weaken houstraining."*

This hasn't been my experience. Quite the opposite, in fact. The more I teach a dog about the art of houstraining, the more reliable the dog seems to be. When I lived in a city house, I had a specific spot in the yard where the dogs were required to eliminate, and nowhere else in the yard. Yet they were all trained to eliminate on cue in other locations - at dog shows, on grass, on cement, on city drains, on dirt. And almost all were trained to eliminate on pee pads indoors, but none ever had a problem with inappropriately generalizing this to eliminating freely in a house.

The Limited Hold

"What other suggestions or recommendations might anyone have for Yoda's daddy to get him to go outside, and how might I train him to give me a signal that he has to go?"

Dear Yoda's Daddy,

Yoda has way too much freedom. I would suggest you put him on a leash, and keep the leash attached to your wrist. I recommend this to new "parents" anyway, but it is especially useful for housebreaking.

When he is on leash, you can't get distracted because he's with you all the time. My computer desk (where I do about 50% of my work) is around a corner from the rest of the house - once the dog is around the corner, she might be having full-size frat parties for all I know. When you see the pup acting in any different than normal - including whining, circling, pulling on the leash, thinking hard, or anything else, you can start cueing "wanna go outside?" or whatever you're going to say, and take him out.

You will learn to see when he has to go out (you learning is the first step - him learning is the second step).

When you are both outside, go to a spot where he has peed and where you have planted a couple of his poops, and where you want him to "go". Stand still and be quiet. Don't nag, don't encourage, don't cheerlead, stand still and be quiet. If he stands still or sits, move just enough to get him up and moving around again, then stand still and be quiet again. Stay outside for **ONE MINUTE**. Not five minutes, not ten minutes, not half an hour - **ONE MINUTE**. If he pees, give him a treat and then stand still and be quiet for another **ONE MINUTE**. If nothing happens after one minute, don't say anything at all and take him back in the house and go on with what you were doing. Wait until you notice something again, then take him out again.

Why one minute? This is called a "limited hold". He has one minute to "go". That's his opportunity. If you give him half an hour, he'll take half an hour. Going sometime in the next half hour while I stand out in the cold is **NOT** being trained to go. If I sit a toddler on a pot for four hours, he's going to go in the pot eventually. This is not training him to go when I put him on the pot!

The pup does not want to "go" where he lives. If he is free to wander off, he will go somewhere else. His definition of where he doesn't live, however, is "under the dining room table" or "in the next room" or "ten feet from where I was when I thought of pooping". Whereas **YOUR** definition of where he doesn't live is "outside". He'll be happy to go along with your definition as long as you give him a clear explanation of what your definition is, and what he can do about it (and what he

CAN'T do about it - every mistake he makes in the house, he's being rewarded for going in the house because after he goes, he doesn't have his problem any more).

The really neat part of taking him out with a limited hold is that it produces a pup who not only knows where to go, he associates you with getting there, and he learns to go on cue - which means any time at all you can tell him to go, and he will. Once you've had a dog who goes when you want him to, it's hard to live with a dog who won't!

Toileting on Different Surfaces

"The basic surfaces would be: grass, asphalt, concrete, wood chips, rock, sand."

To that I would add "grates" - this happened quite by accident, we happen to have a city drain in the parking lot right outside our training building. After a long evening of classes, my dogs have to go when we get outside. They COULD hold it till we got home, if there was no place to go, but the grate looked so inviting. Since they learned to hit the grate (yes, even the bitches hit the grate), even the toughest airport has gotten easier, because we can go outside, find a "somewhat" quiet exit ramp or road (or even grates inside the parkade), and my dogs are pre-curb-trained. Yes, they'll go on the sidewalk if I tell them to, in fact they'd go on my couch if I told them to, but it seems more polite to leave pee in the drain than just lying there on the road.

Training to Eliminate on Concrete

"I understand there is no choice but I don't get it, I mean, who wants to walk in urine walking down the street, what do you do."

My dog pees on grates. If no grate, she pees where and when I tell her to, whether it is on pavement or cement or grass or whatever. This is absolutely essential to me. We frequently find ourselves in situations where neither of us can afford HER to make the decision whether she needs to go or not, because SHE is not the one who is in charge of airline schedules and training sessions and university classes and such, so I need to be able to tell her to go whenever and wherever. As to wherever, when I lived in the city, I had a city drain in one back corner of my yard, which we put cement around. This was a perfect solution, the dogs were trained to "go" on the cement, and I could pick it up easily and rinse the rest down the drain.

As to the question of them asking to go, when they are not on duty and not on lead, they can go out their dog door and go anytime they please. On duty, or just on lead, I expect them to ask, or wait for permission, because how do they tell the difference between cement of a roadway and cement of the floor in Home Depot? Or the difference between a scruffy patch of grass in between buildings at the airport and the small but immaculate lawn of a rabid gardener friend of mine? Or even the difference between the city drain grate outside in the parking lot and the actual drain near the sink in my training building? I need them to ask for permission in all these locations.

Peeing on the sidewalk - well, that would be an emergency, but I have asked her to pee on the pavement at the airport between flights - we didn't have time to go for a hike looking for a more discreet place, and we were coming up on a 6-hour flight following a 3-hour flight. I have stood in the gutter and asked her to pee there rather than on the sidewalk. I guess the best we can is the best we can do, and remember that not everyone loves dogs, and even if they do, that doesn't mean it is polite to let your dog mess any old place. The Depends are a SUPER idea, I'm going to start working on that right away, and carry one in my pack for emergencies.

Here's another facet of the same question - what do you all do about different water and different food in places you go, besides ALWAYS carrying diarrhea pills? I have some ideas about this from years of going to dog shows, but I'd like to hear other opinions.

Verbal Marker for Toileting on Cue

Spot (ahem) on, Cindi. Click ends the behaviour, so the dog stops peeing.

I've had 7 wo puppies dribble a single drop, get the click, coming running over for the treat, and get to go back in the house **TOTALLY** unfinished with the job. And clicking after **IS** reinforcing stopping, or possible **NOT** peeing, since they aren't peeing when you click and that's the whole point of clicking.

I find the longer-duration verbal praise (AKA marker) works much better for this behaviour. I **DO** reward though, when they're done. Yes, they already had the reward of relief, maybe the reward from me is just "Wow, job well done, didn't we have a good time out here together?"

Squat on the Spot

I had the pleasure of demonstrating "squat on the spot" to a non-believer in a recent seminar in California (fortunately it was **OUT**doors). My dogs will go on the spot, on cue, and if they don't need to go they will squat anyway to demonstrate their lack of product. The key for me has been a **LIMITED HOLD** - the dog is kept on leash in and out of the house. When she starts telling me she has to go out, we go out, we go to a spot that looks inviting (to me, at least), and she has maybe 10 seconds to get started. If she doesn't go in that 10 seconds, we go back in the house for half an hour, or an hour, or five minutes, or however long it takes her to get a bit more uncomfortable, then I ask again "Wanna go outside?" and out we go again for another 10 second stint. If she goes, she gets clicked, she gets treated, she gets to stay out and play a bit. If she doesn't go, we go back in the house. We are not outside to dawdle, to play, to sniff, to see who is walking by the house, to bark, to whine, to pull on the leash, or for any other reason but to potty. Once she knows where she's going and why, I add

the cue (in our case, "Go on, hurry up"). When we've done the whole thing with the cue about 40 times, I start from scratch again and take her to a different place, and work up to adding the cue again. I bet this takes about an hour longer than simple housetraining, altogether. And the result is a dog who WILL go anywhere, anytime, with distractions - one of my basic civilization behaviours without which I could not enjoy a dog, or travel with one. In fact "eliminate on cue" is in Level Two of my 8-level training classes. You can't get into Level Three without passing it!

BTW, this limited hold also works on llamas. Everybody grooms them, then turns them loose in a pen at the show, and bemoans their dirty pens. I groom, take them outside to the "pile", click and reward the pottying, and THEN return them to a clean pen. 4 minutes a day extra, and no poop scooping.

Toileting on Cue

Song knew a lot of service behaviours but was never young when I really needed a service dog.

I DO remember that rainy California seminar though - it was outdoors. At one point we were under a canopy and I was talking about training your dog to "go" on cue. A guy tried to argue with me, saying that was fine for MALES, but a FEMALE could never be trained to pee on cue. I was happy it was outdoors! I called Song off her table, pointed at the ground and gave the cue. She squatted immediately.

Now, WE all know that bitches of course can be trained to pee on cue, all my dogs since the dawn of time have known this. Still, I thought it was pretty funny - this happened to be one of Song's BEST things, and she happened at the time to have been lying on that table for over an hour, so the pump was certainly primed. I was hoping the guy wouldn't

remember that she'd hadn't gone out in quite a while, since my point was that a trained bitch will pee because you told her to (which Song certainly would have), not because she needed to.

HEEL

Heel Position

"The shoulders back with the handler's body PLUS the dog's body in perfect alignment, correct front-to-back, with their shoulders PLUS the dog suitably close to the handler. "

That's it. An airplane moves in three planes - pitch (nose down or up), roll (wings level or one higher than the other), and yaw (plane actually traveling in the direction the nose is pointing, or sliding to one side or the other.

The dog is also described in three planes - forging/lagging (the shoulder is even with the hip, ahead of it, or behind it), wide/close (the dog is near the leg, or far from it, or touching it), and yaw (the dog's butt, for instance, might be swung out to the left, or the butt might be in position while the front of the dog is wide, or the butt might be tucked in behind the handler too far). An error in any of the three will be a half-point error.

"Ok...but, still thinking in pictures...since there are THREE factors here...and a perfect heel position would be all three, wouldn't one error be a third of a point off?"

Only if you're an easy judge...

Actually, there are no thirds, only halves, and a wide, forged, crooked heel could be worth three points off, depending on how wide, how forged, and how crooked. It's a game of inches.

Heel and Finish

Sit on a small stool, low to the ground, so you can scootch around on your butt with your face almost at dog level. Sit there for three days' worth of sessions. Click for nothing but eye contact. Keep your hands in your pockets or hidden in your shirt until after you click.

"Wow, this is really working great, I'm on my second day of this, and its working great, I can really tell I was lumping now. Looking back I can see that she really didn't have a clue what I wanted and was just randomly guessing. And seeing this has made me realize how much I've been lumping in everything, and now that I'm splitting everything goes some much faster and easier. Before I was getting frustrated "she knows this why isn't she thinking, I don't want to explain it again" Now I'm seeing how much faster it goes if you just go back and explain from the beginning.

Anyways, at first I was thinking that maybe I should work on this sitting on a stool and paying for eye contact in every room of the house for these three days. But now I'm starting to think, that I should get the whole thing perfect in one room and then start over in the next. Is that thinking right or would the other way work too? I'm thinking that the latter would work better and would be more splittingish, is that right?

I'm thinking that the latter would work better and would be more splittingish, is that right?"

Right. Well done!

Swing Finish Questions

*"What specifically am I looking for here? Should she technically be *backing* into the position when I pivot left?"*

No. What specifically you're looking for is that she doesn't let go of your eyes. To learn this particularly swing finish, she **MUST** hold your eyes as you pivot ccw (as she does when you pivot cw). What's happening is that the old swing finish is interfering with the new one. Concentrate on her eye contact.

Then, get a broom. Hold it with the tip on your belly button and the brush out in front of you. The tip is her eyes, **HOLDING** contact. Pivot ccw. Notice that the tip and your belly button are going slowly around, while the brush (her tail) is going around really fast. When you have her eyes glued to yours as you pivot, start clicking when you see her tail

"keeps her front feet in about the same position, but swings with her back feet to keep my eyes. "

That's it. Now all you do is click for the **MOVEMENT** of her butt going faster than her head, and she will automatically continue the movement until she works her way all the way around into Heel position.

JUMP

Shaping the Jump

"Is it a case of it's never too early to do training from a chair? or is that a more advanced concept that I should present later?"

It is never too early to train from a chair. When people learn to shape, they learn a) to avoid lumping, b) to watch the dog more carefully, c) to be happy with tiny improvements, d) to give the dog room (both mentally and physically) to learn, and e) to allow the DOG to be in control of what happens next. What an incredible feeling of power, awe, and teamwork you allow them to achieve by teaching them to shape!

"Should they be sitting next to the center of the jump, like the comp. ob. Broad Jump handler position?"

It's probably easier this way to add a TINY bit of luring if you have to in the course of the event - by tossing the treat for the LAST behaviour to a point which puts the dog in a good position to offer another interaction with the jump. You don't have to start with them 20' away ;-), but don't plant them right on top of the jump, either. And I would start with the bar on the floor, so the dog can easily step from side to side. I have found the idea of "get from one side of this sucker to the other side" to be a very powerful one, and one which translates very easily into "go over this no matter how high, no matter how broad, no matter what it looks like, no matter where I am". In the Broad Jump in obedience, for instance, this means that the dog is responsible for jumping over the boards - not for cutting the corner, not for walking on, not for walking through, not for avoiding. This frees the handler from the responsibility of "keeping the dog on the jump" -

which is basically the whole point of making the dog operant. IMO, people should learn shaping BEFORE they are allowed to lure!

LEASH

Be a Tree

Personally I actively hate "Be A Tree". So if that's what you're recommending, don't ask me because I hate it. Why do I hate it? I think there are very few people who have the innate speed and talent and attention span to make BAT work. Most people forget what they are doing, allow the dog to pull them a step or two closer to what he wants to get to, then remember to stop, then the dog gets to stand and stare at the thing as long as he wants. When he is done, he loosens the lead and the pair move on to the next exciting thing. Basically, the dog is rewarded for pulling them that last step or two.

When you do the "Baseline" method - that is, back up away from anything the dog is pulling you toward - even if the person allowed that extra step to happen, the object of attraction then rapidly disappears as dog and handler back away from it. The idea is that the only result of the dog tightening the leash is that the handler moves rapidly in the opposite direction.

So I recommend Baseline. Then I want the dog to have a very definite focal point. If you can provide a squirrel in an appropriate position, great, but if you can't, put down a honking big chunk of liver or something equally charming to give the dog something to aim at: WOW, LIVER! I'M GONNA GET... hey, the liver is disappearing over the horizon! Darn! WOW, THERE'S THE LIVER AGAIN! I'M GONNA... hey, it's disappearing again! WOW, THERE'S...nyuh uh

Jack, I don't see any liver - and so on, and so on, until the dog can walk right up to the liver on a nice loose leash.

The "trouble" with Mini Schnauzers is that they are very smart and very observant. When you said "I have seen his owner work him and for the most part he is consistent (when I see him) with my methods." it made me think that maybe the Mini is being rewarded for a tight leash often enough to encourage him to keep trying to tighten it. The dog must never Never NEVER NEVERNEVERNEVER get to go anywhere with the leash tight. Never. There is a device which attaches to leashes that makes a noise every time the leash tightens, maybe that would help (the owner).

Click and Reward LLW

Hi guys, it's me...

bear in mind that the posted story of my Song and her sheep was written (as the last line notes) specifically in response to a question about CONTACT.

Not that it doesn't work exactly the same way for loose leash walking, it does. Just that if it's CONTACT you want, you click and reward for contact, whether the leash is loose or not, and if it's LOOSE LEASH you want, you click and reward for loose leash, whether you have contact or not. What I was looking for in Song at that time was controlled behaviour, defined by loose leash (screaming was a result of her lack of control - as soon as she was in enough control to loosen the leash, the screaming stopped on its own). The fact that she gave me eye contact was incidental and was NOT necessary to me clicking her for loosening the leash.

I point this out because of the original title of the thread, which was about heeling (as I recall) - do they have to do it all the time? My

answer to that would be that HEEL is a precision competition behaviour (assuming that's your definition of heeling). I've seen many dogs that were pretty darn good at heeling but if not under the control of a heel command, were completely out of control dragging their handlers around on a tight lead. I doubt very much that one dog in a thousand can give quality heeling behaviour for two minutes, let alone longer.

Loose Leash Walking, OTOH, in my life at least, is a default behaviour. It requires no command, no cue, no special body language, and no eye contact. If the leash is attached to the dog and to me, the leash is loose. This is a behaviour which my dogs (and many others) can perform well for hours on end. I liken it to wearing a seat belt. You're in the car, you're wearing a seat belt. No discussion, no argument, no fussing, no special orders. Car equals seat belt. Leash equals loose.

There are exceptions, of course, but that's what they are, exceptions. On a show lead, with my body/gait/left arm specifically in show position, *I* can put 2 oz of pressure on the lead and have the dog maintain it. In a harness, with the pull coming off the dog's shoulders instead of her collar, the dog will happily pull a cart or sled. These behaviours, however, require specific additional cues to override the default behaviour, which is LLW. Always interesting to watch a trained dog introduced to a sled team for the first time. Usually takes her 15 minutes or more to realize that she CAN pull.

Loose Leash Walking

OK. Loose Leash Walking.

I'm going to start by rewarding the behaviour I want, so I'll start in a place with no distractions. Put the dog on a leash maybe 4' long, buckle collar, martingale, or limited slip. I first met limited slip collars about 30 years ago when racing sled dogs, and I've loved them ever since.

They slip on, like a choker, which I really like because my fingers don't handle buckles very well any more. They're adjustable so when the leash is tight the collar hasn't closed on the dog's neck but is tight enough that the dog can't get out of them.

Anyway. Lots of click & treat for nothing but having the leash loose in, say, the bathroom, with nothing else to do. If the leash tightens, I'll just stand and wait until it loosens again, or I might help out a bit by luring the dog back over to me so I can start clicking again. Note here that the dog is going to start looking at you, but **YOU ARE NOT CLICKING FOR THE DOG LOOKING AT YOU**. The **ONLY** thing you're clicking for is the leash being loose. This is important, not because you don't want the dog looking at you, but because you don't **CARE** if she looks at you. She can look around if she wants to - don't get suckered into only clicking when she's looking at you. The **LEASH** is the thing.

BTW, dogs may do shades of gray, but humans don't do them all that well, so stick with this definition: when the leash is loose, the snap hangs **DOWN**. When the snap isn't hanging straight down, the leash is **TIGHT**.

Play the leash game in the bathroom, then the kitchen, then the living room, then the back yard... Now it's time to step it up a bit.

First, you are now completely done being a tree. Totally finished. **YOU WILL NEVER BE A TREE AGAIN WITH THIS DOG**.

You will need a **SINGLE** focal point - something the dog wants to get to more than anything else in the area, so she's trying to go in **ONE** direction. What focal point? I dunno - ask the dog. A big-enough-to-be-visible chunk of meat. A ball. Another dog. A person - whatever this particular dog will want to get to.

Here's the setup: you and the dog are in the middle of an area that is, say, 60' long. On the left wall is the focal point. Click the loose leash, if you can. Say **NOTHING**. Take a step toward the focal point. Click the loose leash. repeat. If the dog gets all the way to the focal point with the leash loose, she can have/grab/talk to/play with it.

BUT if she moves out ahead of you towards the focal point, you're going to **BACK UP**. Do **NOT** turn around and walk away from it. Do **NOT** stop and stand still, thus allowing her to stare at the focal point until she loses interest in it. Do **NOT** take a single step or two backwards. **BACK UP**. Back up until she completely loses hope of ever getting to the Focal Point.

When the leash is loose and she's switched her attention from the FP to you again, click, (feed if you think that will help the explanation), and take a single step forward toward the FP again. If the leash is still loose, click and step forward again. The reward is going toward the FP, but if you think that's a bit esoteric, go ahead and feed it first, then step forward. Leash still loose, click and step forward. Leash still loose, click and step forward. Leash still... oops, leash gets tight, you back up again. Back up until she's lost hope, click and step forward again.

Things that can go wrong: you let her pull you forward a couple of steps before you realize what's happening. Don't wait until the leash is tight before you start backing up. Back up when it's **GOING** to be tight.

You only took a step or two backwards. It wasn't far enough for her to lose hope of ever getting to the Focal Point, so you get a yo-yo effect: she pulls, you take a step back, she ducks back with you, you step forward, she pulls, you take a step back... it's like dancing - one step back, one step forward, one step back, one step forward... you lost your FP. Can't go west? Fine! I'll go see **THAT** guy to the south! Can't go see the guy? Fine! There's a squirrel to the east! Can't visit the squirrel? Fine! Let's try west again! You won't get anywhere working in this situation. You have to control the situation better. No guys, no squirrels - only the one Focal Point that **YOU** are in charge of.

Right. As you explain the rules - tight leashes go **AWAY** from the FP, loose leashes go **TOWARD** the FP - the dog will show you where her threshold of behaviour is. Say she can hold the leash loose until she's 10' from the FP. You explain it again. Again she fails at 10'. You explain it again. This time she gets to 9' before she tightens it. You explain it

again. - I love this explanation because it IS so clear where the dog's threshold is.

In different circumstances, different places, with different FPs, she'll have different thresholds.

I also love this because it's SUCH pure Zen. People tend to think of this in light of how hard it is for the dog to keep the leash loose. I look at it from the other direction. The dog will put all her effort into getting to the Focal Point. If she thinks that pulling will get her there, she'll put all her effort into pulling. If she thinks keeping the leash loose will get her there, she'll put all her effort into keeping it loose. So I'm not trying to stop her from trying, I'm just shaping what "trying" means.

Picture me walking a llama stud across the yard from his bachelor pad to the breeding pen. In the breeding pen is a ripe young honey blowing him kisses and batting her eyes. I can pretty much guarantee that there is no dog who wants anything as badly as Mr Macho wants to get to that breeding pen, but I walk across the yard with the leash held in two fingers. He's putting so much effort into keeping that leash loose that he's actually walking backwards. Why is he trying so hard to keep it loose? Because I don't care if you just drove that female from Peru to breed to this boy, if he can't cross the yard on a loose leash, it ain't gonna happen. Loose leashes go to the breeding pen, tight leashes go directly back to the lonely bachelor pad.

One more thing I forgot to say about Loose Leash Walking. I don't use a verbal cue for it.

I've said this before, but it should be more obvious now that we've talked about environmental cues. The cue for the dog to give you a loose leash is that the leash is on. That's it.

"My Dog is Pulling My Arm Off!!"

My thoughts on the Armless Discussion:

Whatever you are doing isn't working. Stop it. That is, until your dog learns not to pull, stop taking her out with two dogs. Stop taking her for hour-long walks. Stop taking her where you don't control the situation and can't control your dog. If you don't want to do any of these things, then the discussion is over. Your priorities are clear, you want the hour-long walks right NOW more than you want her to stop pulling, you want to take two dogs more than you want her to stop pulling, you want to not think about the situation more than you want her to stop pulling. End of discussion. .

If you want her to stop pulling, and you can't take her for walks because that is continuing her education in pulling, you can exercise her by throwing a ball or frisbee or whatever, or you can practise recalls between two people. She can get just as much exercise this way without continuing to be reinforced for bad habits. .

If she will heel, that's great, you have a way to get her to the car and get her into the vet's office and get her from the car to class, etc, but you are correct in thinking that heeling is NOT loose-leash-walking. Heeling is work, hard work, for the dog, it is a competition behaviour, I certainly won't say it isn't fun, but it isn't fun for an hour, and it certainly isn't relaxing. And you won't GET heeling for an hour, you will get sloppy heeling, inattentive heeling, crummy heeling, so you're not getting heeling anyway.

Understand that what you have been doing is not only not working the way you want it to, it is actively instructing your dog in the art of pulling. She knows that she HAS to pull in order to get anywhere, that's the rules. If you want the pulling to stop, you need to begin The First Day Of The Rest Of Her Life with no, zero, nada, never, ever, ever ANY pulling.

Be A Tree works sometimes. Not often, but sometimes. The problem with it when people think it should be working and it isn't is that by the time people notice the dog is pulling, the dog has already pulled them two or three feet closer to wherever the dog wanted to be, and then is rewarded by being allowed to stand there until she has finished looking at/sniffing whatever it was she got closer to.

What DOES work, with a carefully thought-out plan of action, is "penalty yards" (TM pending, Lana Horton). The carefully thought-out plan of action means that the dog cannot overpower you - GL or whatever you need, that you TOTALLY control the situation, that you have a plan of what you are going to do, what you are going to reward, what you are looking for.

You totally control the situation - she is in your basement, your kitchen, your training building, your totally-fenced back yard, whatever, so you control who/what she sees, where she goes, etc. You need to have tack that you can handle - that is, tack that allows you to pull the dog rather than the dog to pull you. This includes not only a halter, but a leash that is heavy enough that it won't hurt your hands. Unless you are a very small person, I suggest a 1" leather leash, and I suggest it be six feet long because that length will give you time to think. BTW, you put the leash loop over one thumb, then wrap the lead twice around your hand, put both your hands together grasping one another, and put your two hands tight into your stomach. That's where they stay. Once the dog has pulled your hands away from your stomach, she controls you rather than you controlling her. Now put your feet shoulder-width apart, dominant foot slightly ahead of the other foot, toes turned out a bit. Lean back onto your back leg. Practise this without the dog, and get your husband to try to pull you off balance. Feet apart, one slightly ahead, hands together in stomach, lean back. Sink your weight down a bit, and grow your soles into the centre of the earth.

You have a plan of what you are going to reward. EXACTLY what behaviour are you looking for? What if she sniffs? So what? Is that what you're working on? Or are you working on a loose leash? If you are working on a loose leash, then that is the ONLY behaviour you are

working on. She can crawl, fly, sniff, roll over, bark, scream, pee, eat grass, whatever, as long as the leash is loose.

What is a loose leash? Most people define a loose leash as "the dog isn't pulling really hard" - not good enough. "Pulling really hard" is fuzzy criteria. Neither you nor your dog can work with fuzzy criteria. You need something specific, something easy to spot, and something that errs on the side of extreme lightness. **IF THE LEASH SNAP IS NOT HANGING STRAIGHT DOWN, THE LEASH IS TIGHT!**

What are you going to do? Assemble hungry dog, leash, good shoes, gloves if you need them to protect your hands, great treats, clicker. Put your back against a wall. This is Ground Zero. There is **NOTHING** here for the dog to look at, sniff, interact with, or do except you.

Click dog a dozen times for having the leash loose. Not for looking at you, not for sitting, not for "paying attention", not for standing on her head, not for lying down. For having a loose leash. Try to get your dozen clicks in Rapid Fire, that is, within a minute.

Now toss (or have someone place) a focal point out about 20' from you. This could be a ball, a toy, a treat, whatever your dog would like to have. Bam, dog hits end of leash, but you don't care, your soles are one with the core of the planet and you just stand there with your back against the wall and your hands in your stomach (this is the **ONLY** time you will Be A Tree, because with your back against the wall, you **KNOW** the dog didn't pull you forward).

Eventually (5 seconds, 4 hours, whatever) the leash will loosen, click, and shove the most wonderful treat in the dog's face. Rapid-Fire another dozen if possible. Take a step toward the focal point. If you got one step forward, Rapid-Fire another dozen. If you didn't get one step forward without the dog whipping to the end of the lead, then **BACK UP** until your back is against the wall again. Wait for the leash to loosen, and Rapid-Fire another dozen.

Repeat until you can take that one step and the dog keeps the leash loose. Take another step. Click if you've got the loose leash, back up TO THE WALL if you don't. Keep working.

If the dog gets to the toy WITH THE LEASH LOOSE, she can have it. Click just before she grabs it.

Do the same thing the next day (or that afternoon, or whatever). And the next. And the next. And the next.

When it's WONDERFUL, take it somewhere else. *****NOT***** out for a one-hour walk! Somewhere else where you totally control the situation. When it's WONDERFUL in the second location, take it somewhere else. And somewhere else. You could, after you have about 8 local locations, work on house-to-car with a loose leash. Once you've got that, get the dog in the car and go somewhere where there isn't anybody, and work it using the car as your wall to put your back against. Now you have Infinite Locations.

Keep working it until you have it everywhere. Whether you get it or not depends ENTIRELY on whether you want it or not, and whether you want it enough to actually teach it rather than going for walks, exercising, etc.

Anecdote

" I certainly have not, he is a rescue that I got 5 months ago and from day one with me he has not been rewarded for getting where he wants to go by pulling me there. "

This isn't a "you did..., you stupid!" situation. A dog that pulls on the leash for more than two DAYS ****IS**** being rewarded for pulling on the leash. That doesn't mean YOU are handing him cookies or allowing him to drag you all over the neighbourhood, but unless he is

an extremely-low-IQ dog, he does what gets him what he wants. Over and over and over again. No matter what answers you get, no matter what you have tried or not tried, the bottom line remains the same.

If he does ANYTHING for more than a couple of days, HE is finding it rewarding.

If you can't figure out how to control the rewards he is getting (finding, giving himself, floating on the breeze, whatever), you will not change his behaviour.

If that means throwing a frisbee in the basement for a couple of weeks while you teach him that from now on the leash is NEVER going to be tight, then he gets his exercise in the basement for a couple of weeks.

"IF he doesn't understand that he makes the leash tight he cannot change his behavior"

I think you're putting too much effort into what the dog understands and thinks, and too much effort into reasons why things won't work.

Forget about what he understands. You have no idea what he understands. Look at the behaviour. You have been training him to pull on the leash for months or years. He is being actively rewarded for pulling on the leash. If you are going to make a difference, you need to stop him from being rewarded for pulling and start rewarding him for not pulling.

Instead of countering every suggestion with "Yahbut, that won't work because... ", try taking the core of the suggestion and figuring out what you need to change about what is happening in order to MAKE it work.

For instance, many people have suggested moving away from something interesting instead of standing there letting him look at it. Your reply of "Yahbut he finds everything interesting" isn't going to help you, but changing what you're doing would. If he finds everything

interesting, you need to find a place where NOTHING is interesting so you can supply the ONE interesting thing. If you don't control the environment, you don't control what the dog learns. In a totally boring environment with ONE interesting thing, it will be a lot easier to explain to him that the way to get to the interesting thing is to keep the leash loose. Once you HAVE the behaviour you want, it's "only" a matter of adding a bit more distraction at a time until he's able to give you the behaviour you want everywhere.

"Many times he doesn't want any treats, all he wants is take it all in."

That would appear to be the answer to your problem right there. All he wants is to take it all in. Unfortunately, when you stop and stand still, he is rewarded by being able to stand and take it all in. This is a pretty natural result of the "Be A Tree" way of teaching loose leash walking, and one of the reasons I never recommend it.

Another way of looking at this is - the dog will continue to do what he's rewarded for doing. If he finds taking it all in rewarding and can pull you a couple of feet closer to "it all" before he has to stand and look at it all, so much the better.

IME, a much better way of teaching loose leash walking is to go backwards AWAY from what he wants to look at/smell, back to some neutral territory, around a corner or simply far enough away from it that it's no longer particularly interesting. Loose leashes go TOWARDS interesting things, tight leashes go AWAY from interesting things.

As a general rule, if an explanation of anything is working, you should see results in a day or two. If there are no results or very poor results in that length of time, you'll need to change your explanation.

Behaviors for Different Disciplines

"Perhaps what one does in an obedience class isn't best for SD work."

Really, one has nothing to do with the other.

Maybe this point is easy for me because I've done just about everything - herding, dog sled racing, retrieving ducks (well, the dog, not me), scent hurdle and flyball racing, obedience, etc. What is right and necessary in herding might get us killed in sled racing.

"Obedience" is nothing more than a sport with set exercises for the ring. There is an obedience portion to Schutzhund as well, but the heeling is not the same - dogs doing Schutzhund heeling fare poorly under obedience judges, and vice versa. What is "right" is, with modifications to exist in civilized areas ;-), ultimately works best for you.

When Scuba is heeling for competition, I can barely see her eyes if I look down (her head is even with my hip), she is trying to make eye contact every second, and the leash is totally loose.

When Scuba is walking on a loose leash, she is looking around, probably 2' out from my left or right side, sniffing the floor occasionally, visiting people quickly - anything she wants as long as the leash is loose. If I want her closer and still "loose leash walking", I shorten the leash.

But when Scuba is working, she is walking close to my left side with her shoulders just ahead of my hip, and about half an ounce of pressure on the leash. She is looking where we are going, not talking to anyone, and once in a while she looks back and gently touches my left knee with her nose (working, working, working, working, check. working, working...) (I don't know why she does this, I didn't teach it to her, but I really like it because it tells me that she is totally "into" being on the job). I can call this behaviour "heeling" if I want to, but it really doesn't have to have anything to do with anyone else's definition of heeling,

and it CERTAINLY isn't a ring definition. Scuba's my dog, and her behaviours, ultimately, are mine as well.

Comfortable LLW

"I am looking for the loose leash walk that is comfortable. "

Let's be specific here on terms - loose leash walking is a completely different behaviour than heeling - heeling being a competition obedience behaviour, very specific and very difficult for the dog to maintain for any length of time. LLW for a Service Dog will be more controlled than a pet would need, but is still LLW - not requiring eye contact (in fact, I specifically don't want eye contact from my SD when LLW), not necessarily requiring sitting when the handler stops, not requiring precise orientation of the body with the handler's body.

Creating LLW Problems

"Problems we might have later on would be giving hand cues while we are traveling if he is watching the wheels"

You don't want the dog watching your face while he's walking normally anyway. I ask for eye contact while Heeling, but Heeling is a very specific competition skill and has NOTHING to do with walking on a loose lead OR with on-duty walking by a wheelchair. The reason for this is that watching your face while moving requires the dog's head to be cranked around over her right shoulder - a very unnatural way of walking, and one that, over long periods of time, could have unpleasant physical consequences. Scuba's on-duty walking is looking where she's going. She developed a behaviour I find useful AND charming, which I didn't teach or reward, but she does it anyway.

When she's deeply into SD mode, every third step she swings her head over and lightly brushes my left knee as it comes forward. "Walking, walking, walking and ON DUTY. Walking, walking, walking, and ON DUTY."

Also I don't much trust hand cues because exactly how do you use a hand cue to get the dog to watch you? To get his attention? To stop him from going THERE? I do develop a "secret cue" for each dog to get her attention in crowds (so I don't wind up bellowing "JOE! JOE! GAWDAMMIT, JOE! WILL YOU PAY ATTENTION!?" This secret cue encompasses part of the dog's name - so Scuba's is "sss" or "ssst", and Stitch's is "ch-ch"

Dog Distractions

"I need longer duration looking at me and staying in position in the hope that it will stop her focusing on approaching dogs."

You've got a plan, you've got treats, you've got a problem you're working to solve - all great.

Except.

Except that your dog can't spend her life walking and looking at you. That's called "Heeling" and it's very, very difficult to maintain for any period of time. The other problem is the threshold. If your dog can stay in your game while seeing another dog 10' away, but 9.5' away, she loses focus, what happens when you ask her to walk and watch until you're 2' from the other dog and THEN she loses it? She's now 7.5' over her threshold.

My advice would be to stop asking her to look at you and simply work Loose Leash Walking. It isn't a matter of her dekeing out to the side to visit, it's a matter of her being sideways to the other dog when she hits

her threshold of behaviour. Do it face on and back up when she starts to tighten the leash. Show her that she CAN look at another dog, CAN keep the leash tight, CAN earn the treats, and CAN control herself without wearing blinders.

Gravity Rules

Loose Leash walking is a "gravity rules" (Ask Sue Ailsby) Tell us more.

This came to me somewhere over Colorado ;*D - There are some behaviours that I need to have on the same level as gravity. These things become Gravity Rules. Many people want to have a dog that walks on a loose leash, but *I* like very small tack, like show leads, I have very large dogs (the smallest dog I've owned in the last 15 years weighs 45 pounds), everything I own hurts, and sometimes my hands hurt worse than anything else. I REQUIRE a loose leash.

I don't get up on Saturday and think "Maybe gravity doesn't work on Saturdays, I think I'll jump off a building and see". If I had spent my first ten years in freefall, I might not have this totally religious belief in gravity, but I didn't, so I do. Similarly, my dogs grew up with loose leashes. Loose Leash is a Gravity Rule. Yes, when they go off-planet (go for a walk with someone else), they can be graceful in freefall (might very well tighten the leash on someone who lets them), but for me, they never think about it.

Not running out exit doors (house, building, car) just because they are open is a Gravity Rule for my dogs.

Food that isn't paid attention to disappears: GR

Food on plates on the couch is unavailable to canids: GR

Etc. Different planets (people) have different gravity (rules), of course, and whether any person actually has ANY GRs depends only on whether or not that person is willing to commit the same dedication to that behaviour that gravity commits to keeping us on the ground.

How Long to Teach LLW

"Does LLW really take an indefinite amount of time to teach?"

No, it doesn't. If you haven't seen huge improvements in, say, a week of actual work, something is wrong.

The dog continues to pull because he is continuing to be rewarded for pulling. "All" you have to do is figure out HOW he is continuing to be rewarded for pulling, and stop the reward, and he will stop pulling.

Totally simple (let me hear it now, a loud AARRRGGGGGHHHH).
That's it, feel better?

TIMING: your timing might be off. You might be not starting to back up until he feels he has had some success in pulling you closer to wherever he wanted to be. Or you might not be rewarded when he is actually moving with the leash loose.

CRITERIA: your criteria might be off. As others have pointed out, make it easy on yourself by defining "loose leash" as meaning that the leash snap is hanging **STRAIGHT DOWN** from the collar. Anything tighter than that is **TIGHT**.

RATE OF REINFORCEMENT: RoR problems include asking for LLW when the dog is too excited or wired to think at all, or going too far at one time, or starting too close to where he wants to be.

A common mistake is not going back far enough - you must go backwards until the dog has given up all hope of getting to the prize. If you go backwards and he goes with you and then jams out to the end of the leash again as soon as you start forward, you didn't go far enough.

A common mistake is not setting up the situation so you have ONE strong focal point.

Consider your dog. Some dogs get more wound up the more they move, so going backwards and then forwards gets them more excited. These dogs might need to go backwards until they give up hope, then get rewarded quietly a few times, then slowly start forward again with lots of food rewards for sticking with you. Some dogs would lose interest in the whole thing if they went that slowly. Show them that they can't get what they want with a tight leash but lookyoucangettherewithaLOOSEone!

Don't put yourself in a situation where you have to get somewhere EVER when you're working on LLW. Your place goal will probably overwhelm your LLW goal and then you're... well, screwed.

How Loose is Loose?

"I know that this is a silly question but.... when teaching LLW.... what is considered a loose leash? I have been working on this with my Doberman, Sage for the last few weeks (ahead of schedule, we are only in level one, but I need to be able to take the dog out without losing an arm...lol). We have succeeded in getting to the dog run with out yanking the leash out of my hand, and can now walk in the back yard (not completely fenced so getting free a bad thing) without what I would consider pulling. However usually some tension in the leash. Not so tight that she is choking (which was what it was like just a month ago) but enough tension that the slightest movement of my hand will pull her.

Is this LLW? or do we need more slack in the leash?"

Sorry, you need more slack. A loose leash is one where the snap hangs straight down, held up by the collar only, not by the leash at all. ZERO tension. There are several places where varying tiny bits of tension are useful (conformation being one of them, the Service Dog walk another), but LLW isn't one of them.

Is This LLW?

"LLWs like a champ."

Cissy, since you solicited suggestions - I'd like you to look at that statement again, in light of the other things you wrote:

"It is difficult (impossible) to keep his attention when another dog is approaching."

"Pull, pull, pull to pee spot."

"The second he's released, it's pull, pull, pull, get me the hell out of here as fast as you can."

"The second he senses it's time to leave, his total focus is in getting out."

Now I'd like you to think about redefining your version of LLW. There IS no release for LLW, because LLW is a default behaviour. NOTHING is more important than LLW. How can he pull, pull, pull to the pee spot if he's LLW? He can't. What he doesn't know yet is that **THE ONLY WAY TO **GET** TO THE PEE SPOT IS TO KEEP THE LEASH LOOSE.**

No reward bigger than dogs? Fine, but Sue A REWARDED him for sitting by giving him dogs. Take it now a step further, and reward him for attention with dogs. **THE ONLY WAY TO **GET** TO DOGS IS TO SIT AND GIVE YOU ATTENTION.**

What you're describing is a dog that gives you what you want when it's convenient, and then tries to figure out how to get what HE wants (not all the time, but as a base idea of how life works). What you need is a dog who knows in his soul that all good things come THROUGH YOU, not because of you, not in spite of you, but THROUGH you.

It also occurs to me that all this avoidance behaviour you're describing might be too much responsibility. Myself, I'd cut back on what you're asking him to be responsible for re public access, etc, and step up what you're asking him for re base behaviours such as loose lead, focus, etc.

Lazy Leash and Stairs

"Has anyone got any experience teaching LL going up or down stairs? Opal has a really hard time with it in comparison to regular LL walking."

Lots. And lots. LL on stairs is a "make or break" situation - literally. If I fall down on stairs, I'll likely kill us both.

The main secret, of course, is that LL on stairs is NOT the same exercise as LL on the flat, any more than Relax is the same exercise on your couch as it is on a busy sidewalk. That means that it needs to be trained, and the fastest way to train it is from the beginning. If the dog is charging the stairs, do a LOT of work on teaching the initial stages of LL, teaching her to give to the collar, and then do the stairs with a VERY short (but still loose) leash so she'll meet the collar pressure the instant she thinks of charging rather than after she's got a good head of steam up.

Other hints:

The idea of putting a treat on each step is a good one. You can also put a trained target on the bottom step and move it up to the next step and the next as you climb up the stairs.

Work on as many SMALL staircases as possible - up and down curbs, 3 steps up to a front porch, in and out of raised doorsills, etc. Then find longer and longer sets of stairs.

Stop every couple of steps (or every step) and have the dog sit, click and reward. Do down stays on stairs. Sit stays. Targeting.

Feed meals on stairs. Frequently dogs charge the stairs because they're unsure of how to handle them. This is especially true of dogs who haven't had any practise or instruction in knowing where their back ends are, so practise on agility equipment, walking along the top of very low walls, etc helps.

Shape the dog to back up stairs. Probably not a very useful skill, but makes a great trick, and really helps the dog understand that her back feet are under her control.

If you're worried about going down the stairs yourself and you've run out of low steps, get a rubber mat of some kind, put it on the stairs, and sit on it. The mat is to hold your bottom to the step, and having your feet out in front of you on a lower step means you're securely anchored with your weight back.

By all means use a front-snap harness. When I'm on steps with a charging dog I'll take all the advantages I can.

Verbal Cue w/LLW?

"I still need to use a verbal cue to remind her in really distracting circumstances, do you do a verbal cue to reinforce the loose lead with your llama studs?"

Nope. Loose lead or back in the pen. These are MALES, remember, and when they're walking toward the breeding pen, you KNOW which end of them is doing the thinking! This is a zero leeway situation, either the leash is loose, or you are back in your own pen by yourself, the female is gone, and another guy is getting a chance at a different female.

So it's not just ONE guy thinking "gotta keep the leash loose, gotta keep the leash loose", but the other three chanting "make a mistake! make a mistake! make a mistake!"

Leash Manners Test and How to Do It

"I do not believe that my dogs have to stay in the car even when there is a tornado coming, a volcano breaking out. "

OK, let me make it simple. The test is done in absolute silence. There is no talking to the dog at all, and there is no other dog present in the car. There is no voice, hand, or body cue for the dog to stay in the car, the dog stays in the car by default.

"Last time, there was a dog walking by, barking hysterically and pulling his leash, so I asked them just to wait a bity longer, and they sat there with huge eyes and waited. "

The point of the exercise here is that you DO NOT ask them to wait. Consider this scenario:

You get out of the car, unsnap the seat belts, step back, fall down, break your ankle, the dogs remain in the car with the hysterically- barking dog walking by and other people rushing up to help you. Trust me, when your ankle is breaking, you are not talking to your dogs, or asking them to wait. If you can't not talk to your dogs, Duct Tape helps.

LLW – A Default Behavior

"And you also want to be sure to have the handler teach a definite and distinct cue (verbal) for the relaxed walking as opposed to the heeling - like my "Easy.""

While I certainly have no problem with putting anything on cue (once you've got eating, pooping, and breeding on cue, you've pretty much got it made hee hee), I have a different take on relaxed walking - I would consider it a default behaviour - in the absence of ANY cue whatsoever, the dog reverts to loose leash walking. I want the loose leash to be akin to gravity - it's there, there's no point in arguing about it, you don't have to think about it, you don't need to remember to turn it on in the morning. This progresses nicely into loose-off-leash as well, that is, the squirrel cannot be chased, there's no point in arguing about it, you don't have to think about it, you don't need a special cue to turn "don't chase the squirrel" on, that's just the way it is. In fact, DO chase the squirrel would be the cued behaviour, not the other way around, just as DO tighten the leash (to pull me up, to pull a sled, to open a door, whatever) is the cued behaviour, and DO NOT tighten the leash is the default.

LLW – Taught to Pull

"It still boggles my mind. She just doesn't get it."

Sure she does. You said it yourself: the leash means pulling. Her people have put considerable effort into teaching her to pull on the leash. In fact, they've taught her so well that she will actually hurt herself in order to perform this job (pulling into the pinch collar). Given how much effort and skill they've put into teaching this dog to pull on the lead, I would doubt that you'll ever be successful in teaching her not to pull on lead for them. My dogs would no more think of tightening a lead for me than fly, but they still ask each new person who walks them whether that applies to THEM or not. There may be still hope for you and the dog together, however.

You had success with "loose lead walking" without the lead. Then you ran into a problem when you dumped the dog squarely back in a situation demanding that she pull. You need intermediate steps. Can she LLW in your yard with only a collar on? How about a collar and a short lead IF YOU AREN'T HOLDING THE LEAD? Collar and long lead dragging? After that, I'd try picking up the lead, but if she takes off, drop the lead. It takes two to pull on a lead, NOT one. If she tries to pull on it and gets no resistance, there wasn't much point in pulling.

LLW – Walking with a Goal Exercise

"Could someone briefly recap the Walking with a Goal loose leash exercise that you all were referring to in the Obedient BC thread"

IME, "being a tree" is excessively difficult, and less productive than it could be. By the time most people realize the dog is pulling and get themselves stopped to be a tree, the dog has already pulled them three or four steps closer to what he wanted to look at, and is then rewarded

by being allowed to stand as long as he wants with the leash tight, looking at it and sniffing it.

Backing up (instead of standing still) solves this problem. The dog is able to see clearly that the result of keeping a loose leash is going forward, and the result of tightening the leash is to go backwards. The explanation is made more immediate by the fact that he is no longer looking at what he wanted to look at, and mom is leaving.

Another problem rears its ugly head. Many dogs, deprived of the privilege of going north, immediately turn and plunge south, tightening the leash again, and when backed away from south, they just turn and charge back north again. This could go on forever.

So what we need to do is provide the dog with ONE thing he REALLY wants to look at/go to - a focus point. So we provide him with another dog, held in place, or a big chunk of hot dog on the floor, and nothing else worth looking at. We start as far as possible away from the focus, and walk toward the object. If you have a 6' leash, we'll give you 1' to hang on to (with your hands firmly on your belt buckle), and we'll give 4' to the dog. If he gets into the last foot of leash, you start backing up, back to your starting point. Or, to put it another way, you don't wait until the leash is actually tight, but when you know it WILL be tight, you back up to the starting point.

The dog is liable to turn and come with you because you are moving away, but if he doesn't, that's OK too. At least he had to move away from where he wanted to go. Eventually the leash will loosen. When it does, you click (you may give him a treat if you want, but the REAL treat will be to get to walk toward the object again) and start to walk forward again. Keep walking until he nearly tightens the leash again, the back up to the starting point again. Wait until the leash loosens, click and walk forward again. When he gets all the way to the focus object with the leash loose, he can have it (eat it, or sniff it, or play with it, or whatever he wanted to do).

If this can work to teach my stud llamas to walk on a totally loose leash all the way across the yard to the breeding pen, it can certainly work to

teach your dog to keep the leash loose while you're walking into the training building! In fact, once they understand that the way to get to the breeding pen is to keep the leash loose, and that the natural result of letting it tighten is to arrive unhappily back in their own pen, alone, they put every single morsel of their desperate desire to get to the breeding pen into keeping that leash loose. You couldn't MAKE them tighten that sucker!

LLW 101

"I know miracles don't happen overnight & I guess I'm just looking for validation for why I should persevere."

How about persevering because you haven't actually tried it yet?

"I would take a step & she was at the end of her lead pulling away, I would walk back a few steps, she would follow but as soon as I lifted my foot to take a step forward she would race forward & start pulling again."

Have you read the Levels description of teaching Loose Leash? If she races forward to start pulling again when you start forward, you didn't go back far enough. You're over her threshold. She can't learn when she's over her threshold.

"We went for a walk down to the postbox at the end of the street"

It sounds like your priority was getting to the postbox. I'd suggest you start teaching this in the house, in one room with one focal point, so she can clearly see what it is you're trying to tell her. Go to the postbox alone.

LLW and Penalty Yards

"Dog pulls= stopping of forward motion, then, leash goes slack= click and move forward. It works well for the people who put a lot of time in it."

IMO, "Be a tree" works great for people who are constantly aware of what their dog is doing and have the reflexes to respond to it. For most people, however, it doesn't work well, mainly because by the time Joe realizes Buffy is pulling, Buffy has already pulled Joe a step or two closer to what she wants to see, and then, having pulled him that extra step or two, she is rewarded by being able to stand and stare at her goal/sniff it, etc, until she tires of it, then she can come back and get a reward.

Penalty yards IS generally faster because the goal is actually receding into the distance. While this is happening, the goal is (obviously) getting further and further away, so is becoming less and less important, aiding the dog in loosening the leash.

"When the dog pulls, you go all the way back to the starting line. Start over walking toward goal, if dog walks on a loose leash his goal, click and jackpot."

I don't really care whether people go all the way back to the starting point. This is an explanation that is useful for people who never go back far enough. How far back they HAVE to go is - back until the dog appears to realize that the goal is lost, and loosens the leash. If the leash gets loose, the people step forward, and the dog immediately hits the end of the leash going for the goal again, that wasn't far enough back. Also, be sure your handlers are **BACKING** away from the goal rather than turning around and heading away from it. This gives the handlers a better chance to watch what the dog is doing, and gives the dog a face to follow when they are deciding to come along.

"As far as teaching in a class type setting were your dogs is distracted by everything, could you set up a goal like a pig ear, or pile of yummy treats a short distance away?"

As far as any time, the dog needs an actual goal. A chief source of frustration for handlers is trying to move away from the goal when the leash is tight, only to have the dog bopping here, and **THERE**, and **HERE** and **THERE**, all over the room with the handler tripping over themselves trying to go away from the pull of the lead. For my llama studs, the breeding pen with a female in it makes an excellent goal ;-). It has their total focus until they understand that in order to get there, they need to focus on the **LEASH** and not on the pen!

"If dog walks on a loose leash his goal, click and jackpot."

No. If the dog reaches his goal on a loose lead, he can have it, whether it's a friendly dog, a person, a pig ear, a bug or a piece of liver. What you're clicking for, especially in the beginning, is the dog's offering of a loose lead. That is, when you're walking backward and he abandons his goal and starts to come back with you, loosening the lead, click and treat. **OR** click and walk forward again (I think the click/treat/**THEN** walk forward is usually a little clearer to the dog). Once in a while when he's walking forward on a loose lead, click and offer him a treat while continuing to walk forward, if he'll take it.. I can't do this with the llama studs - their taste buds are in their (ahem) - once they start thinking about that breeding pen, they aren't interested in treats at **ALL**. Fortunately they're just as smart as dogs and easily understand that loose leads go **TO** girls and tight leads go **AWAY** from girls.

LLW as a Form of Zen

" Sue could you give me a run down how you train this. You mentioned using "the Contact game" as a starting point???"

I want you to picture TWO entirely separate behaviours in your mind.

LOOSE LEAD WALKING is ONE behaviour (well, probably a billion little clickable parts, but I mean a behaviour separate and completely distinct from HEELING.

LLW is something I consider a default behaviour. The **ONLY** cue I want to have for LLW is the presence of a leash. If the leash is on the dog, the leash is loose. End of story. This doesn't mean the dog has to be looking at me, standing up, lying down, sitting, trotting, panting, quiet, on 4 feet, or **ANYTHING** else except that the leash is loose. This means that, without thinking about the dog at all, I can take one end of the lead in my hand and walk into the house from the car. Or around the block. Or into a training building. Or past another dog. The dog will **NOT** pull me or tighten the lead because the dog's default is to keep the lead loose. In my own dogs, this default is so well ingrained that with my last three dogs, I actually had to **TEACH** them to pull into their harnesses when I wanted to run them on a dogsled team.

HEELING, **OTOH**, is a competition behaviour. It happens on cue. It requires the dog to maintain a very specific position in relation to the handler's body, eyes focused at a particular point, spine pointing the same direction as the handler's, sitting when stopping, etc. This is a difficult thing to maintain for any length of time, and it **CERTAINLY** isn't a fun or relaxing way to go for a walk! And, because it's a very complicated behaviour requiring a lot of training and reinforcement, it is unlikely in the extreme to become a default.

I teach **HEELING** from Eye Contact, then into the Get Lost game, where I have contact, then I turn my back and the dog comes around trying to hold onto my eyes. Using this desire to hold contact, I can

fairly easily shape the dog into the correct position and attitude for heeling.

For LLW, though, I don't want the dog staring at me all the time. Another big problem (besides actually **GETTING** the heeling on a regular basis) with heeling is that when the dog is really heeling, he's ignoring distractions - something most people want - but when you **LOSE** the heeling, which happens quite frequently, then the dog is out of control. This is why I need LLW as a default. LLW is fairly easy to teach if you concentrate on it, and it's easy for the dog to maintain indefinitely if you've been consistent.

I teach LLW as a form of Zen. I put a treat on the ground 10 or 15 feet away, make sure the dog knows it there, and then start explaining that in order to get to the treat, he needs to keep the leash loose. Loose leashes go **TOWARD** the treat, and if the dog can get the treat with the leash loose, he can have it. **TIGHT** leashes, **OTOH**, go only **AWAY** from the treat. Half a second before the leash tightens, I'm backing up away from the treat. The treat gets further and further away, until finally we're far enough away that the treat is no longer interesting. The dog loosens the lead, I start walking toward the treat again.

I do the same thing with doors, other dogs, people - all the things the dog wants to get to, he learns that he can only get to by keeping the leash loose, and soon we're working as a team.

LLW Breakthrough???

"The prong collar has rounded edges and does not hurt him at all"

Enough with the prong collars already. There are lots of lists for discussing prong collars. But since I have special privileges here, I want

to say one thing: if it didn't hurt the dog, it would be no more effective than a buckle collar. Of COURSE it hurts the dog, that's what it's for.

"I haven't been using a clicker when I train for loose leash walking because it just seems that there isn't one particular behavior that I can mark."

True, but that applies to every single situation. The dog may be lifting the right front paw off the ground (what YOU think you're clicking), but she's also breathing out, facing west, 6.2 feet from the south wall, on the 17th tile from the east wall, wagging the tail to the left, looking at your right shoulder, and wondering if you'll quit training before she wets herself.

When Scuba was a baby, *I* was working on Stand from Sit or Down. I was doing some paperwork, so just clicking when I caught her climbing into a position with four on the floor and her butt off the tile. She happened to be curled up asleep on the floor in front of me, woke up, uncurled, stood up, and got clicked. I tossed the treat about four feet away from her. She ran to pick it up, then IMMEDIATELY ran back to the EXACT same tile she'd been on when I clicked, and sat on it. No click. Hmmm. She stared at me for a second, then very deliberately turned her head so she was looking in the same direction she'd been looking when I clicked. STILL no click (though my jaw was hanging). Frustrated, she swung her head back toward me and stood up CLICK!!

OH! she said. STANDING UP! On THIS tile, facing in THAT direction!

This is an important story because this happens all the time. When we notice it happening, we can change the explanation to help the dog narrow down exactly what we were talking about. For instance, the next time I worked on Stand, I did it in a different room, on a carpet instead of tile, and I sat facing a different direction. In other words, I

eliminated FOR HER as many of the "wrong" criteria as I could to help her figure out what I was really clicking for.

That said, there's really no need to use the scalpel of the clicker for general behaviours that don't need the precision.

Cute story of my kids (then five and six yo) and superstitious criteria - my husband used to take them to hockey games a lot. One night, they arrived when the game was already in progress. They scooped down the row of people to their seats, stood together in their places, sang Oh Canada at the top of their lungs, then sat down and watched the game.

"Does LLW really take an indefinite amount of time to teach?"

No, it doesn't. If you haven't seen huge improvements in, say, a week of actual work, something is wrong.

The dog continues to pull because he is continuing to be rewarded for pulling. "All" you have to do is figure out HOW he is continuing to be rewarded for pulling, and stop the reward, and he will stop pulling.

Totally simple (let me hear it now, a loud AARRRGGGGGHHHH). That's it, feel better?

TIMING: your timing might be off. You might be not starting to back up until he feels he has had some success in pulling you closer to wherever he wanted to be. Or you might not be rewarded when he is actually moving with the leash loose.

CRITERIA: your criteria might be off. As others have pointed out, make it easy on yourself by defining "loose leash" as meaning that the leash snap is hanging STRAIGHT DOWN from the collar. Anything tighter than that is TIGHT.

RATE OF REINFORCEMENT: RoR problems include asking for LLW when the dog is too excited or wired to think at all, or going too far at one time, or starting too close to where he wants to be.

A common mistake is not going back far enough - you must go backwards until the dog has given up all hope of getting to the prize. If you go backwards and he goes with you and then jams out to the end of the leash again as soon as you start forward, you didn't go far enough.

A common mistake is not setting up the situation so you have ONE strong focal point.

Consider your dog. Some dogs get more wound up the more they move, so going backwards and then forwards gets them more excited. These dogs might need to go backwards until they give up hope, then get rewarded quietly a few times, then slowly start forward again with lots of food rewards for sticking with you. Some dogs would lose interest in the whole thing if they went that slowly. Show them that they can't get what they want with a tight leash but look you can get there with a LOOSE one!

Don't put yourself in a situation where you have to get somewhere EVER when you're working on LLW. Your place goal will probably overwhelm your LLW goal and then you're... well, screwed.

"On leash manners, can the dog tighten the leash briefly so long as she immediately removes the tension? For example, start to pull but then realize they're out of leash and immediately make it slack. Or is this a dog that's just close to passing?"

That's a dog that's close to passing.

"Are variations of heelwork tricks?"

It's ALL tricks, honey. Only some of the tricks we want to save for passing the Levels. If it's not one of the official Level behaviours, it's a trick. The REAL secret to tricks is to put a better cue on them. Every Tom, Dick, and Fido puts his paw on his muzzle, but last week I saw

Stitch's breeder turn to her stud dog and ask "Where's your nose?"
Now THAT'S a good trick!

"On zen there is always a leave it cue allowed"

Yeah, I think so. Goodonya for asking for more.

"What is minimal struggling for L2 handling?"

I don't mind the "Gawd I wish you were somewhere else" paw twitching, but it ceases to be minimal when she plants her back feet in my belly and pushes my chair backwards. Or if I start sweating while I'm trimming toenails.

"If I don't want to name the retrieve behavior until it's complete, then how can I cue just a nose touch?"

A nose touch isn't a retrieve, it's a nose touch. Cue the nose touch. When you want to move on to teaching the retrieve, shut up and just start shaping the harder touches into the retrieve. Really, it's not rocket surgery for the dog to think that if there's a dumbbell in front of her nose, you might be working on retrieving...

"This evening we were out walking and she was pulling and I was stopping or backing up and she'd walk nicely for a bit, but then she seemed to decide that she and I were going to have it out and she started pulling harder than she has in a long time. I mean she was digging her claws into the ground! I didn't see any reason for her determination as there didn't seem to anything around that would interest her to that point. Anyway, I felt like I was engaged in a battle of wills with her! :) After a minute or two of this she apparently decided to "give in" and for the rest of the walk she couldn't have walked more perfectly!"

Well done! This is a really scary thing that happens when you're on the right path. Scary why? Because it looks like everything just got SO MUCH WORSE that you MUST be doing it wrong. It's called an Extinction Burst. Think of it as a last-ditch effort - good grief, this

worked for YEARS, it MUST still work, why doesn't it WORK, for Pete's sake? It doesn't necessarily mean you have arrived at the other side, but it certainly means you're heading in the right direction, congratulations!

LLW Explained.....again

"He spends about ten minutes just happily leaning into a tight lead, obviously happily dreaming his own daydreams, while I have to hang on to the wall, or a branch, or a gate, to stop myself being pulled forward;... Er....does this method work?"

Not that I have noticed, no. The trouble with Be A Tree is that the handler rarely notices (in real life, not in training situations) that the dog is going to pull until the dog has already pulled them a couple of steps closer to the objet d'amour than they were before. Thus Be A Tree rewards the dog for that couple of steps of pulling by allowing him to stand closer to it than he was before watching it, smelling it, etc.

What DOES work is, instead of standing still, back up. Put something really delicious on the ground to focus his attention on (if he wants to go in one single direction, fine, otherwise you need the focus or most dogs will just spend their time going FINE *THIS* DIRECTION ok FINE *THAT* DIRECTION ok FINE *THIS* DIRECTION AGAIN! With something great on the ground in front of him, he has one direction he really wants to go in, and the explanation quickly becomes clear.

Give the dog 6' of leash, except for the end draped over your thumb, then wrapped once around your hand so it is LOCKED on your hand. Clasp both your hands together, and put your hands over your belly button. LEAVE THEM THERE NO MATTER WHAT. Now the leash is down to about 5'. 4' of that belongs to the dog. One foot of it belongs to you.

Start walking toward the object. If the dog gets to the object with the leash loose, he can have it. If he tightens the leash - no, what I meant was, if he gets into that final 12" that belong to you - you don't wait for him to tighten the leash, you start to back up when you know he's GOING to tighten the leash - , you back up at LEAST 10', maybe further, because you have to back up until he loses interest in the object and turns back toward you. You are helping him do this by getting further and further away from the object, and by moving away from him as fast as you can. BACK UP, do NOT turn around and walk away. Why? Because if you back up, you can see what is going on and reward it faster.

When he loosens the leash coming back toward you, click, and start walking toward the object again. Repeat until he walks all the way to the object on a loose leash. Let him have it. This can be a ball, a toy, or a great food treat.

If you think that giving him a treat when he comes back to you would make a clearer explanation, go ahead and do it. Usually I just use walking toward the object as the reward.

Then the key is never to get yourself in a situation where getting from HERE to THERE is more important than being sure the dog is under enough control of himself to keep the leash loose. In other words, you can't say "He can pull me into the training building because I need to get to class." No, you don't. Explaining about the leash is more important than getting into that class. Or you could have gone an hour early if it was going to take the hour to explain it. Or you could drive up to the door and carry him in. Or you could use a halter. Whatever you do, you do not allow him to pull you into class. EVER. Yes, I have had students who didn't manage to get into the class until it was half over, because they didn't come early enough to explain it before class started.

LLW vs Cued Pulling

*"I *really* want to encourage her AGILITY drive. "*

Look here:

I made this harness so the dog could walk on a loose leash (it's a no-pull style harness), but with a strap attached I could hang on to when we were in agility class (since I can't bend over to grab her leash, and don't want her pulling on the leash anyway). This has worked great with Stitch - when I pull on the strap, it tells her that she is free to pull into the harness in anticipation of what comes next, watch the other dogs, make sure she knows where the target-layer is putting the targets, etc, but if I drop the strap and attach the leash to the front of the harness, she immediately falls into LLW-mode.

LLW Zen

"Heavy hands do NOT do well with horses if you want THEM to be sensitive"

Exactly - and that is SO hard for people. If you want the dog not to pull, YOU HAVE TO STOP PULLING!

Here's a wonderful quote from Miss Manners (I love Miss Manners):
The more cheerful and satisfied the normal state of the parent, the easier it is to register displeasure.

Thus, a surly parent may have to resort to terrible measures to convince the child that there has been any loss of satisfaction, since none was apparent anyway; but a happy parent may be able to instill awe and remorse with only a severe look.

Now consider that in the light of LLW. If your dog is used to a loose leash, you can communicate with a tiny wiggle (get good enough in conformation, and you can actually tell whether your dog is trotting or pacing by the feel of a loose leash), but if you and the dog are used to a tight leash, you probably have to lift her front feet right off the ground to initiate a change of direction.

Zen

"I see why you say "loose leash walking is a really hard thing to teach" because for you to have all those "different" walks automatic "

But that's me ;*) The cues for LLW aren't really that difficult.

It's pretty obvious when I'm heeling or doing conformation - the tack is only the smallest cue, and the voice cue isn't much bigger. My body language is a huge cue.

Stitch's cue for Service Dog Walk is me walking relatively slowly and her wearing her SD uniform. SD Walk, by the way, is about 6" in front of what I'd like for heeling, and looking where she's going but knowing exactly what I'm doing. There's no sit at halt, but she can sidestep and back up in perfect position.

I sprained my ankle a couple of weeks ago, and, providing moral support for a friend, I had Stitch entered in Pre-CD at a trial last week. Pre-CD - well, I was planning on practising once or twice, but then I sprained my ankle, so I never actually got around to it.

Even without her SD cape, as soon as I stepped forward, slow and limping, Stitch fell into Service Dog Walk and easily passed. This was a problem with my old dog, Scuba, though, in agility, because if I took more than a single step on a course, Scuba would slow down and wait

for me. She'd only fly the course if I stood still. Ahem. Tracking, sledding, drafting, all have other cues available to the dog.

The absolute most difficult of all these behaviours is the straight, ordinary, loose leash walk. That's usually the **ONLY** one necessary for pet people, and it's so difficult because it requires attention **EVERY** time the leash is on the dog. Horse people have hands that notice pressure without conscious thought, but "normal" people don't.

Leash

If the dog is pulling north and I'm back away south, ***I*** will be pulling on the leash until the dog gives up on her focal point and comes with me. The **ONLY** thing I use the leash to teach is Loose Leash. Otherwise the leash is to keep the dog from getting hit by a truck.

"Do you use a NRM then just move away?"

No. If I use a NRM, it becomes **MY** responsibility to point out when the dog is making or about to make an error. In my world, loose leash is what I call a Gravity Behaviour. You have never in your life woken up and wondered if gravity was working today. You know it is, you assume it is, you take for granted that it is, you move as if it is, you make plans as if it is (it never, for instance, occurs to you to plan to walk off the roof of the garage this afternoon). Gravity works, that's all there is.

Leashes stay loose. There is no cue for gravity, and there's no cue for a loose leash. It's not: gravity if you're carrying books but not when there are cats, it's gravity all the time. It's not: loose leash when mom's paying attention but tight when she's carrying groceries. It's loose leash all the time. Leash is on, leash is loose. End of conversation.

Take another look at the picture of Stitch attached to the car tire (Homework, Level 2). That's my final flash of understanding that this really DOES become a way of life.

For 40 years, every dog I've introduced to sledding has simply walked off with the tire, no big deal. Stitch is standing there swearing at the tire. Leashes Are Loose. Therefore she cannot move the tire. After this photo, she actually reached down and grabbed the line in her mouth, thinking, I guess, that she could RETRIEVE the tire, since I was asking her to come and that appeared to be the only way she could do it. She runs on a dog team now, and is working on her Draft Excellent title, but I had to TEACH her to pull on the harness.

"Also, the core of what I have learned and teach is the automatic check in. Would not acknowledging "look backs" or eye contact and only loose leash play against the check ins?"

Yes, it does. Clicking the checkins feels to me like clicking the dog for watching me instead of the Bad Guy - great as long as I've got it. It feels not far enough removed from those poor people who have GREAT heeling, but if the dog isn't heeling, there's no connection at all. Heeling or tight leash, nothing in between.

If I'm clicking the leash for being loose, the dog is free to wander around, look at whatever she wants to look at, enjoy the day. She doesn't have to look at me, as long as she knows how far she is from me so she can keep the leash loose.

Also clicking the leash for being loose may not go any further with pet people, but it helps me a LOT when I get to agility and herding people who adamantly declare that the dog can NOT pay attention to them and "commit" to the obstacles or the sheep at the same time, as if not staring at your husband across the room at a cocktail party means you have no idea where he is or whether or not he's giving you the "can we go now?" sign.

That said, I have nothing against the automatic checkin, it's just not the way I do it. Either way it sure beats the heck out of charging through the neighbourhood hauling mom!

Both Stitch and Scuba "taught themselves" a neat behaviour. When I'm busy - walking in a store, for instance - and counting on them to be as invisible as a cane or walker, they started swinging their muzzles around and touching my knee as I walk - "Step, step, step, step, and ON the job! Step, step, step, step, and ON the job!" which I love because I know they're there without having to look at them. I assumed that Scuba "just did" this, but when Stitch started doing it to, I realized that I say "good girl" every time it happens.

This weekend in the Rally trial, my sprained ankle hurt horribly and I was slow and limping badly. In response to the way I was walking, Stitch's Service Dog walk took over completely from her heeling - she settled in half a step in front of heel position, and started swinging her muzzle every couple of steps. Dear little Tat!

"Do you ever use a harness (chest)?"

Yes, I love the front-attach harnesses. They don't give you the complete control of flashing teeth like a halter does, but they turn the dog just as well, and without all the fuss about wearing something on the face.

New on LLW

"I need some advice here on Taivas' LLW. I can get Taivas to LLW for fairly longish stretches, in fact she will LLW for most of her road walk (30 - 40 min) with only a few cues (she will also LLW if I put her back on leash in the forest - I tried it today) but it is definitely NOT her default behaviour. While she will LLW with minor distractions - cars going past, one or two people etc, if she wants to either go to toilet, get to another dog or grab something on the ground (bit of a stick for example)

she simply lunges to get where she wants to go. If I'm not totally on the ball I get my arm wrenched (ouch). So my question is does this level of training get her to pass level 3. Looking at the criteria I would say it does, would just like confirmation (or not) <bg>

*So my question is does this level of training get her to pass level 3.
Looking at the criteria I would say it does"*

Default behaviours become default behaviours through months and months and months - or years and years - of training, I wouldn't expect LLW to be a default in L3. Stitch has been LLWed since 9 weeks with ZERO opportunity to pull, and she didn't hit it until midway through L4.

"Thank you Sue for the explanation. I suspected your "zero opportunity" was something you had established from day one and worked consistently. Altho I'd love instant results, I'm clever enough to know only patience and consistency is going to pay off. Excuse me while I go muster up a mega batch of each one....I've got some work ahead of me.

This question has probably been addressed and if it has, feel free to send me in that direction but I'd like to know if I am doing more harm than good at putting a gentle leader on Gus so we can go for a good old fashioned walk. With the gentle leader I quite merrily walk along allowing Gus to pull when he wants something BUT when we practise LL we use the flat collar and there is no tolerance for pulling. I'm defeating my purpose here aren't I? As I'm reading and typing this I'm seeing that I'm my own worst enemy here aren't I? Thoughts please?"

"I'm defeating my purpose here aren't I? "

Yeah, a bit. OTOH, everything you teach a dog will interfere with something else you teach a dog. If going for a walk is a bigger priority than LLW, then putting the dog on a halter is a better alternative than letting him pull on his collar. A dog is perfectly capable of learning to pull hard on a pulling harness, pull lightly on a tracking harness, not pull at all on a walking harness, not pull at all on a buckle collar, pull

with an ounce of pressure on a show lead - BUT it takes more work to teach any ONE thing while you teach all the others as well than it would have if you had simply taught the one. So teaching LLW to a dog who already knows how to pull on a halter is going to be more difficult than teaching LLW to a dog who is never allowed to pull.

OTOH, when Scuba began her sled dog career/hobby, I actually had to teach her to pull because she didn't know how.

Penalty Yards/Goal Walking

"When the dog tightens the leash and you return to the starting point-do you walk backwards facing your dog, or turn around and walk with your dog following behind you."

I have found that walking backward facing the dog works better - gives the dog a focal point, and leaves you watching the dog to click and reward what you want. If you turn around and walk away from the dog, you can't see what the dog is doing - OK for good trainers, but most people can't tell what the dog is doing unless they are looking at him. Also the whole thing can rapidly turn into nothing but a rebound match where the dog goes from a tight lead South to a tight lead North to a tight lead South etc.

Position for LLW

"Where is your dog normally when you walk together? I'm thinking that I may have conditioned Flim to be a little far forward for perfection."

There's actually no such thing as a perfect position for LLW. For Heeling, yes, but that's a competition behaviour. For LLW, most dogs

will be a bit further ahead. I prefer it, in fact, because in Heel position, I can't see the dog without turning my head or bending forward a bit. The point is, of course, that whatever position you pick, you watch the leash. If the snap isn't hanging straight down, the leash IS tight - not, of course, because it is actually tight, but because, as Vicky says, by the time your brain registers the fact that it isn't hanging straight down and gets you to react by starting to back up, the leash WILL be tight. It's always better for YOU to tighten the leash backing up than it is to wait for your DOG to tighten it, with you standing flat-footed, caught by surprise, oops now what to do?

Another LLW Anecdote Great Pyr and loose leash

" I certainly have not, he is a rescue that I got 5 months ago and from day one with me he has not been rewarded for getting where he wants to go by pulling me there. "

This isn't a "you did..., you stupid!" situation. A dog that pulls on the leash for more than two DAYS ****IS**** being rewarded for pulling on the leash. That doesn't mean YOU are handing him cookies or allowing him to drag you all over the neighbourhood, but unless he is an extremely-low-IQ dog, he does what gets him what he wants. Over and over and over again. No matter what answers you get, no matter what you have tried or not tried, the bottom line remains the same.

If he does ANYTHING for more than a couple of days, HE is finding it rewarding.

If you can't figure out how to control the rewards he is getting (finding, giving himself, floating on the breeze, whatever), you will not change his behaviour.

If that means throwing a frisbee in the basement for a couple of weeks while you teach him that from now on the leash is NEVER going to be tight, then he gets his exercise in the basement for a couple of weeks.

Starting LLW

"She would pull again and I would back up to the middle of the walkway where she sits and looks for a treat. "

First, goodonya for working in an area of low distractions!

Now, put a treat or toy or something down that she really wants to get to and try LLW towards that, so she can see the benefit of LLW (get to the thing she wants) and the problem with a tight leash (move away from what she wants). When you're giving her treats for having the leash loose, be sure she is MOBILE with the leash loose. If she has a chance to sit and wait for a treat, you should have clicked much sooner. That should help.

Teaching Loose Leash Walking

You mention that this principle can be used to teach walking on a loose leash. Can you tell us a little bit about how to do that? Where do so many of us go wrong with this behavior?

Loose leash walking—I don't like "Be a Tree." To me, "Be A Tree" means the dog got to drag you two steps closer to whatever he wanted to look at, and then gets to stand there staring and smelling until he's had enough. I prefer modifications of "Penalty Yards"—basically, loose leashes go where the dog wants to go, tight leashes go in the opposite direction.

Where people go wrong with teaching loose leash walking is that the loose leash is only a priority once in a while. What they need to learn from Song is that you cannot reward the behavior you don't want sometimes. You have to never reward the behavior you don't want. You can't say, "Well, he almost made it to the car yesterday on a loose leash, and today I have to get groceries and get home before supper so it won't matter if he pulls today."

I once drove seven hours to a llama show, took my stud out of the trailer to walk him into his pen in the building, and ten minutes later he was back in the trailer. He never did get into the building, and he never did make it into the show ring, because I could have driven to Timbuktu to show him and I still wouldn't have let a tight leash drag me into that building. Tight leashes go back to the trailer. Tight leashes go back to the lonely bachelor pad. Tight leashes go back into the car and the car goes home from the dog park. Tight leashes sit in the waiting room at the vet's for three hours. Tight leashes never go in the direction the animal wants them to.

My priority for teaching a loose leash is that if my bone, my kid, or my dog is broken, or my house is on fire, I'll probably let the dog pull me somewhere. Otherwise, I will either pick the dog up and carry him, lure him, blindfold him, or just not go where I wanted to go if I can't get him to loosen the lead. And if you've truly got that kind of commitment to your priority, you're going to wind up like I did—I had to use the clicker to teach them to pull when I started carting with them!

In the long run, what did it cost me to get Song to control herself around sheep? Less than three and a half hours sitting in a chair near a sheep pasture, reading a book and enjoying the fresh air. No frustration, no anger, no yelling, no yanking. And what did I gain? A dog who worked sheep brilliantly, was totally committed to the job, and at the same time knew we were partners. That was one of ten thousand days when I've said "Wow, this clicker stuff really works!"

To Pull or Not to Pull

"My mentor's dogs have never pulled on lead when I've been able to see them...then I used to take her dogs out on lead to potty when she was teaching. In the training building they walked perfectly...open the door to the field outside and they too were "little freight trains"."

This is not a reflection on your mentor, it's a reflection on you - my dogs NEVER pull (well, Song pulled frantically toward sheep, but we sat down and solved that), nevernever pull, NEVERNEVER pull on leash. We all have our personal, private priorities, and this is one of mine, I don't remember when I learned it, maybe it was when I was doing dressage, but I don't have to pay attention to it at all because my hands notice and "correct" tight leashes with no conscious thought on my part whatsoever - like flicking on the turn signal before a turn. No one has EVER caught one of my dogs pulling.

At a seminar last year, someone else kindly took my girls for a pee during a break, and came back to report that they pulled like little freight trains.

I take this to mean that her leash-handling informed them that she was going to take full responsibility for where they were and what they were doing, and they didn't have to think about it when they were with her except that if they wanted to go THAT way, they should just GO that way, so they immediately stopped thinking about self-control and started going THAT way.

Training LLW Position

"She continues to want to pull to about 1 1/2 -2 ft ahead of me. (If I give her more leash, she will not go further ahead than that distance"

How about accepting that distance? Is there anything **WRONG** with her being that far ahead?

If she's OK out there but you'd rather have her closer, how about letting her walk there, and click/treating every time she drops back a little closer to you? That is, accept what she's giving you and shape her to stay further back?

LLW as a Form of Zen

"Sue could you give me a run down how you train this. You mentioned using "the Contact game" as a starting point???"

Matt, I want you to picture **TWO** entirely separate behaviours in your mind.

LOOSE LEAD WALKING is **ONE** behaviour (well, probably a billion little clickable parts, but I mean a behaviour separate and completely distinct from **HEELING**).

LLW is something I consider a default behaviour. The **ONLY** cue I want to have for LLW is the presence of a leash. If the leash is on the dog, the leash is loose. End of story. This doesn't mean the dog has to be looking at me, standing up, lying down, sitting, trotting, panting, quiet, on 4 feet, or **ANYTHING** else except that the leash is loose. This means that, without thinking about the dog at all, I can take one end of the lead in my hand and walk into the house from the car. Or around the block. Or into a training building. Or past another dog. The dog will **NOT** pull me or tighten the lead because the dog's

default is to keep the lead loose. In my own dogs, this default is so well ingrained that with my last three dogs, I actually had to **TEACH** them to pull into their harnesses when I wanted to run them on a dogsled team.

HEELING, **OTOH**, is a competition behaviour. It happens on cue. It requires the dog to maintain a very specific position in relation to the handler's body, eyes focused at a particular point, spine pointing the same direction as the handler's, sitting when stopping, etc. This is a difficult thing to maintain for any length of time, and it **CERTAINLY** isn't a fun or relaxing way to go for a walk! And, because it's a very complicated behaviour requiring a lot of training and reinforcement, it is unlikely in the extreme to become a default.

I teach **HEELING** from Eye Contact, then into the Get Lost game, where I have contact, then I turn my back and the dog comes around trying to hold onto my eyes. Using this desire to hold contact, I can fairly easily shape the dog into the correct position and attitude for heeling.

For **LLW**, though, I don't want the dog staring at me all the time. Another big problem (besides actually **GETTING** the heeling on a regular basis) with heeling is that when the dog is really heeling, he's ignoring distractions - something most people want - but when you **LOSE** the heeling, which happens quite frequently, then the dog is out of control. This is why I need **LLW** as a default. **LLW** is fairly easy to teach if you concentrate on it, and it's easy for the dog to maintain indefinitely if you've been consistent.

I teach **LLW** as a form of Zen. I put a treat on the ground 10 or 15 feet away, make sure the dog knows it there, and then start explaining that in order to get to the treat, he needs to keep the leash loose. Loose leashes go **TOWARD** the treat, and if the dog can get the treat with the leash loose, he can have it. **TIGHT** leashes, **OTOH**, go only **AWAY** from the treat. Half a second before the leash tightens, I'm backing up away from the treat. The treat gets further and further away, until finally we're far enough away that the treat is no longer

interesting. The dog loosens the lead, I start walking toward the treat again.

I do the same thing with doors, other dogs, people - all the things the dog wants to get to, he learns that he can only get to by keeping the leash loose, and soon we're working as a team.

Service Dog Walk

"Would you please describe Stitch and Scuba's "service dog walk"?"

Heeling: walking at my side, leash loose or no leash, dog watching me all the time, precision, shoulder even with my hip, automatic sits when I stop. Fast, abrupt motions.

LLW: appearing to pay little attention to me, walking near me, usually out in front of me a bit intent on where we're going or sniffing casually as we walk, free to wander anywhere except right across my path, must maintain approximately on my left side (to avoid catastrophic collisions).

Service Dog walk: on my left side, hip to waist even with my hip, glancing at me now and then but generally looking straight ahead, leash "tight" with a quarter ounce of pressure on it, movements calm and slow, stand at halt, head in casual walking position, no sniffing.

I use the SDW anytime she's on duty, in stores and restaurants, walking from car to store, etc, especially when there is any other person around.

Sniffing LLW

There's nothing wrong with sniffing, it's how dogs enjoy their surroundings. It's the same as humans looking at things. Think about all the different kinds of "looking".

a) teenager bopping along with earphones on, completely oblivious to the fact that he nearly got run over by a car because he was barely aware of where he was. I've had dogs that paid such close attention to me when they were heeling that they would literally run into things if I didn't swerve to avoid them.

b) person walking to the bus in his own neighbourhood, he'll notice something really out of place but otherwise not really noticing because he's seen it all a million times before. This is a dog walking around in his own house - yep, they're having chicken for supper. Otherwise, same-old, same-old.

c) person walking around a new workplace. Have to see everything, remember where things are, pay attention to the boss who's doing the orientation, notice things that are really interesting that he'll have to come back and learn about. This is a trained dog walking in the neighbourhood. Lots of cool stuff, new spice smells, different dogs, a new squirrel family, a crow that ate a dead mouse landed right **HERE**.

d) yokel standing gobsmacked in the middle of the street, never saw a building taller than 1 storey before, never saw neon lights, never saw more than 5 people in one place. Three busses and 8 taxis honking at him. This is an untrained dog going for a walk, nose to the ground, no thought of anything else except the information coming in through the nose.

What ***I*** want from a walk is a Lazy Leash - a leash that is completely out of a job, no tension on it at all - and the ability to get the dog's attention focused on me when I need it (when we're walking past a dead squirrel, when a skateboarder or a snuffle of daycare kids is approaching, when I need to move faster to get across a street before

the light changes). What the *dog* wants from a walk is a Lazy Leash and the freedom to enjoy c) - all the wonderful things to learn about the area.

The essence of training: in order for the DOG to get what she wants, *I* have to get what I want, so as long as I can have my Lazy Leash and I can get the dog's attention when I need it, she can sniff herself purple and I won't mind.

Sue on Teaching LLW

Loose lead walking IS a hard thing to teach.

This isn't so much because it's hard to learn, as because there are so many pitfalls for the trainer.

First, 99% of people aren't successful with being a tree. Pitfall #1. The dog starts to pull, you stop and stand still. From the dog's POV, she's pulled you a step or two closer to what she wants to see, then she gets to stand there looking at it. Reward up the wazoo for pulling.

Second pitfall - too many great things to look at. You need to teach this behaviour somewhere where there is only ONE great thing to look at. This might be another dog, a person, a toy or treat on the floor. Never mind the halter, that's just an attempt to control the dog. You need the dog to control herself. So get the attraction ready, out about 15 or 20' in front of you. Have a FIRM grip on the lead. Start toward the attraction. As long as the lead is loose, keep moving slowly toward the attraction. The INSTANT the lead gets tight, BACK UP as far as you can away from it - keep backing up until the dog pretty much loses interest in the attraction and the leash is loose again. Don't turn around, back up.

Pitfall #3: definition of loose lead. Pulling a LITTLE BIT isn't a loose lead. In order to be defined as loose, the leash snap needs to be hanging down. If the leash snap isn't hanging absolutely loose, the LEASH IS TIGHT and you should have been backing up already.

Start forward again when the leash is loose. As long as the leash is loose, keep going slowly forward. The instant the leash tightens, back up again until she loses interest.

Pitfall #4: if you back up, she loosens the lead, then you start to go forward again and BAM she goes whipping out to the end of the lead again, you didn't go back nearly far enough. Go back far enough and you WILL have a few steps of loose lead. Reward it if you want, or use the inherent reward of going forward.

When she gets to the attraction on a loose leash, she can have it/eat it/play with it/whatever. Pitfall #5: you'll think she's doing great and then she gets really close and makes a dive for it, tightening the leash. Watch for this, be ready for it, back up. Better to back up a few times at the last minute when she WASN'T planning on tightening the lead than letting her drag you forward to get it a few times.

Put down another attraction, and start again.

Pitfall #6: Priorities. Don't start this until you're ready to say absolutely, positively, under no circumstances is this dog EVER going to pull me ONE SINGLE INCH **EVER** again unless someone is actively dying and I can help. I don't care if I'm late for an appointment, or for class, or if she needs a walk, she will NEVER EVER AGAIN go forward with the leash tight.

The Leash

Possibly the worst part of judging is watching all the really bad leash handling. Why do dogs pace instead of trot? Bad leash handling. Why do dogs sidewind, paddle, goose step? Bad leash handling. Why do handlers profess to love dogs and dogs shows and then demonstrate, by their leash handling, that they have no respect whatsoever for the animal on the end of that leash?

You've been teaching your dog to do the conformation behaviours without the leash. When you put the leash on him, remember that he can already do the behaviours. You don't have to use the leash to keep him with you, to make him start or stop or turn around, to move his feet, to stand still, or to get him to look at you.

The truly beautiful show dog looks like he is doing everything on his own. Your cues are subliminal, a tiny shift of your weight forward or back, dropping or raising your hands by a quarter inch. It should look like you're only in the ring with him because it isn't legal for him to be in there by himself.

Is the leash useful at all? Aha, now we're getting into really professional work. Yes, the leash is useful. Remember when the dog was walking up to the judge after the diagonal, giving her eye contact and demanding a ribbon? When the dog is about halfway back to the judge on the diagonal, you'll add a quarter of an ounce of pressure to the leash, and that pressure will build up slowly until it smoothly brings the dog to a stop five feet out from the judge. This too is a mechanical skill, and you'll have to practise a lot to get it smooth and beautiful, but it's worth the effort.

If you ride, it's allowing the dog to "meet the rein" rather than pulling back to make the rein meet the dog. And if you ride, you know that "The proof of the training is whether the horse becomes more beautiful because of it".

Conformation handling is a dance. You lead the dance, but the object of the dance is for you to be invisible and for your partner to be smooth, natural, and stunningly beautiful. When people start congratulating you on having such a great "natural show dog", you'll know that all those hours of training have paid off.

Zen

If you get him into a situation that is out of control (cat shows up), get out of the situation ASAP. I might, for instance, back up into the house. This puts the whole Zen thing right smack into the realm of Loose Leash Walking - if he can keep the leash loose, he can look at the cat, if he tightens the leash, the leash (and his head) go back into the house where he can't see the cat any more.

Walking Narrative

We go for a walk.

Without humans or dogs, her leash is loose, she's attentive and relaxed and clearly enjoying the outing.

When people go by, I ask her to Sit and reward her for seeing them but not responding, and by the third set she's doing it by herself.

By the tenth dog that goes by, she can handle that too.

RELAX

Clicking Relaxation

"Could you give a practical description of how the shaping of a "Relax" might progress?"

I think offering behaviours is one of the very best things about clicker-trained dogs, and I take relaxation for granted. I used to get to ride horses for free because I got on with a bunch of guys on a weekend polo team. These guys had no time for horses, they just liked to go out on Sundays, make their horses crazy, and whack a ball around. So I rode all week calming their horses down. It was a huge shock to me when I first realized that people were frustrated and annoyed by the constant offerings of their clicker dogs. It was a classic case of ME doing things naturally and not thinking through to the foundation behind what I was doing.

So now I teach Relax, and emphasize Relax. In fact, I did a phone consult this afternoon with a hysterical PWD owner from the eastern seaboard who desperately needed her to dog to Relax.

It's a "simple" shaping exercise. Talking of teaching relax always makes me think of a particular client, a Rottweiler, 3 yo intact male, always got his own way, had bitten 2 people who tried to "teach" him to lie down by pushing on him, and rather seriously injured a third who tried an alpha roll on him. He comes barreling into the training room on full alert, body tense, scanning the room. He dismisses me as unimportant because I'm sitting down, seeing him only out of my peripheral vision. I'm slouching, legs crossed and tucked under my chair, arms crossed loosely in front of me, clicker in one hand, handful of cooked liver in the other.

When I'm shaping, I first define the dog's base behaviour - tense, scanning, alert, tall.

Then I define the behaviour I'm aiming for - lying down, head down, at least over on one hip if not flat out on his side, ears quiet, eyes quiet.

Now I know what I've got and where I'm going.

My job, then, is to click anything closer to the goal behaviour than what I started with.

Sarge (well, his name isn't Hitler, at least) spends several minutes stalking around the room. For some reason he doesn't lift his leg, but if he did, I wouldn't respond. I had his owners sit down on the couch. I'm talking to them in a casual voice while waiting for him to wind down a bit.

Seeing no immediate threat, Sarge relaxes his neck muscles. I click and toss a bit of liver on the floor at his feet. He eats it and spends another minute being tense.

He lowers his head to sniff where the liver landed. I click and toss another bit.

His neck muscles relax again.

He comes over and checks me out, but I'm not responding. He nudges my hand a few times. Still no response. As he turns away from me, he lowers his tail. Click and toss.

He wanders around for another couple of minutes with his neck relaxed. I'm now able to click for him lowering his head without sniffing, and when I notice his back leg muscles have relaxed. I click him for standing still with his head down. He's clearly aware of the fact that what he's doing is causing the click, and he's working it for all he's worth. He doesn't know WHY this is happening. He has no experience with something like this, but he's recognized the sequence.

Finally he slumps down on the floor. I have two choices here - I can click and toss the treat right at him so he doesn't have to get up and can STAY as relaxed as he is, or I can toss the treat slightly away from him so he has to get up to get it, thus giving him a chance to offer me another relaxed down. I choose to give him a chance to keep practising offering me the down, so I toss it away.

He loses track of where we were. I have to go back to clicking him for lowering his head. While he did get lost, though, he didn't get tense again. I click his lowered head a couple of times, then he sits. I click that, then he sits again AND lowers his head. Pretty soon he's lying down again, but this time he's over on one hip, so I'm clicking that.

He's down, and he lowers his head.

I've been talking to the owners all along, describing what I'm doing. I've given them each a clicker, and I've been having them click for any signs of relaxation. In the beginning, they missed all of them. Partway through, they started hitting a couple at the same time I did, and now they're hitting 90% of the clicks either at the same time as mine or slightly ahead of me. Time to let them have a go.

I ask them to pick up the leash and take him out for pee, then bring him back in and start clicking him for relaxing.

While he's out, I change positions. I have an expen set up in a corner, and I go and stand in it. When he comes back in, I'm standing up in the pen and looking just over his head.

He doesn't like this. He barks and blusters, coming up to the pen and threatening me. I stand quietly looking over his head. He turns away from me, and one of the owners clicks and tosses a treat at him. Good call.

He turns back and glares at me, but he's getting no response, so he starts working the click again. He lowers his head - that seems to be a good way to start. He does that about 8 times. He seems to be getting stuck on that, so I ask the owners not to click next time he lowers it, but

wait for a count of 5. At 3, he lies down. c/t. From then on he's working harder - he puts his head down, he sighs, he rolls from hip to hip.

I ask the owners to take him out, bring him back in again, snap his leash onto a hook in the wall, then sit down and go back to clicking relaxation.

This time he comes in, glances at me, turns to face the owner, and lies down. 2 clicks later he's got his head down. I come out of the expen and start walking casually around the room. He glances at me from time to time but continues to work the click.

Relax

Relaxation. A big topic. A big, important trick, for pets, for show dogs, for competitive performance dogs, for service dogs.

I teach baby puppies to relax "in hand" by simply not putting them down until they are hanging totally inert in my hands. This is generally easy for them to do when up high and away from their sibs, but when you start to put them back in the whelping box, they usually start to struggle in an effort to get down faster. It's important to pay attention. A little struggle will usually result in me stopping and just holding them at that level until they stop. A big struggle results in me standing back up and taking them further from their families until the struggling stops. Thus they learn to hang inert coming up off the ground and going back down to the ground. Once upon a time, a billion years ago, this resulted in very large dogs (105 lbs) understanding immediately that they had to be absolutely "silent" in their bodies when strapped to me to rappel in and out of helicopters.

I teach slightly older puppies to relax on tables. Important for any dog that will ever go to a vet for an examination, any dog that ever needs to

be examined for any reason (important for my SD Scuba when she found her first large patch of goat's head thistles in New Mexico!). First I make the dog totally comfortable on the table. I feed the pup her meals on the table. I put her on the table regularly and pet her and play with her gently on the table. I teach her to sit and lie down on the table, where it's easier for me because I am closer to her, not bending over, and can see her better than if she's on the floor. Thus she learns to be very confident and happy on the table.

Along with this I teach her the dangers of getting off the table. In my life, dogs are NEVER allowed to get off a table without an express invitation. While working on getting the dog totally comfortable on the table I scare them a little bit about the edge. With the pup on leash, I am reinforcing them for being on the table and in the middle of the table, for sitting and lying down on the table. I'm teaching Table Zen by showing the pup her food dish but not letting her have it until she's relaxed and "centred" on the table. On the very odd occasion when she thinks about dropping a paw over the edge of the table, or about getting down, I gasp loudly and act very relieved when she pulls herself back to the centre of the table. Eventually we work up to me pulling her gently toward the edge of the table with the leash, then clicking and rewarding when her opposition reflex helps her resist the pull and stay in the centre of the table.

When she's comfortable on the table, I put her on the table and start teaching her different ways of being lifted. My favourite way for adult dogs to be lifted is to grab a large handful of neck scruff in one hand and put my other arm under the dog's belly. This allows me to lift even very large dogs off a table and put them down on the floor without bending over. NOT particularly useful for lifting a dog UP, but good for moving over and lifting down. So with the pup on the table, I start Assuming The Position and putting a tiny bit of lift on the scruff and belly, then clicking for her relaxation. By the time I am lifting her up or over off the table, the dog is totally relaxed, not grabbing for the table edge or struggling at all.

Another table manipulation I teach is for the dog to allow me to wrap one arm around her front legs just below her chest, the other arm

around her back legs just above the hocks, then lift slightly, tip her over (legs toward me, body away), and lay her down on her side on the table. The first few times I do this, I try to have a helper standing by to assume control of the dog's head as she goes down, while I maintain control of the feet. If you've prepared for this by teaching her to be comfortable on the table, to accept your scruff lift, etc, and if your technique is good in that you roll her onto her side rather than lifting and flipping her down, there really shouldn't be any struggle at all, but if she's mildly alarmed by it, your helper controls her head so she can't bang it around while you maintain control of the front and back leg closest to the table. If she can't lift her head and can't get that bottom elbow under her, she's basically going to stay on her side. Now you can start massage/petting/TTouch - rub her tummy, rub her ears, massage her legs, whatever she likes best to make her comfortable lying on her side on the table.

Meantime, I teach "Go To Mat" in the living room, although I find I like a dog hammock better than a mat for this "trick". It seems that off the floor is easier for the dog to understand than on a mat on the floor. I won't go into teaching GTM, everybody does it, but I try to teach it as many ways as possible, by luring, by waiting, and by shaping. When shaping, I work the pup to go to her hammock, climb up on it, sit on it, then to lie down in it. Then I either tie her near it or get a helper to supervise her on it while I start working another dog. The pup is ignored if off the hammock, but as soon as she climbs back onto it, she's peppered with treats. Thus she learns to get on her hammock, lie down, and stay there while exciting things are happening - other dogs are being rewarded, doorbell's ringing, I'm leaving the room, etc. I find the GTM behaviour far superior to putting the dog in a crate. In a crate (which the dog should also learn, BTW), the CRATE is controlling the dog, so the dog has no responsibility for relaxing or behaving. On the mat or hammock, the DOG is controlling the dog, the responsibility is hers, and that's what she's thinking about.

Using chair seats, coffee tables, pause tables, open car doors, the hammock, grooming tables, etc, we gradually get the dog calm, confident, relaxed, and controlling herself in hundreds of different locations.

I'd like to teach the dog to relax on her leash, but so far, by the time we get to teaching that, I've made the retrieve into such a default behaviour that it isn't worth the time to get the dog to lie on something she wants to badly to pick up and give to me.

While I'm working on the computer, I have a bucket of dog food on the desk next to me. Anytime I see a pup lying down in my vicinity, I click and toss a treat to her. Thus she learns that the living room/computer room is not the best place for playing rough games. I might go so far as to say that walking into this space makes the dog sleepy! I have to add that this is transferred as well to exercise pens, since as I'm keyboarding, I'm looking at a very enthusiastic and bored Giant Schnauzer with a broken leg who has now spent 3 weeks in a very small ex-pen in the living room without whining anytime except when her meals are coming.

I have several different cues. **DOWN** means to fold up everything and lie down. **LIE DOWN** means to give me a standard competition obedience down, over on one hip and with one front paw tucked under. **HIT THE RACK** means to get up on something like a table or chair, or to get in a crate. If the dog is already in a **LIE DOWN** and I ask for it again, I'll get an over-on-the-side flopout down. Then if the dog is looking around, I can ask for **PUT YOUR HEAD DOWN**. **THERE DOWN** means to hit the ground when in motion (**THERE** being a **STOP** cue, followed by **DOWN**). **GO LIE DOWN** is a more general cue meaning *Get Outta My Face And Quit Wandering Around Bugging People*. After a **GO LIE DOWN** cue I expect to find the dog lying down, but **WHERE** she lies down is her choice, as long as it doesn't involve being close enough to me to keep poking me asking for pets! **GLD** allows me to tell a dog who is "working a room" that she's pushing the limits of being allowed to stay and she'd better cool it or she'll be out in the yard all by herself.

From all these cues and behaviours put together, the dog learns to relax when in any down position. Then you get into more specific situations, such as the tucked-under-the-seat Down in the waiting area at the airport, the outright crash under the table in restaurants, the

immediate flakeout on the floor of an aircraft or on the floor of a car or truck, etc.

Teaching Calmness - Teaching Zen

"Calmness" for me is a very difficult criteria. I'm not clicking calm. I'm clicking SEEING the scary thing. I've set up the situation so I'm far enough away from the scary thing that the dog isn't going to have a panic attack.

Let's put this in the situation of the doorbell. Kerflushinner dog screams and scrabbles to the door every time the doorbell rings. Not acceptable. OK, I could start out by teaching Go To Mat, get it really strong, and then start adding the doorbell - or a combination of that and what comes next. Nothing wrong with either one. But in this case, I'm going to approach it differently - since this is the way I had to work the Mountie bear in the airport.

I'm sitting on the couch. Dog is wandering around, lying down, sucking on her blanket, chewing a mosquito bite, whatever. I look towards the door and say "hello?" Dog perks ears and looks toward door. This wasn't enough of a "door bell" to get the hysteria, just enough to get a momentary alert. Click, treat, go back to reading my magazine. Several minutes later, I look toward door and say "Who's there?" ALMOST enough to get hysteria, but not quite. Dog perks ears and looks toward CLICK!! and treat immediately in the dog's face.

Back to magazine. Several minutes later, "hello?" Perk/look - click/treat. We continue this for about 15 repetitions. Then I knock on the table beside me. Dog perks, stands, then looks at me, but I already hit the perk with the click. My criteria is to notice the door without getting hysterical. I WILL get superstitious behaviour - looking at me, standing up, etc, but it's the ear perk or head-turn I'm clicking. If the dog explodes instead of a simple perk or turn, I read my magazine so no

reinforcement for running madly to the door, and the next repetition will be with LESS of a cue (put that in terms of a car going by, if the dog can't handle how close the car is, then we move further from the road and try again).

RETRIEVE

Level 3 Retrieve

L3 Retrieve is to nose-target 4 objects including a dumbbell. Let's first look at the difference between a TARGET behaviour and a RETRIEVE behaviour. TARGET means TOUCH, and not with the mouth. So if you're working on TARGET you don't want mouthing. To prevent mouthing when trying to teach nose-targeting, I will, among other things, use a big flat target - a paper plate, a book, the flat of my hand - and I hold it in my hand. Later I might progress to pasting a plastic spot on a wall - still large flat objects.

Retrieving, OTOH, requires the dog to open its mouth on the object. Thus, two different behaviours. HOWEVER for the sake of specifically teaching RETRIEVE, for the L3 Retrieve behaviour of nose-targeting the objects, I will certainly accept if the dog is opening her mouth on the object, as that will make moving on to L4 immeasurably easier.

What I always want to emphasize about retrieving, though, is that, while play retrieving is fun, it really has NOTHING to do with a trained retrieve. People who think a play retrieve is a "real" retrieve always ALWAYS come up with complaints - my dog mouths, my dog chews, my dog tosses the article at me, my dog won't give it to me, yadda yadda - and NO real way to correct these problems because

they've already given the dog WAY too much responsibility for the object. I would liken this to turning a baby puppy loose in your house and then, 6 months later, complaining because his housetraining is imperfect.

So PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE read through ALL the Levels of Retrieve before you get started, so you can see how we're going to train for a competent, correct, reliable retrieve right from the beginning.

Llama Retrieve

Ah, the elusive llama retrieve! Don't be ridiculous, you can't get a LLAMA to RETRIEVE!

Actually, you can. The good news is that it really isn't that difficult. The better news is that you're well on your way already if you've done your ComeBefores!

What can a llama retrieve? Anything that will fit in their mouths. My llamas have retrieved mitts, hats, shoes, whips, sticks, small dog dumbbells, Kleenex, doggy rope toys, halters, lead ropes. The list is limited only by the size of the mouth, and your imagination.

COMEBEFORES - Your llama understands the use of the clicker or a word that serves the same purpose. He eagerly eats treats from your hand. He understands Zen, and knows how to target both your hand and an object.

START HERE - You can teach retrieving anywhere you and the llama have time to work and are able to concentrate. I most often work on this in a pen in the barn with no other llamas present, but I've also done a lot of work on it in quieter times in the pens at farm fairs and shows, usually sitting on my walker. In a private space, you can work off-lead, but working with the llama haltered isn't a problem.

AIM FOR THIS - You drop your glove on the ground and the llama picks it up and hands it back to you.

WHAT YOU NEED - Something to retrieve. Something light, strong, small enough to fit in the llama's mouth, and not icky - that is, not plain metal, especially if you're working on a cold day. A light twig comes to mind. A plain stick-type ballpoint pen. A light glove. A sock.

HOW TO TEACH IT - Well, first, in order to reward the llama, you need to get a behaviour, and not the **WHOLE** behaviour. That's asking too much. Start with a little bit of the behaviour and build it up as you go.

Start by getting the llama to reliably and cheerfully touch your object. Then, whether it's a pen, a dumbbell, or whatever, you'll need to shape him to touch it where you want him to - touching a dumbbell on the end won't lead to retrieving! Be sure to remember that you can't fling an object up in front of a llama's nose. He can't focus his eyes on it in that position. If you want to show it to him before you ask him to touch it or take it (and it's a good idea to show it to him first), bring it up on the **SIDE** of his face so he can see it clearly with one eye.

When he's touching it regularly (touch, click, reward; touch, click, reward), after maybe five repetitions, do nothing. Simply stand when he touches it and pretend he didn't. He has two choices now. He can think "Well, I guess we're not playing 'touch' anymore" and quit. If he does this, you need to work your targets more. He needs to have absolutely faith that touching that thing will make the click happen and get him his treat. His second choice is to think "**HEY! STUPID! I TOUCHED IT!** Weren't you paying attention? Where's my treat?". If you get this "hey stupid" reaction, he's going to touch it again, a bit harder to make sure you see it this time. That's exactly what you want - a harder touch. From here you just have to play around with the behaviour until you see a lip twitch over the edge of the object. Be **SURE** to reward that!.

Work until he's very, very good at taking the dumbbell out of your hand, and then start "300-Pecking" the hold. 300-Peck behaviours were

named after from an article written about horses by Alexandra Kurland. We've changed them a bit, but the idea remains the same.

The llama takes the dumbbell in his mouth. Click, he spits out the dumbbell, you give him a treat. He takes the dumbbell, you count to one (silently). Click, he spits out the dumbbell, you give him a treat. Take, count two, click, spit, treat. Take, count three, click, spit, treat. And so on.

Keep increasing your count one second at a time until he makes a mistake. When he drops the dumbbell (it doesn't drop, because you're still holding on to it, but you are NOT holding it in his mouth, that's his job), just start your count over again **FROM THE BEGINNING**. Take, count one, click, spit, treat. Take, count two, click, spit, treat. And so on. By working this way, you allow him to define his own threshold of performance, and you reward him a LOT below his threshold, so there's a lot more explanation of what happens when he gets the job right (he gets a click and a treat) and very little explanation of what happens when he gets the job wrong (he doesn't get the treat).

Once he'll approach the object, take it in his mouth, and hold it while you're holding it as well, you can start getting him to move with it. You've explained incidentally to him that you need to have your hand on it in order for him to get the click, and you're going to need that in a minute.

Hold the dumbbell a little further from him, so he has to stretch his neck to get it. When he's comfortable with that, hold it further away yet so he has to take a step to reach it. When he's good at that, and still holding it securely once he's grabbed it, you're ready to give him a little responsibility for it.

Hand him the dumbbell. He takes it, you hold it for a moment, then let go of it. **DON'T CLICK**. Put your hand back on it right away. Hold it another moment, then click.

Build up the amount of time you can have your hand off the dumbbell until you're up to about 10 seconds. Now for the next step.

Llama on your left facing the same direction you are, dumbbell in your right. Show it to him, and step forward, bringing the dumbbell up in front of him so he has to take a step to reach it. He takes it in his mouth, you let go of it, and step back slightly. Hold your hands up to take it just as you've done before, but this time you're just out of reach. If he drops it, go back several paragraphs and work it up again. If he doesn't drop it, he's got a decision to make. You need to have the dumbbell in your hand before he gets a click. He wants a click. What to do? What to do? If you built it up correctly, explained it in enough detail, and he's comfortable with the whole idea, he'll swing his head toward your hand. Don't scream EE HAH, even though you want to. Put your hand quietly on the dumbbell, hold for a moment, click, and reward.

From there, it's simply a matter of lowering the object gradually to the ground. You can lower it to a table, then to a chair, and finally to the ground, or you can just go slowly toward the ground. Having him interacting with chessmen or other objects on a table makes a good trick, as does having him pull a rope attached to a bell or to unfurl a banner.

Once he is comfortable picking it up off the ground, you can start tossing it around, here, there, way over THERE.

You can also start working other objects, but please remember that every new object is a new behaviour to him, so start right back at the beginning and explain it to him slowly and clearly again.

If you'd like a more detailed explanation of teaching retrieving, look on the dog side of my site. There's really no difference between teaching a llama to retrieve and teaching a dog - save that the llama's neck is a lot more mobile and the dog can see better in front of her nose.

Picking Up Coins

IMO whether a dog is safe to do coins, or credit cards (different safety issue), or knives, or scissors, or pills, or bits of kibble, or hot dogs, or whatever, depends on how much training has gone into teaching the retrieve.

By the time I ask my dog to pick up any particular thing that isn't totally safe, I know exactly how she's going to pick it up, where she's going to hold it in her mouth, and what she's going to do with it next.

When she can SAFELY pick up a knife AND a pill AND can hand me hot dog pieces and her kibble if I ask for them, I'm not too concerned about whether she's going to swallow a dime.

A Look at the Retrieve

"I'm looking for other ways to encourage him to pick up items."

Why? He's telling you very clearly that he doesn't understand that he can do anything with an object except chase it. You KNOW that if he can't do anything but chase it, you're going to have serious problems later. Is a play retrieve good enough for a credit card? Credit cards don't work well with tooth marks in them. Do you have to throw a wheelchair before he'll retrieve it?

My point is that when a dog tells me he "can't" figure out how to do something, this doesn't tell me I need to ignore it. It tells me I have to work harder to help him figure out how to do it. He "can't" touch an object? Then he can touch my hand. He can get excited about touching my hand. He can dream about touching my hand. Then he can touch my hand wearing a mitt. Then he can touch the mitt without me wearing it. Then he can touch a dinner plate. Then he can touch a dumbbell. Then he can touch a credit card.

My other point is that I don't WANT to encourage him to pick things up. I want to teach him exactly how I want him to hold things, then how I want him to pick them up. What I want him to do with them after he's holding them. I want him to know that he can hold them quietly and calmly WITH me - all of this long before I ever trust him to have something in his mouth without me holding it as well. That way, I have complete control over what he's learning about how, when, where, and what to hold, and what to do with it when he's done. I need him to hold credit cards in his lips, dimes in his incisors, dumbbells behind his canines, and ropes in his molars. I need him to hold lightly, securely, strongly. I need him to release on cue. All these things need to be TAUGHT, and you can't teach them if you're trying to use a play retrieve to teach the retrieve.

A "Natural" Retriever

"My dog is a non-retriever by nature"

Somewhere we got the idea that there are only two kinds of dogs: dogs with a natural play retrieve, and dogs that don't retrieve unless you ear-pinch them (or other force methods). Somehow the retrieve got to be something totally scary and strange. There aren't two kinds of dogs: dogs that do downstays and dogs that need to be hurt. There aren't two kinds of dogs: dogs that love swimming and dogs that need to be tossed off docks.

Retrieving is a behaviour like any other. It's all tricks, and retrieving is just one of them. A play retrieve is a lovely behaviour, but in my mind it has NOTHING:ZERO:NADA to do with a trained retrieve. For competition, a trained retrieve is MUCH better than a play retrieve because you can FIX PROBLEMS with a trained retrieve - dog holds dumbbell wrong, dog chews dumbbell, dog pitches dumbbell at you. How much more important is a trained retrieve for a Service Dog - a play-retrieved credit card, for instance, doesn't work very well with tooth-

holes in it. When Scuba's pulling something heavy with her teeth, I want her to hold the rope in her molars, where her strength is, and not risk injuring herself by pulling with her incisors or canines. I can't teach that with a play retrieve. And I'd REALLY prefer she doesn't use her play retrieve when she's nibbling around my toes trying to get enough of my sock in her mouth to pull the sock off my foot! Dog bites down too hard, doesn't hold hard enough, dog gives up too soon, dog tosses articles around before bringing them, dog shreds retrieved articles - nyuh uh, I need a trained behaviour!

In seminars, we've started a LOT of dogs retrieving with the clicker. I don't rely at ALL on play behaviours, but teach it as a targetting behaviour, then harder, then opening mouth, then the grab, then a double grab, a hold, hold until released. Off the top of my head I'd say that in a seminar situation, we can get about 50% of from-scratch dogs taking and holding in half an hour or less.

Don't let the presence or absence of a play retrieve say ANYTHING to you about the possibility of teaching your dog to retrieve, any more than the initial presence or absence of a pawing behaviour says anything to you about teaching a paw target.

Dumbbell Possession

"chew on it like a toy if I futz getting her clicked"

This is a problem not confined to those of us with disabilities. I don't think I've ever met anybody who had never started a training session before they were ready to train. CLICK - uh oh - where's my treats? YEAH - uh oh, where's my clicker? Wait, wait, don't start yet, I'm not watching!

So the dog winds up either doing four things right and then giving up on that behaviour because it doesn't pay off (this would be my own

major failing, Scuba is always ready to train ten minutes before my brain arrives in the room), or doing something you really don't want like chewing on the DB.

Suggestions: be very sure you have all YOUR toys and are ready to start the session before you ever bring the DB out in front of the dog. You don't have to click, you can say YES! instead if the clicker's getting fumbled. And the bottom line - if she's using it as a toy, she NEVER gets possession of it again until she understands the job she has to do with it. In fact, if you're having trouble with this, and you're training a service dog, not a competition obedience dog, I'd get rid of the DB altogether, as she already knows things about it you don't want her to know, and train with other things. A toy cellphone, for instance.

This reminds me of the day Scuba REALLY learned to be gentle with things she's retrieving. We were in San Diego, introducing a litter of Portuguese Water Dog pups to the water in a swimming pool. A mostly-empty can of squeeze cheese fell into the pool and drifted out into the middle. When the pups were done, I asked Scuba to go out and get the can. She jumped in, swam over and grabbed it - and put a tooth into it. The can had no cheese left in it, but PLENTY of fizz left. It attacked her and then sat in the middle of the pool, spinning around and swearing at her for several minutes. When it was finally quiet, I asked her to get it again. The look she gave me was priceless, but she went out and retrieved it for me. Man, those things are thinner than paper!

"This will pose a problem for me because of my physical inability to lean over without holding on with my other arm - which must be poised on the clicker."

Remember the clicker is just a gadget. You can use a voice click or word if you have to. Or use an iClick or cut down clicker that you can click with your foot or knee. Clicker training was MADE to be adaptive!

Rather than you having to bend over, reach out, how about having the dog up on something? Table training - chair training, mat training - is an absolutely necessary behaviour once you've had a dog that can get on things and stay on them. Would it make the whole thing simpler if the dog was lying down on a table with his mouth at the level of your hand?

OR you could put the DB in your lap and teach the dog to rest his chin on your lap, then to rest his chin on your lap while holding the DB, letting your lap serve the same purpose as your hand.

OR you could hold the DB with a pair of kitchen tongs or something.

OR you could temporarily replace the DB with a dowel of a comfortable length so you and the dog could both hold it without you having to bend or reach.

OR you could forget about the you-both-hold-it part altogether and just shape the whole thing from the beginning (but I'd call that the least useful suggestion).

OR you could hold the DB between your feet instead of in your hands.

Maybe none of these suggestions are reasonable for you, but take the ideas and see what you can come up with.

Sue eh? "she will battle me for its possession as soon as she's finished the treat"

Don't battle. Put a leash on the DB if you're not going to get it back any other way, but don't tug on it, that's fun for the dog. If she picks it up, hey! That's what you wanted! click her for it, and give her another treat.

Then you can start clicking her for NOT picking it up or grabbing it. Click BEFORE she has a chance to grab it, rapid fire if you have to until she can sit calmly with the DB on the bed between you and not try to grab it until you indicate that you want it.

Gosh, you've taught the dog TOO well to retrieve. She's broke now, eh? Hee hee - well done.

Dumbbell Retrieve Thread

"Hello everyone.....I do not post often but follow every thread. I need some help from the group. I shaped my Pap (even though I am inept with the clicker) to pickup and retrieve the dumbbell. The problem is that he drops it before I take it and I don't know how to get him to hold it.

He brings it to me and wants his treat whether or not I click. Help. Some background about this particular dog.....I own his mother and although I am not his "breeder or record" I have raised him since he was weaned.....and that is when I started him with the clicker. He is a very soft dog even though has never heard a harsh sound from me. He is training in obedience and last Nov got his RN. I've not had any other problems with his training until now, and I am sure I am doing something wrong. I live in the country and usually train alone but do get to practice weekly with some friends who do NOT use clicker. Any suggestions?"

"The problem is that he drops it before I take it and I don't know how to get him to hold it. "

Start from the beginning following Retrieve in the Levels and remember - the Levels are all about filling in gaps in our training!

"There are still lots of people out there who say that is the ONLY way to get a reliable retrieve from a dog. I disagree. "

Scuba was taught to retrieve according to the instructions on my website. I have and will put her "unreliable, non-force-trained" retrieve up against any dog at any time. Here's a list of things she has retrieved: dumbbells bumpers ropes and toys from underwater 30' fishing net

deployed between boats messages from boat to boat 10" buoy balls bar
jump bars bar jump uprights broad jump boards weave poles hay
llamas by the leash puppies by the leash boats by the leash can of
squeeze cheez from the middle of a swimming pool vacuum cleaners
wheelchairs coins credit cards (no damage) shoes socks (off my foot and
off the floor) pop cans (full and empty) garbage cans car keys suitcases
backpacks purses adult tricycles her leash stools on wheels garbage of
various sorts farm boots sheep shears pens & pencils scissors knives
knitting needles & crochet hooks yarn a mouse (live) an injured bird
(live) Giant Schnauzers (dead weight) brooms and mops buckets rakes
& hoes my walker crutches & canes TV remotes telephones tables
chairs

"Yes, but can she retrieve a hot dog? :P"

We're not up to the full non-frozen totally juicy one yet, but it's going well. Of course, I'm SURE that if I was ear-pinching her, it would be going MUCH faster! She would have retrieved the cold hot dog in LESS than the 90 seconds it actually took her...

Fetch, Tug, Retrieve

"Should I keep on with the retrieving exercises? At the moment, he is really enjoying playing tug-of-war with me, finishing with me throwing away the object and he chasing it, sometimes bringing it back, sometimes not. I would like to go on, but I do not want to make things too complicated for him. "

Remember that fetch and tug aren't part of retrieve. Great games in themselves, but totally different from retrieve, just like Go To Mat isn't Sit, and Distance isn't Come. Go ahead and teach retrieve - you may have a moment or two of confusion, but part of training a clicker dog is teaching him to watch for what's paying off right NOW, so any

momentary confusion will refine his ability to sort out exactly what you're looking for at any particular moment, so sure - go for it!

Fetching Eye Glasses

Debi, I never bothered much with what damage the teeth would do. After we got through clicking for not denting credit cards, etc, Scuba's mouth is VERY soft with anything she doesn't really need to grip. When she picks up my glasses, she's just using her canines to cage them to keep them in her mouth. My thoughts on this are that it is easy for a small dog to target one part of a pair of glasses, much more difficult for a larger dog. Try grabbing your glasses every time by one particular part for a couple of days. If Finn is having difficulty with being soft on glasses, I'd borrow an old pair from an eye place and work on just getting a soft retrieve rather than identifying a part that may not be particularly available depending on which way they land.

"canines only to 'cage' the glasses"

Right. She holds the glasses as you'd hold an empty intact eggshell in your hand - with your hand caged so it couldn't fall out, but no pressure on the eggshell at all. She doesn't put any tooth pressure at all on the glasses, or pick up any part of the glasses. She scoops up the glasses as a whole and holds them loosely inside her mouth.

Float Line Retrieve – but Good Advice for Any Retrieve of an Item (i.e. Keys)

"I feel that I need some guidance to help get back on track. "

OK, now you're talking. Do 10 throw-it retrieves in the living room with the float line. Then leave it on the floor in the living room, go into another room and do something for a couple of minutes, bring the dog back into the living room, "discover" the float line when you're about four feet away from it, and ask him to go get it.

Eight hours later, do the same thing, but discover it 6' away and send him for it.

Next day, if he's successful, and by that I mean cheerful and willing, discover and send from 10' away.

Make finding the float line a default behaviour, so if he EVER sees it on the floor, he wants to bring it to you.

Translate that whole thing into five different places outside - parking lots, parks, friends' yards.

Then have a friend do 10 throw-it retrieves for him, then walk 4' away and "lose" it. Have the friend send him for it. Do ten of those, then YOU send him for it.

Next time, repeat.

Next time, repeat.

Next time, have the friend just walk nearby and lose it, without first doing the throw-it retrieves.

Continue.

Floor Retrieve... and more

"I've been trying to teach my husband's GSD to retrieve and while he has no aversion to anything I offer him, we have encountered a problem the solution of which may be of some help to you.

The Croc was doing well on take, hold and drop until I began lowering the object. When I got to a distance about a foot from the ground, he took the object and laid down with it. After three tries with the same result, I figure I'd better change tactics--so I: 1. put the thing on a chair (still holding it) and invited him to take, hold and drop; 2. put the thing on a chair with my hand a fraction of an inch away etc.; 3. put the thing on a chair with my hand further away etc.; 4. put the thing on a chair with my hand off the chair etc.

That's as far as we've gone but I plan (Know how to make God laugh? Tell Him your plans.) to move down to progressively lower surfaces until he will retrieve from ground level."

WHEEEEEEEEE!!!!!! An opportunity to work on what I learned in Chicken Camp! Let's look at this objectively and leave out the characterizations - "stubborn" means you have a difficult dog to work with, SHE is frustrating you. In fact, she's putting a lot of effort into doing what she knows about how the game is correctly played - she ignores things on the ground, everyone else gets grumpy, she quits. Don't feel picked on here - my students both here and in seminars very quickly learn that using the "S" word (stubborn) will get them nothing positive in the way of reinforcement whatsoever 8*/ .

First, plan what is going to happen:

WHAT DO YOU WANT? You want the dog to pick up things that are on the floor, on coffee tables, on the ground.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE? You have a good Take from your hand, an excellent Hold, and a good Give. So these things are not in question. You also have invisible items on the floor.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT YOU WANT AND WHAT YOU HAVE? The dog can "see" what is in your hand, she cannot "see" what is on the floor. IME, this is an extremely common problem with dogs that have been trained to retrieve with an ear pinch or other force method (indeed, when I taught that way, I had this problem written right into my handouts) - not so common with clicker trained dogs, but that's beside the point - you are working with what you HAVE, not what may or may not have happened in the past. The Hold and Give should translate readily enough, but whether she never learned to pick things up off the floor, or whether she was taught that things on the floor are dangerous to her, right now she does not have the floor Take.

WHAT ELSE ARE WE DEALING WITH? We are dealing with the problem of her shutting down after 15 minutes of training, which, IME, usually means that the trainers aren't getting what they want fast enough, are jumping ahead too fast, are not giving enough information and reinforcement to the dog, and are displaying physical signs of being frustrated and upset with the training situation. I dealt with this exact scenario on Monday while doing water work with a friend of mine. Solution - train in ONE minute sessions. Work on ONE thing at a time. Plan and write down FIRST what you are going to do, work in a one minute session, STOP and evaluate what just happened, is it going well, if it is not going well, what can you change to HELP it go well? Did you keep your rate of reinforcement high enough to keep the dog motivated? Did you ask for behaviours that the dog was physically and mentally capable of giving you so you COULD keep the rate of reinforcement high? What will you do in the NEXT one minute session?

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO GET FROM WHAT YOU HAVE TO WHAT YOU WANT? Forget about retrieving, forget about what the kerflushinner dog is supposed to know, forget about

what "they" told you. Work on the behaviour. Write it out - for instance:

- Get a block of wood the same size as the TV remote (the remote is liable to get a little battered during training - or use a dead remote) - get dog to Take wood from hand X 10. - hold wood in hand on your lap, put Cheez Whiz on block, show block to dog, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - hold wood in hand at your knee, put Cheez Whiz on block, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - hold Cheez Whiz wood in hand at your ankle, get dog to lick CW off X 5

- put CW wood on your feet, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put CW wood between your feet on floor, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put CW wood two inches in front of your feet on floor, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put CW wood 6 inches in front of your feet on floor, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put CW wood 12 inches in front of your feet on floor, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put CW wood 24 inches in front of your feet on floor, get dog to lick CW off X 5 - put NAKED wood TWELVE inches in front of your feet on floor (notice we stopped putting the CW on the wood, so we moved the wood closer to your feet to make it easier), click and treat dog for going to wood to sniff if CW is still there X 10 - move naked wood to 24 inches from feet on floor, C/T for dog touching wood with nose X 10 - move naked wood to 36 inches from feet on floor, C/T for dog touching wood with nose X 10 - move naked wood back to 24 inches from feet, do NOT C/T dog for touching wood, but wait for the wood to move AT ALL, C/T the wood moving, never mind if it was from pushing, pulling, lifting, whatever (NOT pawing) X 10

After each 1 minute session, stop and evaluate the session. If the dog is correctly performing the behaviour you are working on in that 1 minute session (80% right, fast, eager, deliberately performing), move on to the next behaviour in your list. If the dog is NOT performing correctly, DO NOT MOVE ON but either repeat the behaviour you just worked on, back up one behaviour, or change what you were doing to make the dog more successful. Remember that it is the dog's job to earn the treats. It is your job to convince the dog that she CAN earn the treats, and to put her in a situation where she can figure out how to

do it. Having gone through ALL of the above stages, and being totally happy with the behaviour you are getting at each stage, you now have a dog that sees the block of wood, rushes out to touch it, and tries to get it to move with her nose or mouth. Write out your evaluation from there - what is the next step? I might pick up the block of wood again, and ask her to take it in my hand X 10, then start lowering it again until she could pick it up off the floor. Or I might just work on clicking her for opening her mouth more and more on the object on the floor. Or I might alternate, 1 minute X 5 click for taking it from my hand, 1 minute X 5 clicking for moving it around on the floor, sooner or later she will make a "mistake" and open her mouth on it on the floor. Whatever you are going to do, you have written it out, and are evaluating it after every one minute session. Some sessions you will change completely. Some sessions your planning will simply be looking at each other and saying "Wow, that went great, let's do that again!"

Hold Behavior Conversation

"I am wondering if a "hold" taught using OC is as reliable as one taught by force training."

HA! Double HA! I will gladly put my SD Scuba's retrieve up against any retrieve, anywhere, anytime (though she's getting up there now and no longer travelling, but this challenge was open throughout her career.

Scuba has pole-set in agility for me, has retrieved broad jump boards, uprights, a rowboat, the dead weight of a 90-lb Giant Schnauzer (not dead, just lying down), dimes, her leash, her harness, suitcases, purses, credit cards, hot dogs, dog carts, folding chairs, wheelchairs, gurneys, a spinning wheel, llamas, pop bottles, beer bottles, knives, pieces of duct tape, other dogs, dumbbells, clothing, bath towels, TV remotes, forks, dinner plates, a crystal stem glass, a full baby bottle, ducks, a grasshopper, a live sparrow and a very dry but still living 14" koi (both the sparrow and koi survived).

By "retrieve" I mean the entire skill - go to the appropriate object (including cues to search to her left or right, high up on a table or chair, low down on the floor, get her paws up or jump up or lie down or crawl to reach it, and to move on to another object if she has assumed I want the wrong one), pick it up correctly (coins, credit cards, knives, etc in her lips or incisors; dumbbells, canes, crutches, etc held behind her canines; ropes on doors, wheelchairs, etc that are to be tugged held firmly between her molars), deliver it (to me, to another designated person, to an invisible spot up to 100' away on land and about 40' away in swimming-depth water; to a basket, vehicle, crate, garbage can, etc), hold it solidly until cued to release it, and to release it (into a stationary or moving hand or into or on any other object) promptly when cued to do so.

She also "retrieved" humans, doing the "Timmy's in the well" routine where she goes to another person, stares, nudges, and indicates by moving back and forth along the path that she wants them to follow, or by taking their hand in her mouth if cued to do so.

Scuba is 100% totally and completely trained with OC, without negatives to the extent that it is possible (bearing in mind that withholding a click is certainly a negative), and most definitely without force. So the bottom line answer would have to be HECK YES, but it goes MUCH further than that.

As Debi Davis said " The bonus of backchaining is that we get extremely solid behaviors in a host of changing environments" - which to me means that a positive retrieve is one which produces a thinking dog, a dog who is not suspicious of new things, who trusts her own ability to figure out how to do something - a dog who can truly give THE most reliable retrieve in all sorts of changing situations.

Just What Is a Trained Retrieve?

"I need to generalize the retrieve from a specific "trick" that we do in the obedience ring to a life skill? And in doing that I'll conveniently be clarifying/proving/strengthening our obedience ring "tricks"?"

Um, yeah, that about covers it. I liken the retrieve to conformation - so many people are happy if their dog just gets around the ring and doesn't sit when they stop, whereas a Specials quality, trained conformation dog knows about centre of gravity, leash tension, angle of head, ear carriage, tail carriage, speed, yaw, yadda yadda yadda. Likewise many people think of a retrieve as getting a dumbbell from there to here, but a TRAINED retrieve involves the dog marking, going to, picking up correctly, holding correctly, returning promptly, holding until released, holding if bumped, holding securely without mouthing, holding in the correct place in the mouth, holding hard or gently, holding in the correct position to be taken out of her mouth.

A play retrieve is a wonderful thing, but it isn't, by golly, a trained behaviour with the necessary parts of the behaviour for competition (or for service work, either; for that matter - credit cards don't work very well when they have tooth marks in them!). I do play retrieves with Stitch with her soft toys, with dish towels (don't ask), with twigs and rocks, but any retrieving she did with service-type objects was done in close quarters, with the clicker and treats ready so she was thinking ONLY about picking up the object and bringing it to me. Specific items like the dumbbell, she never got to play retrieve EVER, and she never got to pick up off the floor until she had a firm grasp (ahem) of the task with the dumbbell in my hand as well as in her mouth at the same time, so no playing, no chewing, no mouthing, no holding by the bell, just a nice solid hold no matter what happened until I cued a release. Combining her play retrieves with a solidly taught dumbbell retrieve, she's now discovering that retrieving the dumbbell isn't just good because that's what I'm paying for today, it's also lots of fun, but anytime the fun starts to overtake the trained behaviour, we go back to basics.

OL4 Retrieve Question

"How long duration do you go for before you switch to focus on the holding itself?"

You're right, duration first. If you click often enough for duration, you're also clicking for him having the object in his mouth.

When you have enough duration - I don't know, 5 seconds? 8 seconds? - push your time a bit until he lets go. Do nothing. Just sit there with the thing in your hand. Dang, what's the matter with this scenario? He thinks about it, he puts his mouth back over it, you click. Sounds like twofers, right? Right. Next time it happens, don't click until he's held it for 3 seconds or so the second time.

You're building up not only a history of duration, but a history of him seeing a problem (thing not in mouth) and figuring out what to do to solve it (put mouth back over thing). If you hold it less and less securely, he'll have to hold it more and more securely to ensure he can continue to do his job (thing in mouth) even though you're getting sloppy about yours.

When you finally let go and he drops it, you're going to have to help him get it back in his mouth (bend over and pick it up yourself) but do that very slowly. Make him wait. You're old, you're slow, it's heavy... there. He should be VERY eager to get it back in his mouth when you finally get it up high enough (I'm talking maybe 4 seconds as "slow").

Pins and Needles

"Are there other small items that a dog can be trained to pickup?"

Dimes, nickels, Loonies & Toonies, knives, postage stamps, nails, paper clips, the stylus for my Palm (17 times), felt pens (they don't like the smell), individual keys, pills (!), small flat plastic rulers, nails, screws, bolts (50, all over the kitchen when I dropped the box), the bolt box, nuts (bolt nuts), peanuts in shell, crochet hook (24 times), knitting needles (11 times), stitch holder pins (3 times), washers, my husband's eyedrop bottle, gift tags, tinsel, hex key (9 times), Post-It notes, tiny stones my cheap little vacuum can't pick up, a flat fridge magnet, 3 chocolates wrapped in shiny paper.

I think that covers Scuba's "small item" jobs for this week. Of course, it's only Tuesday...

Putting Objects in a Hamper

"I was hoping to teach him to then put them in my hamper. Not sure how to begin with this because he wants to give me everything he picks up."

I thought this behaviour was going to be a real challenge, but in fact my students taught it to both my dogs in a seminar! Simply put the hamper between you and the dog, reach for the object, click just as he releases it, and don't catch it. I found that it seemed to help the dog understand better when I used an object that made a noise when it fell into the hamper (I used a laundry basket) - when things got a little tough as I moved the basket around a bit, the dog seemed to understand that the object had to produce the noise in order for it to be correct (empty pop cans make good noises, so do tennis balls - dish cloths do not). Scuba's (Portuguese Water Dog) very favourite all-time service is to pick up an empty pop can after it has been stepped on and

flattened, and carry it to the recycling bin and dump it in on top of the other flat pop cans. She seems to find the noise of the can falling onto other cans to be extremely rewarding. Once they understand what is required, of course, you can switch to cloth items. Song (Giant Schnauzer) discovered that the easiest way to get large towels into the laundry basket is to flip her head as she is approaching the basket, thus tossing the whole towel in at once instead of having to place it in, then place a bit more of it in, stand back, look at it, make sure that some of it is still hanging out, sigh, place a bit more in, place a bit more in, sigh, place a bit more in, etc. This works great for towels, but tends to get a little nasty when I'm asking her to put the TV remote or the cell phone into a basket ;*/ .

"I can't always use a clicker to train"

Use a clicker when you can, and say "YES" when you can't - just try to use YES exactly the same way you would use the click - that is, use it accurately, use it consistently, and treat after each time you use it.

Putting Objects in the Bin

"I would like her to be able to take bit of rubbish to the bin for me"

This is one of my favourites. Once the dog has a good retrieve, I put a wicker basket (or laundry basket) between my feet as I'm sitting on the couch. Ask the dog to bring me something, hold out my hands to take it, then "fumble" it as I take it from her and click her (much to her amazement) when it makes a noise landing in the basket. Gradually fade the reaching for it as she starts to realize that the "click" is actually the noise of the object hitting the basket, then add the cue (I use "Put it in there" for individual things, "Clean up this mess" for her paper and bits that go in the garbage can, and "Do your chores" for putting dog dishes back in their wicker basket after meals. This is one of Scuba's

favourite jobs, the toughest part was stopping her from pulling the last item back out of the garbage so she could drop it in again.

Song, being a Giant Schnauzer and therefore full of passions and enthusiasms, learned that in order to get an entire towel into the laundry basket, she either needs to put it deliberately in in small increments, or she could FLING it in and it would probably all (or at least mostly) land in the basket at once. So now she knows how to FLING. Great for scoring on the basketball court, but in general I'd suggest that if you have a passionate dog, FLING, along with SPEAK, might be a secret you'd like to keep from her.

Retrieval Goals

"There are still lots of people out there who say that is the ONLY way to get a reliable retrieve from a dog I disagree. "

Scuba was taught to retrieve according to the instructions on my website. I have and will put her "unreliable, non-force-trained" retrieve up against any dog at any time. Here's a list of things she has retrieved:

dumbbells

bumpers

ropes and toys from underwater

30' fishing net deployed between boats messages from boat to boat

10" buoy balls

bar jump bars

bar jump uprights

broad jump boards

weave poles hay

llamas by the leash

puppies by the leash

boats by the leash

can of squeeze cheez from the middle of a swimming pool

vacuum cleaners

wheelchairs
coins
credit cards (no damage)
shoes
socks (off my foot and off the floor)
pop cans (full and empty)
garbage cans
car keys
suitcases
backpacks
purses
adult tricycles
her leash
stools on wheels
garbage of various sorts
farm boots
sheep shears
pens & pencils
scissors
knives
knitting needles & crochet hooks
yarn
a mouse (live)
an injured bird (live)
Giant Schnauzers (dead weight)
brooms and mops
buckets
rakes & hoes
my walker
crutches & canes
TV remotes
telephones
tables
chairs

Retrieve

"You build the "I want to be in the game" attitude in preparation for exercises like this."

For everything we want to teach the dogi.

In life, I always want to be working with a dog who's really in the game. In competition, if I'm going to fail something, I would SO rather fail by the dog being too eager to do something so that I have to go home and work a little more on her self-control rather than her being reluctant or confused or afraid to perform the behaviour and so NOT doing it.

I once failed a Novice obedience trial with a 6 mo Giant Schnauzer puppy with a PERFECT score. Perfect zero. She grabbed the leash and tugged it throughout the heel on leash exercise. Zero. She flossed the teeth of both stewards on the figure 8. Zero. She flossed the judge's teeth on the stand for exam. Zero. She grabbed the back of my shirt and tugged it throughout the heel free exercise. Zero. She anticipated the recall, then jumped up, flossed my teeth, and landed sitting on my feet with her back to my legs for the finish. Zero. She lay down on the sit stay, and sit up on the down stay. Zero, and Zero. She had a heck of a good time. It was a pretty good day. She was totally in the game but just misplaced her brain for a few minutes. The next morning we had a further discussion of self-control, and she passed the next 3 trials with scores over 190.

Retrieve 2

"I knew I would come across the "I don't want to fetch that" attitude and I was not/am not prepared to insist with just any means that they do."

That's a very "traditional training" problem. "I don't want to... whatever" no longer means a refusal, it means the dog isn't in the game - tired, confused, not getting enough information.

Another traditional retrieve problem that we've solved with this method is the question I get ALL the time - "How do I make her let go?" The answer to that is built into the training right from the beginning. The dog is working for the click. When the click happens, she's reaching for the food, end of problem.

That question only happens when people are pretending that Fetch is the same thing as Retrieve. My dogs know both, and they know a great game of keepaway when they're fetching. I cock my head to one side, slit my eyes, glare at the dog, and snarl "You gimme that back, you BAD DOG!" and that's the cue for keepaway. I chase the dog all over the house "trying" to grab the object, while the dog dekes and ducks and runs ahead of me, stopping to tease me when I stop to catch my breath. Then once in a while, I stand up straight, reach out and say "Bring it here, please" and they come to me and hand me the object. At that point I sometimes stop the game, but usually toss the thing and start the game all over again.

"I am assuming the dog should be sitting right in front of you, facing you?"

Yes, that's the most useful place to start. I usually put a small dog on a pause table or coffee table so she's at a better height to start.

" IF you start pushing it into her mouth, she will start pulling back. Once again, a case of you doing the work so the dog doesn't. "

And soooooooooo easy to take that step and run with it which I did and just as you say the dog backed off then where was I then?"

Take a look at the picture of the llama Madrid with the dumbbell again (Retrieve Level 3). There's no WAY he would be putting his mouth over that dumbbell or feeling free to examine it with his prehensile lips if I was pushing it at him in any way. ANY time you impose yourself on an animal, the animal will react in a way you don't want.

"So instead of bite bite you're going to gradually get to bite bite"

That didn't appear on the list the way I wrote it. Let me try again.

So instead of bite.....bite you're going to gradually get to bite.....bite and then bite.....bite and finally bitebite

"If you have done your homework and the dog is REALLY in the game.....how long would you say "most" dogs would take in this particular step?"

Given all those ifs, a coupla days. A week. Two weeks if you weren't a dog trainer, maybe.

Again, look at the page with the llama retrieving. The other picture is my nephew Andrew, who knows NOTHING about dog training, and his Mini Long Dachsie Slinky. Slinky blew a disc in her back and is wearing a back brace I made for her to keep her from being paralyzed while her back was healing. Slinky also knows pretty much nothing, but Andrew wanted to keep her mind active while her body had to be quiet. This picture was taken on the FIFTH day of her retrieve training. He's taking his hand off the dumbbell for 3 seconds at a time at this point. I didn't have any Mini Dachsie sized dumbbells - the one she's holding is a very old Giant-sized scent hurdle racing dumbbell.

"So if the dog starts to mouth or chew or bounce it around in the mouth you immediately remove it sideways? You wait for THEM to find the

place in their mouth where the item should be? You don't help them with that by manipulating it a bit?"

There's a fine line there. Accept the idea that I'm going to let the dog find the place that makes the click happen, and then I'll acknowledge that I might move it gently into the right position once or twice if it wasn't going to interfere with the dog's understand of who's responsible for what.

Retrieve 3

"Any ideas on how else I may get a silly Siberian in the game for other retrieve skills, like picking up the thousands of pieces of paper towel tubes that she shreds when she's anxious?"

This is an opportunity to practise your "letting go" skills. You're still trying to rely on your Sibe's fetch drive to get the retrieve. TEACH the retrieve with the dog in the game, and she'll be picking up lint and dust bunnies for you.

Retrieve 4

"Do the "service dog" organizations no longer use this method, or did they ever?"

Oh yes, they certainly did - and do. After all, a reliable retrieve is important to a service dog, and you can't get a reliable retrieve without an ear pinch, right? SD organizations are sadly slow to change, although the Seeing Eye has produced one guide dog solely clicker trained.

"I have been a bit surprised to see so many service dogs wearing head halters these days. I would think that would not be necessary."

There's a huge cultural problem involved in that. Children used to be seen but not heard, soundly thrashed when heard, and basically treated like dirt. Then "we" decided to treat them like human beings, and so tossed out all thought of discipline or self-control. The same thing happened with dogs. Either we treat them "like dogs" with ear pinches and pinch collars and electric shocks, or we teach them no self-control at all. So when the SD organizations DO try to change, they simply stop using physical correction rather than taking the idea to logical conclusions. The dogs, having no one physically controlling them with corrections, then need head halters to control them. And then all the old trainers get to say "See, that clicker training is the road to DOOM."

The sad part is, without external control, and without self-control, they're right.

SA Principle of Laziness and the Hold

"How you click on the take but get them to understand they have to hold it for some length of time."

Perfectly normal step in the retrieving process - and a very frustrating one for the trainer. Here we are, clicking for the dog grabbing it, then just TRY to get the hold!

NON-USEFUL SUGGESTION: wait for a longer hold before you click (withhold the click). Most dogs at this point are giving you a 3/100000s of a second hold. Waiting for a longer hold might give you a 4/100000s of a second hold. Big whoop. Even if you had time to spot it, you don't have time to click it.

USEFUL SUGGESTION: Go for TWO grabs. That is, grab, click, treat. Grab, C, T. Grab, C, T. Then: Grab, nothing. Just sit there and pretend no grab happened at all. If the dog decides you aren't playing any more and wanders off, he isn't ready for a longer hold yet. If OTOH he gives you a "Hey, STUPID! I GRABBED it!" and grabs it again (that's twice, right!), ee hah, click, treat. So then you're looking at

Grab CT Grab CT Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grab Grab CT

Grabgrab CT

Notice how the grabs are getting closer together? Ailsby's Principle of Laziness states clearly that if you require two distinct grabs and only ever click the second one, the grabs will get closer together and less distinct. Pretty soon the dog says "Hey, this is a lot of hard work! Would you still click if I just put my mouth over the dumbbell and sat there THINKING about coming away and hitting it again?" and you agree that, hmmm, yeah, you could probably live with him just holding it in his mouth for a few seconds instead of the original two hits... ;*D

Shoe Zen (Retrieving Shoes)

" I have to put up every shoe in the house"

One of the best things about clicker training is that you're teaching the dog to pay attention to what is being rewarded RIGHT NOW.

So far you've taught him that retrieving stuff is rewarding. Now you have to teach him that retrieving unless asked - or retrieving shoes - or whatever you decide - is not what's being rewarded right now. What's now being rewarded is SHOE ZEN. Do NOT pick up shoes.

So, start from the beginning, teach him shoe zen just like hand zen. Don't forget to keep rewarding him from time to time.

Solid Hold: Retrieve

"Do I teach her to first hold it for an extended period clicking before she releases it bringing it up, not caring much about the munching then once she has hold, wait till she stops munching...it may take days, but when that happens click and treat?"

Since munching is so very rewarding (try holding a rubber band in your mouth for a couple of hours and not chewing it!), I would probably teach her to hold with something less giving - a largish rock, for example, or a paperback book - at any rate, something that isn't very munchable and without "give". Click for her teeth NOT moving on it. Remember, once you've clicked, she can let go of it.

I also approach it from the other direction - *I* hold the object, and teach her to come and put her mouth on it while I hold it, then click for BOTH of us holding it quietly, and move on to both of us holding it quietly for some time.

As she masters these two behaviours, move on to more munchable objects like socks, and finally to her toys. When you first give her a ball, though, I would make it one of those tennis balls with the rope attached, and I would start with me holding the rope and asking her to hold the ball, both of us together, and a quiet mouth. For this, I wouldn't move on to a reward of giving her the ball until she was VERY good at holding it, I would keep using food treats to reward the hold, so as to emphasize that her toy is her toy, and a fine toy it is, but when it gets near my hand, it suddenly becomes just another service behaviour.

Once she understands that, I would start rewarding her by tossing/dropping the ball so she can have a few chews before I asked for it back.

An easier fix that usually works is to reach for it in an extremely calm and quiet manner, a when a chomp happens, look disappointed and move your hands away from it. Keep encouraging her to give it to you, but don't put your hands near it until her mouth is quiet. In other words, tell her that giving you the ball is not part of the ball game, it is a service behaviour, and you physically can't get the ball when she is still playing the game. "Keep away" and "Final chomp" are wonderful games that most dogs love playing, even when they are perfectly willing to give you the toy. If you totally refuse to play, they will usually give up the game and hand over the toy with no trouble at all.

Once the dog understands that you will NOT play the game, you can tell her that you WILL play "Keep away" under your conditions - that is, you say when the game starts, and you say when the game stops. My cues for my dogs to play Keep away are me looking suspiciously at them out of the corner of my eye, lowering my head slightly, and declaring "You give me that, you bad dog!", after which we play around with me trying to snatch it and her dodging it just out of my reach. When *I* want to stop the game, I straighten up, lift my head, look at her full face, stop grabbing for it, hold my hand near my body and quietly give the service-retrieve cue, "Get that, please" or "Give it here".

Starting Retrieve

" Any thoughts on which is better. I can see that a better hold might result in the taking from hand but would be slower for the dog to want to grab onto it."

I use both. (mornings perhaps) I shape the dog to touch, push, mouth, grip, hold the dumbbell from my hand. This way I can be sure that she is taking the dumbbell correctly, holding it with a decent grip just behind the canines so she won't EVER start chewing it, and that she will hold it for any period of time until a click or a cue (Thank You) tells her to spit it out or give it to me.

(afternoons perhaps) I put the dumbbell on the floor and shape her to look at it, go toward it, put her head down, target it. This way I can be sure that she's going to be eagerly searching for the dumbbell no matter where it is on the floor. Before she's actually retrieving I can work on her touching it under chairs, very far away, hidden in the grass, etc, and I can work on any other objects (phone, socks, etc) also.

Sooner or later, these two skills will come together. Sort of, hey, as long as I'm here, I might as well pick it up! For Scuba, this happened at 11.5 weeks of age. I've had extremely good success with this method, have taught hundreds of dogs to retrieve, including baby puppies and very old dogs that were turned off the dumbbell ten years earlier. Scuba will retrieve anything, anywhere, anytime (she once brought me a broad jump). She can pick a credit card up off a lino floor without denting it, and she (40 lb dog) can pull 100 lbs attached to a rope (this is a volunteer behaviour. She once pulled a 100 lb Giant Schnauzer's "dead" weight 30 feet on grass). Other objects I usually leave to her discretion, but the dumbbell, being a competition behaviour, I insist she hold squarely directly behind the canines, and pull ropes she must grip back between her molars.

Teaching Retrieve of Coins

"Do they later, maybe, hold the coin way back in their mouth...and maybe swallow it?"

I generally ask for the coin fairly quickly, and since the dog will have to figure out how to get the coin OUT of her mouth soon after picking it up, she learns to hold it on the front of her tongue so she can spit it carefully into my hand. I've had several people yell at me about putting the "poor innocent dog" in danger by asking her to pick up something she is OBVIOUSLY going to swallow (and no doubt die from).

OTOH, considering the things my dogs normally swallow (trees, rocks, duck and cat poop, socks, bits of teatowel, squeakies, etc etc), I never considered a penny to be too much of a danger. Scuba picked up coins for 9 years before she finally swallowed one - and from the look on her face, I'd say she was more shocked about it than I was (Geez, WHAT was I THINKING? I can't believe I did that!) and certainly hasn't done it since. She's also still alive, 2 years later, in spite of the doomsayers.

Teaching the Llama Retrieve

Pursuant to my two posts about retrieving that Debi reposted (thanks, Deb), I spent today at a farm fair with my llamas. Standing in a pen all day talking to people about llamas and keeping the llamas amused, I happened to find an old dumbbell in my pocket, along with an apron full of oats. I started teaching a gelding that I've had for 3 weeks. His name is Cass. I spent the first couple of weeks I had him teaching him to respect my personal space and practising Zen so I wouldn't have a 300 lbs llama sitting on me digging oats out of my pocket.

So today I started by teaching him to touch my hand. Then to touch the dumbbell. Then two touches on the dumbbell, then I waited for touches only on the bar. Then two touches on the bar. Finally I started waiting for more interaction. Llamas are pretty cool because they have

prehensile lips, so when bopping the dumbbell didn't work any more, he started lipping it - left lip, right lip, both lips. Then I waited for him to get it in between his bottom teeth and upper gum.

We hit a bit of a snag when I rewarded him several times for nipping the bar and sliding off it. We got past that - I withheld the voice click for some time while he nipped and nibbled, finally he got it in his mouth for a second and I rewarded that and we went on with training from there.

In total today we worked about 45 minutes in three different sessions. We got from no idea at all about clicker training other than Zen to about a 3-second hold on the dumbbell. He'll give me the same 3-second hold whether I hold the DB right in front of his face, down low, up high, left or right - anywhere he can reach that doesn't require him to take a step.

Tomorrow I'll go for a longer hold and quieter mouth in some sessions and moving his feet to take it from different positions in others. I don't think he'll be picking it up off the ground tomorrow, but he'll be getting close, and he'll be holding it for maybe 10 seconds without mouthing it, and whether I'm holding it as well or not.

And, truth be told, not many people would consider llamas to be natural retrievers!

Teaching the Retrieve

"I'm looking for other ways to encourage him to pick up items."

Why? He's telling you very clearly that he doesn't understand that he can do anything with an object except chase it. You KNOW that if he can't do anything but chase it, you're going to have serious problems later. Is a play retrieve good enough for a credit card? Credit cards

don't work well with tooth marks in them. Do you have to throw a wheelchair before he'll retrieve it?

My point is that when a dog tells me he "can't" figure out how to do something, this doesn't tell me I need to ignore it. It tells me I have to work harder to help him figure out how to do it. He "can't" touch an object? Then he can touch my hand. He can get excited about touching my hand. He can dream about touching my hand. Then he can touch my hand wearing a mitt. Then he can touch the mitt without me wearing it. Then he can touch a dinner plate. Then he can touch a dumbbell. Then he can touch a credit card.

My other point is that I don't WANT to encourage him to pick things up. I want to teach him exactly how I want him to hold things, then how I want him to pick them up. What I want him to do with them after he's holding them. I want him to know that he can hold them quietly and calmly WITH me - all of this long before I ever trust him to have something in his mouth without me holding it as well. That way, I have complete control over what he's learning about how, when, where, and what to hold, and what to do with it when he's done. I need him to hold credit cards in his lips, dimes in his incisors, dumbbells behind his canines, and ropes in his molars. I need him to hold lightly, securely, strongly. I need him to release on cue. All these things need to be TAUGHT, and you can't teach them if you're trying to use a play retrieve to teach the retrieve.

The Click Ends the Behavior.... Retold

"I click for the calm hold and he immediately drops the dumbbell so he can eat his reward."

What did the click say? It said "Thank you, you have brilliantly performed the behaviour I was looking for. Thank you!"

IOW, the click ends the behaviour. I know this drives early crossover trainers absolutely insane, but consider if I hired you to work from tomorrow until 4 PM Sunday, then I will pay you whatever price we agreed on. Then at 4 PM Sunday, I say, yeah, well, thanks for working so hard, but I really need you to work until Monday afternoon. No increase in pay. On Monday, BTW, I need you to work until Tuesday...

The click ends the behaviour.

This is, in fact, one of the true glories of clicker training. My dog likes to kick the dumbbell - no problem, I click her for approaching it with her mouth in front of her feet. My dog doesn't carry it firmly - no problem, I click her for a firm hold. My dog throws it at my feet instead of holding it until I ask for it - no problem, I simply don't pay for that behaviour. The click marks whatever behaviour you are paying for at that second. If your dog is doing a brilliant calm hold, why would you want to withhold reinforcement until after he (what?) sits? Drops it? Drops it and you managed to catch it? Gives you a crooked front? Breaking behaviour down into tiny increments means rewarding tiny increments. Then you start putting several tiny increments together in order for him to earn the click. THIS time I want him to approach the dumbbell, pick up the dumbbell, hold the dumbbell, come back to me, put it in my hand **CLICK!** OR *this* time I want to tell him that I **REALLY** want him to turn back toward me with the DB, not head off under the table, so approach, pick up, hold, turn back toward me **CLICK!**

The click ends the behaviour.

The click ends the behaviour.

The click ENDS the behaviour.

Training the Retrieve

NOTE: DB refers to dumbbell.

"This will pose a problem for me because of my physical inability to lean over without holding on with my other arm - which must be poised on the clicker."

Remember the clicker is just a gadget. You can use a voice click or word if you have to. Or use an iClick or cut down clicker that you can click with your foot or knee. Clicker training was MADE to be adaptive!

Rather than you having to bend over, reach out, how about having the dog up on something? Table training - chair training, mat training - is an absolutely necessary behaviour once you've had a dog that can get on things and stay on them. Would it make the whole thing simpler if the dog was lying down on a table with his mouth at the level of your hand?

OR you could put the DB in your lap and teach the dog to rest his chin on your lap, then to rest his chin on your lap while holding the DB, letting your lap serve the same purpose as your hand.

OR you could hold the DB with a pair of kitchen tongs or something.

OR you could temporarily replace the DB with a dowel of a comfortable length so you and the dog could both hold it without you having to bend or reach.

OR you could forget about the you-both-hold-it part altogether and just shape the whole thing from the beginning (but I'd call that the least useful suggestion).

OR you could hold the DB between your feet instead of in your hands.

Maybe none of these suggestions are reasonable for you, but take the ideas and see what you can come up with.

"chew on it like a toy if I futz getting her clicked"

This is a problem not confined to those of us with disabilities. I don't think I've ever met anybody who had never started a training session before they were ready to train. CLICK - uh oh - where's my treats? YEAH - uh oh, where's my clicker? Wait, wait, don't start yet, I'm not watching!

So the dog winds up either doing four things right and then giving up on that behaviour because it doesn't pay off (this would be my own major failing, Scuba is always ready to train ten minutes before my brain arrives in the room), or doing something you really don't want like chewing on the DB.

Suggestions: be very sure you have all YOUR toys and are ready to start the session before you ever bring the DB out in front of the dog. You don't have to click, you can say YES! instead if the clicker's getting fumbled. And the bottom line - if she's using it as a toy, she NEVER gets possession of it again until she understands the job she has to do with it. In fact, if you're having trouble with this, and you're training a service dog, not a competition obedience dog, I'd get rid of the DB altogether, as she already knows things about it you don't want her to know, and train with other things. A toy cellphone, for instance.

This reminds me of the day Scuba REALLY learned to be gentle with things she's retrieving. We were in San Diego, introducing a litter of Portuguese Water Dog pups to the water in a swimming pool. A mostly-empty can of squeeze cheese fell into the pool and drifted out

into the middle. When the pups were done, I asked Scuba to go out and get the can. She jumped in, swam over and grabbed it - and put a tooth into it. The can had no cheese left in it, but PLENTY of fizz left. It attacked her and then sat in the middle of the pool, spinning around and swearing at her for several minutes. When it was finally quiet, I asked her to get it again. The look she gave me was priceless, but she went out and retrieved it for me. Man, those things are thinner than paper!

Voluntary Retrieve

"They should ask for a drop it, reward lavishly, and then give the object back"

Portuguese Water Dogs invented this game! They are constantly bringing me things. About 80% are bits of crumpled paper, dog toys, rocks, twigs - appropriate things. These I take, intone "Oh! This is a chewed-up receipt from McDonald's from last week! You must be SO PROUD to have found it!" while the dog sits looking at me very seriously. Then I hand it back, and she takes it with an enormous SWOOP of jaws, and walks away with it, totally satisfied. When she brings me something inappropriate (a crystal glass, her class graduation certificate, a sock), I admire it, thank her, put it away, and then praise the dickens out of her and hand her something different.

The Retrieve

When I started training dogs, training retrieving relied totally on the dog having a Fetch - a built-in desire to pick things up and bring them back to the trainer. About half the dogs I trained as a kid during that time DID Fetch, and got their CDX or UD titles. The half did NOT

Fetch, so never got beyond CD, and that was pretty much par for the course.

Then we moved on to the ear pinch - a way to force a dog to retrieve whether she wanted to or not. At that point, maybe 80% of the dogs I trained went on to CDX or UD. The others, though, had all kinds of strange problems. Some refused to let go of the dumbbell once they had it in their mouths. Some started biting ME when I reached for their heads. Some gritted their teeth and refused to even LOOK at a dumbbell.

And almost ALL dog, in those days, had problems that we had to just shrug over, and put up with. I used to take four dumbbells to trials because several of my Giant Schnauzers could and did bite dumbbells into three pieces in the ring. Some "just" chewed them gradually to bits. Some kicked them a couple of times, so they could hunt them down before they picked them up. Some carried them by the bell instead of the bar. Many people taught their dogs to drop the dumbbell when the trainer reached for it.

What an improvement today! We can explain very clearly not only WHAT we want the dog to retrieve, and WHEN, but very precisely HOW. We can teach them how to correctly pick up a dumbbell, how to pick up credit cards, coins, eyeglasses, hot dogs. My dogs not only herd sheep, but hand me back my crook when I drop it, help me pole-set in agility, take off my socks and shoes, and toss garbage in the garbage can, cans in the recycling bin, and laundry in the washing machine.

I've been told by many people that "you can't get a reliable retrieve without an ear pinch". Hogwash. I'll put my dogs' retrieves up against any dog's, anywhere, any time.

Aside from the obvious base behaviours like paying attention, sit, come, etc., it looks like I start retrieving in Level 3, but that's not true. In fact, I start retrieving in Level 1, with the Target exercise.

First we get the dog to touch your hand. Then we get him to touch a bunch of other things. That's L1 and L2. Then, in Level 3, we start

shaping her to open her mouth on something. This doesn't have to be a dumbbell - in fact, it probably shouldn't be. A pen or pencil is a good start, or a piece of dowel, or the handle of a mixing spoon, or anything similar. She should be sitting when you start this - sitting helps anchor her head where you can reach it.

If the dog's in the game, excited about touching the pen, sooner or later she's going to give you a little more than she was before. She's going to bump it with her incisors, or fold her lips over it a bit as she bumps it. Scuba is a very literal dog, and, being clicked for bumping, steadfastly kept bumping - bumping harder, bumping up, bumping down - but never let the inside of her mouth touch the pen, so I finally smeared a little peanut butter on the pen and then clicked when her tongue touched it. After that, she was more than willing to open her mouth on it.

Do NOT put the pen in the dog's mouth. This all comes from HER. You hold the pen no more than a quarter inch in front of her mouth. SHE opens her mouth and moves her head forward to get it in her mouth. If you start pushing it into her mouth, she will start pulling back. Once again, a case of you doing the work so the dog doesn't.

Having gotten the dog to the point of making the click happen by putting her mouth over the pen, you have a problem. When you click, the dog naturally whips her mouth off the pen to get the treat. If you DON'T click, she's already bitten the pen and come off, expecting the click. How do you get from this to her holding the pen?

I've heard instructors say "wait for a longer hold". Well, that's not going to happen, and if it did, it would be so slightly longer that you wouldn't notice it in time to click anyway.

The answer is to wait for two bites. She bites the pen, you do nothing, she glares at you, heaves a figurative sigh, and shouts "HEY, STUPID! I BIT THE PEN!" and just to be sure you saw it, she does it again. Now (ta da) you have TWO bites for one click. I call this the Hey Stupid Reaction, and it's absolutely necessary to any shaping endeavour. You want the dog get a little bit frustrated with your refusal

to click for a perfectly good behaviour. If she's frustrated enough to try it again in case you missed it, but not frustrated enough to walk away from the game, she's going to try a bit harder next time.

Now you've got two distinct bites for one click. Ailsby's Law Of Laziness says that if a dog has to give you two distinct behaviours to get one click, the time between and effort into the two behaviours will get less and less. So instead of bite bite you're going to gradually get to bite bite and then to bite bite and finally to bite bite And bite bite, people, is a hold. You've now eliminated the take-you- mouth-off-the-pen-between-bites behaviour.

And here's my biggest secret of getting a good retrieve. **YOU DO NOT LET GO OF THE PEN WHEN THE DOG HOLDS IT.**

You're a dog person. You wouldn't leave a baby puppy loose in your house all day. You wouldn't take your puppy on a walk on a busy street without a leash. Do not, for Heaven's sake, let go of the pen just because your dog is holding it.

The dog doesn't get single control over the pen until you absolutely, totally trust that she's going to hold it correctly and consistently for however long you're asking her to. Even then, you start releasing it by just momentarily taking your hand off it, then holding it with her again.

Everything she needs to know about how to hold the pen she's going to learn from you with your hand on the pen.

If she holds an object like a pen or a dumbbell tight up behind her canines, she'll be able to hold it comfortably. If she tosses it back onto her molars, she WILL chew it. Try holding a rubber band in your molars for an hour without chewing it. Can't be done. Chewing is for toys, NOT for retrieve articles. The reason I wanted you to start with a pen or dowel is that if she tries to toss it back between her molars, you can simply slide it out of her mouth, wait a couple of seconds, and start again.

When she graduates to credit cards, you have two choices. She can either hold them in her lips, or very, very gently between her canines. Credit cards with puncture marks don't work very well. Paper and books get held gently between the canines or incisors. Coins in the incisors. The knowledge of how to hold these things doesn't come naturally. You teach it to her **WITH YOUR HAND ON THE OBJECT ALL THE TIME.**

So far there's no cue. Presentation of the object to the dog triggers her make-the-click-happen behaviour. 300-Peck the time she can hold the object. Before you start counting, she's got to be holding it quietly, and holding it in the correct position in her mouth. No mouthing, munching, teeth-chattering.

PART TWO: as a totally separate behaviour from the hold. Put the object on the floor and shape the dog to target it with her muzzle. Still no cue.

PART THREE: back to her taking and holding it. When she's eager to take it and competent at holding it, you can start asking her to move to get it. Begin asking her to move her head and neck - hold the pen to the right of her head, to the left, up a bit above her nose, down a bit below it. When she's really good at reaching for it, hold it in front of her so she has to stretch forward to get it, then to stand up to get it.

Now think of how far she can go to get it **WHILE YOU STILL HAVE TOTAL CONTROL OF IT.** Dog on your left in heel position. Pen in your right hand. Show it to her. She takes a step toward it to get it, but you start slowly pivoting to your right. As you turn, the pen "escapes" from her and she has to go further and further around you to get to it. Once you slow down enough for her to put her mouth on it, you might click, or you might let go of it for a **SECOND**, take a step backwards, and have her come a step forward into front position to hand it to you.

PART FOUR At this point, she's holding it correctly, she's holding it for at least 3 or 4 second at a time with you, you can take your hand off it and put your hand back on it and she continues to hold it in a quiet mouth. Now you can switch to a dumbbell, which is a lot easier to pick

up off the ground than the pen is. Put the dumbbell on the ground and shape her to go to it and touch it as you did with the pen.

PART FIVE You've now practised the take, the hold, the going-to-it, the bringing- it-back. The only thing you're missing is the picking-it-up, and that's about to happen. Sooner or later, if you hold off on your click for a moment, as the dog reaches to target the dumbbell, she's going to make a "mistake" and pick it up. Or, to look at it from another POV, she's going to think "OK, I get clicked for targeting it, but I get a LOT of clicks for holding it, so as long as I'm here, I might as well pick it up". And of course once she picks it up, she knows what to do with it - bring it to you so you can both hold it, because that gets the click. Wow, did you get this far? Questions?

"My guts tell me that the separate floor targeting should start at least a bit after the taking and holding part. Not sure, however, that that is what you would do."

That's a great question, and I can't believe you read through that whole post so fast!

For the first couple of weeks I have no intention of letting the dog get to the pen on the floor. I want to shape her to the point where's she's **DESPERATE** to get to it, but the click keeps interrupting her. If she starts ignoring the click to grab the pen anyway, yes, I'm going to stop playing the floor-target game until the hold part catches up. I do **NOT** want her picking up the pen until she's qualified to do so.

I could also strengthen the go-to behaviour by shaping her to go to different things - the pen one day, a Kleenex box the next, a plastic glass, a shoe, a purse.

Or, do it the easy way, and don't start shaping the floor targeting until she's almost qualified to hold the pen. Gee, who thought of that?

Retrieving Metal

When I'm training a retrieve, I try to train every possible type of object - metal, wood, plastic, cloth, leather, large, small, light, heavy, bulky, tiny.

When I have a problem with something, such as a dog not wanting to pick up metal, I'd first take "pick up metal" totally out of context. That is, NO scent discrimination, NO fronts, NO recall, NO finish, NO distance, etc. Then, without fuss, I put the problem right in front of meals. The five minutes before every meal is gold training time. I'd teach the dog to pick up a spoon. Maybe the spoon needs to have a bit of tape wrapped around it at first. I'd get as much of "pick up spoon" as I could get, then plunk down breakfast. Get as much of it as I could get, then plunk down supper. Etc. Once she mastered the spoon, I'd move on to her dish. I like the little stainless steel buckets, they are a nice size for most breeds, and you can prop the handle up with a bit of tape until they are really eager to pick it up (once they're eager, they'll pretty much drop-kick the bucket across the room to get the handle in an accessible spot). One of my dogs gets the dog dishes out of their wicker basket at meal times, and the other puts them back in the basket after the meal. (That's fair - one kid sets the table and the other kid clears). IME, once the dog has equated picking up metal with mealtimes, you've got it made.

Retrieving

No matter what I said 8*) add a cue for a behaviour when you have the behaviour the way you want it to be forever, and stop using it immediately when you're not getting what you want, or if you start asking for more behaviour.

The Idea of Training

As part of management, before you get to the actual trained retrieve, just start building in the idea of trading. No matter WHAT the dog has, you'll trade it for something just as good, or usually better, whether you want the thing he has or not. So if Stitch is walking through the living room with a ball in her mouth, I'll offer her a bit of my sandwich. She drops the ball, gets the sammich bit, I pick up the ball and admire it (wow, you had a ball! You must be SO PROUD!) and then I hand the ball back to her. Once in a while, of course, I don't give her back the object (credit card, crystal goblet, package of sutures, knife), but usually she gets to have BOTH the thing she had AND the new treat. This develops into a marvellous game. You can always tell where I've been sitting in the house because that chair is surrounded by single socks, notebooks, crochet hooks, dog toys, magazines, a computer bag (I'm just looking around my chair now), nail clippers, slicker brush, a pen on a carabiner, a cloth grocery bag, a collar and leash, a watering can...

The Retrieve and Credit Cards

I'm quite sure that Scuba would love to toss a credit card around, and I'm sure credit cards would make very satisfactory chew toys (for a minute at least), but the fact is that I need Scuba to pick up and hand me a credit card very, very gently (credit cards don't work very well with tooth dents in them!). She's never been allowed to play with credit cards, to learn how much fun they are to dent, or how far they'll fly if she throws them. Until she knew so much about credit cards that there was virtually no danger of her ever learning these things, she was never in "charge" of the card (having said that, I can picture Scuba running down the aisles at PetSmart with my credit card, a happy gang of clerks behind her picking up everything she flicked her tail at! I'm pretty sure she knows my PIN number.)²

Teaching the Dog to Retrieve

MAKE THE CONTRACT

What the dog wants - hot dog? Cheerios? What you want - first, touch the dumbbell, then touch it harder, then open mouth on it, then pick it up, then bring it back (simplified version ;-), there are LOTS more steps) **GET THE BEHAVIOUR**

Wait for it - try just holding the dumbbell with one hand, c/t if the dog touches it.

Shape it - hold the dumbbell with one hand, c/t if the dog glances at it, or moves slightly closer to it. Work this up until he's touching it rather hard. I usually do the dumbbell-in-hand work in the morning, and in the evening I put the dumbbell on the floor and shape the dog to go and touch it there. By the time you have the dog actively bumping the db, many of them will simply open their mouths on it.

Lure it - my PWD pup didn't think of opening her mouth, so after several days of trying, wherein she bumped it VERY hard, pulled it down with her chin, pushed it up with her nose, batted it sideways, etc, I finally put a bit of squeez cheez on the bar, and clicked when her tongue touched the bar. An electrifying moment! She stopped dead, looked up at me with her tongue still stuck on the bar, then joyfully grabbed the dumbbell out of my hand. That was all the hint she needed.

CLICK WHAT YOU WANTED

Click and treat at each stage. Don't worry that you're clicking for the next step, which might be, for instance, actually cradling the dumbbell in the mouth on their own for a second, and the click causes the dog to spit out the db - the click is SUPPOSED to end the behaviour!

DELIVER THE TREAT

After the click. Let the click take the photo of the good behaviour, then give the treat.

WAIT FOR HIM TO OFFER IT TO YOU

When you can hold the db out, or put it on the ground, and the dog runs over and deliberately picks it up, knowing full well that he's about to earn a click, you can start to forget about the ear pinch, OK ;-)?

ADD THE CUE

When you've got the dog offering you the retrieve, you can start predicting it by softly saying "Take it" when he's picking it up. It's not a command here, it's a prediction: "I bet he's going to... 'take it!'" When he's heard the words "take it" a hundred times, he'll **ONLY** have heard them when he's actually performing the task, **NEVER** when he's not going. That way you don't fall into the "Take it! Take it! Take it!" rut. Eventually, when he's heard it and done it many, many, many times, you can try to suggest it when he's not already thinking of it. If he immediately starts looking for a dumbbell, and brings it back very proud of himself, you were right! If he fails to retrieve, the failure is yours - you asked him too soon. Practise predicting some more.

ASK FOR MORE

More retrieves, more objects, more distance, more energy - with tougher distractions ("but there's a **DOG** out there!").

ASK FOR LESS

Ask for less whenever you change anything about what he knows - what to retrieve, when to retrieve, how far to come.

Ask for less and teach him how to do it all over again. Each new thing he learns will be faster.

SCENTING

A Different Approach to Scenting

"Does the person who has touched the other item need to be someone not well known to the dog?"

Not necessarily, but it makes a cleaner explanation in the beginning if you can manage it. I had a student who was a piano teacher. She got all HER students to scent her articles while they were waiting for a lesson.

Scenting Questions

"I thought I'll try with three unscented objects just to show him "please sniff all of these, one after another". And he'll get C&T for sniffing and checking. Later, he'll get three scented objets, so he can train indicating."

Hi everybody - I've been out of town and out of town, and out of town - just went to my first dog show in YEARS.

ACK NO. DO NOT CLICK THE DOG FOR SNIFFING THE ARTICLES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We don't have to teach the dog to smell our scent any more than we have to teach a kid to see a turquoise balloon in a pile of red ones. What we DO have to do is let the dog know that WE WANT HIM TO FIND THE ONE WE TOUCHED.

When you want a dog to go around a pole, you do NOT first teach him to touch the pole. Do that, and he's stuck touching the pole and won't think of going around it.

When you want a dog to find your article, you do NOT first click him for interacting in ANY way with ALL the articles. OK, there's balloons. What do I do with them? Pop them? Bounce them? Kick them? See? "THEM" is the problem. We're not looking for THEM, we're looking for IT.

Let's go back to the beginning here.

ONE article - dumbbell, pencil, plate, whatever.

Rub your hands on this ONE article, and smear some peanut butter, soft cheez, liverwurst or something on it as well. Send the dog out to "find" it. When she finds it, she is AUTOMATICALLY rewarded for finding it because there's PB on it, right? She licks off the PB.

Repeat ten times.

Now get SOMEONE ELSE (or use a pair of tongs - do NOT in ANY WAY touch the second article yourself) to put out a second, "clean" article. Rub the first one again, and put more PB on it. Send the dog. Dog finds the right one, and is automatically rewarded by licking the PB.

Repeat eight times. The ninth time, do everything exactly the same except do NOT replenish the PB. Dog goes out, finds the correct article, noses around looking for the PB, you praise, call her back and tell her what a great job she did.

The tenth time, replenish the PB again.

Add another clean article. Eight more times, the ninth time, no new PB, the tenth time more PB.

Add another clean article. etc.

When you get up to maybe 5 articles and no mistakes, start working 4 times with PB, once without, 4 more times with, once without.

When that's going well, 3 times with PB, twice without, 3 times with, twice without. And so on.

Scent Articles

"What I want is some "found object""

OK, here goes (101 things to use for scent articles):

pens (find MY pen)

pencils

pop cans (what's your favourite brand?)

pop bottles

plastic glasses (bring me the yellow glass)

plastic drink cups (7-11)

plastic spoons

metal spoons

little plastic dishes (take everybody back their own dish)

socks

scarves

mitts

hats

AOL CDs

dead cell phones

dead TV remotes

small Glad containers

empty plastic salad dressing bottles

old pocketbooks (oops - Americans, that's a "paperback")

plastic clothes hangers

dish towels

facecloths

big baby-size Lego blocks
toy toss-rings
old naked Barbie dolls
little plastic plant pots
cut-up bits of garden hose
cardboard jewelry boxes
sets of old keys on rings
old plastic dishsoap bottles
barrettes
any of the hundreds of carved wooden crafty things you can find
in craft stores
Alphabet blocks (this makes a GREAT trick - can he spell CAT?)
rocks
plastic film canisters
leashes

hmmmm - that's all I can see from the couch...

Scent Discrimination Training

"Sue, sorry to belabor a point, but it's hard for me to understand a process without watching it. My timing with WHAT has to be exquisite ..."

OK, for a dog that likes to retrieve, you start with pb on one article. You send the dog out, she finds the pb, licks it off, she's had her reinforcer, great, by the way, long as you're still there, how about bringing back the db and save me the trouble? So you do this a bunch of times, she gets reinforced for finding the pb, and she's bringing back the correct one and getting another c/t for bringing it back.

Of course, with dogs who can't stop retrieving long enough to lick the pb off, I'd have somebody else hold the db and not let it go until she has licked all the pb off it - in which case you might even consider

NOT letting her retrieve it until she's more focussed on the pb, let alone not rewarding her for bringing it back.

OK, back to the plain happy retriever. Now she knows she can get a c/t for bringing it back, AND a reinforcer for finding it. So you put out a "wrong" db with your pb one. She goes out, finds the right one, licks the pb off, starts to lift her head, you command TAKE IT, she reaches down and picks up the WRONG one. Smack yourself upside the head, you told her to take the wrong one and she did. Try again:

She licks the pb off and on her third last lick, you SUGGEST that she bring it back, she takes her two remaining licks and picks up the right db and brings it back, c/t. Super job.

Can you make your timing more exact? Can you suggest the retrieve when she is on her LAST lick? But ALWAYS before she has swung her head away from the correct db. If you cue a retrieve when she has removed herself from the right db, you will get ANY retrieve, which is what you asked for. In which case, Least Reinforcing answer on your part is to simply take the db away from her, replenish the pb, and send her back. See if you can cue the retrieve while she's in the right position this time.

Scenting and the Tie Down Mat

"Do you ever use the tie-down mat?"

Not any more, no. The tie-down mat prevents (sometimes) the dog from RETRIEVING the incorrect article. It doesn't teach him how to FIND the RIGHT article. Think of all the mistakes dogs have made on the tie-down mat - they retrieve the whole mat. They pick the one with the string around it. They grab the first one they come to. They start poking them to see which one moves - the tie-down mat doesn't

explain clearly enough that it is the SCENT we are looking for. After all, we are scintily blind

They haven't got no noses. They haven't got no noses. Goodness only knowses The noselessness of Man. (Ogden Nash, I think)

and have NEVER used scent to point out anything to the dog before, why should he think we are starting now? It's like living in a world of people who only see in black and white, and then suddenly they start asking you (in a foreign language) to get them the blue dish. HUH?

Using the pb or cheese on the article a) short-circuits the retrieve so they have time to think, b) clearly kicks in the smelling and kicks OUT the seeing, c) removes any frustration the handler might have over the dog doing other weird things (in fact, people watching their dogs learning to scent this way frequently have teary-eyed moments over it, it is so cool), d) removes pretty much any possibility of the dog doing anything "wrong", and e) breaks the whole exercise down further than the mat does - the mat says, right from scratch, "find the article that I scented and bring it back to me". After all, how do you tell if the dog found it if he doesn't bring it back? This way, OTOH, you can teach baby puppies to do scent articles, because you KNOW they found it when they start licking the pb off it. This way breaks it down to the basic necessity - just find the one I want you to find, by scent.

Scenting Conversation

"I'm so excited I just have to share. Shy did her first set of "big girl" articles tonight. I put out 4 each of metal and leather, and planned to have her find one each before dinner. I put the leather out first. She went nearly straight to it, slightly glancing at the others she passed on the way, but obviously was targeting the right one from the get go. She picked it up (not very nicely, but that wasn't today's lesson) and brought it right back to me. I started whooping and hollaring and telling her how brilliant she

is, and in a moment of brilliance myself figured this was a good place to stop, so jackpotted with her dinner. :)

*What I don't understand is why she nearly always goes straight to the right article, targeting it from the time she leaves me, yet most dogs work them in a pattern, or sniff randomly over and over. I know she can smell it before she gets there (I've heard Sue's stories about scent hurdling) so why is she so much more direct than most dogs? I'm not complaining :)
I'm just confused."*

"Why is she so much more direct than most dogs?"

Bitch, nag, whine - jeez, Hope! Why? because you explained clearly what you want. Think of scenting as the dog's equivalent of you searching for a colour chip in a paint store. If early on you're given a choice of the correct red chip, a blue chip, a green chip, and a yellow chip, you'll probably figure out fairly quickly that you're looking for the red chip. If early on you're given a choice of the correct red chip, an orangy red chip, a purplish red chip, a pinkish red chip, and a slightly-wrong red chip, you'll start looking for other indications of which one is the correct one, and you'll probably want to check your choice several times before making a commitment.

"why is she so much more direct than most dogs?"

Why? because you explained clearly what you want.

"Well, this sort of makes sense, but not exactly. I am not a very good trainer. I'm pretty sure I haven't really truly explained what we're doing. I think Shy at this point is just appearing to know what her job is. :) She is a brilliant dog, and she is an honest, excellent little tracking dog, so she does understand finding things that smell like me. I also think that with compromised hearing and vision she uses her nose more than an average dog

*But that said, I've watched LOTS of utility teams, OTCh teams right down to novice A dogs, and they all search the pile. I have trouble believing that *I* have somehow taught my dog better than them. :) An awful lot of people in my area use Janice DeMello's "Around the Clock" method, so perhaps that's it? They've taught their dog to check everything rather than just find the stinky one and bring it back?*

I will admit that I've seen a lot of dogs stress over articles because they've been trained to be uncertain - like the poor golden in Nellie's class who was told she was wrong, only to be told that "oh sorry, my bad, that was the right one". The next week she was very tentative. :(

I just find Shy's behavior a bit odd and unusual compared to what I'm used to seeing. And struggling to believe it could possibly be this easy. (Haven't hit my Easy Button yet!). :) Gosh, haven't you heard that articles are the hardest thing to teach? :) "

"Gosh, haven't you heard that articles are the hardest thing to teach?"

Sure, and seen the results of people "knowing" this. You're falling into the same trap, you're just not screwing your dog up because of it! When we teach Heeling, we don't teach the dog to walk, we only teach him WHERE to walk. When teaching Scenting, we don't actually teach the dog much about scenting, we only teach her what to look for and what to do about it when she finds it.

Maybe your dog is an artist and the difference between clear red and red-orange is imbedded in her soul. And just because you're "not a very good trainer" (which hasn't been my experience) doesn't mean you didn't clearly allow your dog to learn the easy way of scenting. Let's take this back to colours - if, for instance, you had a nice bright white light on while she was learning, it was easy for her to see the colours. If everyone else is teaching in a large training hall with dim fluorescent lights, perhaps it's very difficult for the dogs to see the correct colours. And you're right, if "they" spend a lot of time teaching the dog to circle the articles and meticulously check each one before picking the right one, that's what the dogs will do.

And one more point - if you have the wrong articles scented by someone else, you take the whole discussion from red-orange and purple-red to GREEN and BLUE and YELLOW and ****RED!!****, and how hard is that?

What I'm trying to say is that laboriously sniffing the whole pile, IMO, is an aberration, a result of being TAUGHT to sniff the whole pile, or of being put in a position where the dog wasn't clearly shown (or didn't clearly understand) what was asked of him.

"Wow, the light bulb just went on! So there is no need to worry if they don't sniff all the articles, and they are not just getting lucky each time..

Now, it is finally clear why Sue's way of teaching articles is so easy for the dog."

Hope is right, most dogs I see sniff the entire pile.. I thought they needed to do that, but of course- they have all been taught to do that.. and Sue is right - they don't need to! I can throw a stick in the forest, have it land among 20 other sticks/ branches etc on the ground and my dog runs right to it, picks up the right one.. no need to sniff them all. (I don't throw sticks anymore after he hurt himself with one...)

"I'm going to relax more about teaching articles ..I have to laugh it all seems so easy now."

"At the OH seminar you made a comment about dogs new to scenting being very unpolished about it. That a dog sniffing all over in an unrefined behavior isn't a dog working well, it's a dog that doesn't know its job yet. You will need to restate this for me as I'm sure I just misquoted you. The comment made me think about Shy. I was initially shocked she's such a lovely tracker as she's not the dog that goes out sniffing all over the yard, etc. Yet she knows every scent out there, she just doesn't make a display of checking them out. So she's using a mature scenting technique whereas the pupster, who is still busy snuffling

around, hasn't learned not to waste energy. :) Appearances can be deceiving on this, can't they?"

Also consider that air scenting (which is what your dog is doing) IS a perfectly natural way to do the job.

"Ah, I hadn't thought about that. Yes she will air scent. I know we're in for a good track when she's already picked it up and is working before we even get to the edge of the field. Gives me goosebumps."

If your dog was ball crazy and you threw HIS tennis ball in a field with ten other dogs and their tennies, do you think, he'd check each one before picking up his?

"Um, my dogs would shove ALL the tennis balls in their mouths to bring back. :) And if they didn't all fit they might nudge one or two along with their paws. And if it's Nellie the Toy Nazi Golden she'd be to the balls before all the other dogs! :::sigh::: I know, it's not a bug, it's a feature!"

Another Question on the Topic

"Hello ... I have a question about this. If I recall, Sue stated that it was sufficient to simply have anyone else handle all articles when an exercise was over. That there is no need for elaborate efforts to help our dogs find "mine" Is this correct?" Hal

There's no need for elaborate efforts to "clean" the articles. Having someone else handle the articles puts their scent over yours, so the dog is choosing "Ick, ick, ick, ick, MOMMY!" - like "blue-green, green-green, yellow-green, RED!" I think a lot of the problem with teaching scenting is that people are asking a beginner dog to choose between the

dumbbell you scented a minute ago, the one you touched yesterday when you had chili for supper, the one from the day before that when you bought the new shoes, and the four that were in the bag in your car when you brought home the pizza. Having a stranger scent all of them makes it incredibly easy to tell what you want.

Scenting

"Can we go over the steps for teaching the scenting"

I really don't like to use the clicker for teaching scenting. The problem, as I see it, is that the dog knows so much about scenting, and we know so little, that we have zero idea what we're actually clicking. AND you don't want to get into the habit of indicating when the dog is right, as, again, you have no idea what you're indicating. AND I don't want to reward the dog for bringing back the article rather than for finding it, because FINDING it is the point AND because why shouldn't he just bring back an article expecting a reward? The reward, in this case, is too far from the FIND. Conundrum.

Solved by:

Put a little bit of peanut butter or Cheez Whiz on ONE article with your scent. Show it to the dog. Dog finds pb, licks it off. Replenish it, let dog go find it, lick it off. Repeat X 10. Put the article in this position and that position, turn the pb underneath so he can't see it as he comes to it. When dog is really excited about getting out to lick the pb off the article, put a second article out WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S SCENT ON IT and replenish your scent and the pb on the first article. Put them very close together.

Note that I haven't mentioned retrieving yet. I want to take this away from being a retrieve exercise, at least in the beginning. That's lumping. If he licks the pb, he was rewarded for finding it. Retrieve is not

important. If he happens to bring it back, give him a kibble in exchange for it, but retrieving was not the point. Finding the pb was the point.

Now, you put the two close together because ONE article signals a retrieve to a dog who knows retrieve. You want him to remember that he's looking for pb. So put them close together and let him go find the pb. Voila, your dog is doing scent discrimination.

When he gets really good at it, keep adding articles that someone else has scented. Once in a while, don't bother putting more pb on.

Once he's retrieving, you can eventually switch to rewarding him for bringing back the right one - BUT be VERY CAREFUL that you don't start cueing him to retrieve while he's standing over the pile of articles. If you cue a retrieve and he brings back the wrong article, then what? You asked for a retrieve and you got one. You can't tell him he did it wrong, because he didn't.

If he brings back a wrong article without you asking for it, I look at the ceiling for a 10-count, then take it away from him as if it was something disgusting, put it away, then send him back to the pile.

Using this method, we've had 12 wo puppies doing 8 articles in less than 15 minutes. You get an enthusiastic go-out, you get immediate scenting, you get instant reward for the exact behaviour you want. All you have to do is gradually use less pb until you've switched the dog from the article reward to rewarding for bringing back the right one.

Having someone else scent your articles is important. It really helps the dog understand what you're trying to explain - ick, ick, ick, ick, MOMMY & PB EE HAH! I recommend that my students switch entire sets of articles with each other every couple of weeks so the dog is working with a whole set of ick.

"This is just a game we play - are we on our way to scenting?"

Nah, you'll never get there at that rate...

Actually, you are NOT on your way to scenting, you ARE scenting, and well done, too. That's a great game I love to play. It's so much fun to watch the dog learn to use his nose ever more efficiently, and lets the dog use his mind instead of just a brainless fetch game - not that there's anything wrong with brainless fetch either ;*D

"How do go about putting your scent on the article? Is just holding it in your hand "scenting" it? And if so, doesn't absolutely everything you pick have your scent on it? "

Yes, it does. And everything you live with, and everything you've walked by. I had a student once who occasionally IN THE RING IN COMPETITION would merely touch the scent article with the tip of one finger. Gave the judges heart attacks (snork), but the dog was that good. That's why I recommend have someone else scent all your articles before you use them. Then you put YOUR scent over theirs on the one you want to use. Your dog, for instance, is doing a much harder job than finding your scent when you play your search game. He's finding your MOST RECENT scent from all those others. And because of the growth of bacteria (something you may not have wanted to know about scent!), old scent is frequently stronger than new scent. It's a MUCH easier job to find (as I said) ick, ick, ick, ick, MOM! So playing that game in someone else's house, once he understood what you wanted, would be much easier for him than playing it in your house. Sort of like finding your husband in a roomful of women, as opposed to finding him in a roomful of men.

How to scent an article? Just hold it in your hand. In competition, you HAVE to rub it a bit. This is necessary, otherwise you don't have time for the prayers (Please, God, let him find it - rub, rub, rub - just this once - rub, rub, rub - I'll go to church - rub, rub, rub - I'll give to the poor - rub, rub rub). For the dog to find your article, though, rubbing isn't necessary, and in fact if you rub too hard, the theory is that you can change the scent enough to make it a whole different exercise (or maybe that's just an excuse for nervous competition handlers trying to

figure out why the kerflushinner dog blew another trial). Anyway, just hold it in your hand for a minute. If I'm using dumbbells, I hold the dumbbell only by the bar, thinking that way the ends concentrate the scent in the well between them rather than spreading it all over the floor onto other dumbbells.

"Has anybody been teaching their dog to do scent discrimination on stranger's scent?"

Think of scent as colours - you aren't asking the dog to do something difficult. You first wanted him to pick up the blue article, now you want him to pick up the pink one.

I think I would use ALL stranger's scent - one "designated stranger" and another "bad guy" stranger, so the dog is going for the stranger's scent that played with him, not the other guy's. This as opposed to YOUR scent and the stranger's scent.

I used to run scent hurdle racing. I had two dogs on a team. I'd run the best dog a couple of heats, then get my second dog to replace somebody else's. I'd give my best dog to another member of the team. That person would do one short straight retrieve with my dog, then my dog would run for him, not picking up my article or anybody else's. To get the dog to run for me again, all I had to do was hand her my dumbbell once. Just make a plan of how you're going to explain what you want to the dog, and don't let the scent scare you.

All I did to transfer was hand her leash to the other handler. That person would scent and toss the dumbbell and tell her to get it. That was enough to tell her she was getting theirs. Scenting is SO easy for dogs, really, like seeing colours for us. The problem with scent is that WE can't really do it, so we think it's hard, and we get lost doing it, forgetting that we touched this or that. In the olden days when we tied articles to a board so the dog couldn't retrieve the wrong one, I had a string tied through holes so I could carry the board without touching it. Well, didn't my Mini Schnauzer get stuck trying to bring me the board - BY THE SCENTED STRING.

The stuff in jars that the police use - remember that they use scents that are restricted, drugs, cadaver scents, etc. I'm taking a trick class right now where we're going to be teaching dogs to "spell" by getting them to find blocks scented with vanilla. Another class in town right now is teaching dogs to sit when they find a tea bag.

Use the Clicker

"Sue...Cristina thinks you are saying to not use the clicker. I am very sure you do mean for her to use the clicker. Sue, could you clarify this? Having been to two of your seminars, and hosting one more...I am certain you do mean for people to use the clicker on this exercise."

No, I very definitely do not use the clicker on the scenting exercise.

I have seen WAY too many dogs pause over the first article, then look back at mom to see if they're supposed to pick up that one, move to the second article, pause over it waiting for feedback, move to the third article, etc.

If you start by putting the reward ON the scented article, the dog is being automatically rewarded WHEN SHE ACTUALLY DISCOVERS THE SCENTED ARTICLE, and you have no guesses involved.

If the dog knows which article is scented (has actually located the scented article) when she's still 5' away from it, but then puts her nose on the first one, the second one, the third one, and THEN you finally click, you have rewarded her for putting her nose on the article and you've pretty effectively removed her FINDING the correct article from the equation.

Back to the balloons. Tape a \$5 bill to the turquoise balloon, and the kid will pretty quickly figure out he has to come into the room and spot the turquoise balloon.

If, however, you wait until the kid has **POPPED** the turquoise balloon, and you have allowed him to pop 15 red balloons before he gets to the turquoise one, you have built popping into the equation, and popping may well seem to be the important part of the equation. Geez, how many of these stupid things do I have to pop before I get the reward? The kid focuses on the popping and doesn't notice that the random number of popped balloons always ends on the turquoise one.

Scent in Location Areas

Another thing we've done as a practise session for handlers is to chart the air currents in warehouses by watching where the dogs can and cannot smell treats we've hidden. A dog can walk by a treat within 24" of it and not know it is there, then snag a scent out of the air 300' away and follow it right to it.

Sue Changes Her Mind, sort of: Scenting and Clicking

OK, I changed my mind. I think it would be a much better idea if you **NEVER** click finding the article when you're working toward a retrieve. Many tracking, search and rescue, or drug/agriculture protocols require the dog to give a **SPECIFIC** indicator that they've found the search object - bringing the handler a dowel, or doing a Sit or Down, or barking, for instance. In that case, I would click the indicator, but I still wouldn't try to click the dog for actually finding the article, since you have no idea when she actually found it.

In the case of the retrieve, which is what we're working toward here - using the retrieve, basically, as an indicator that the dog has found the article - I might click the retrieve. The problem there, of course, is that when the dog is trained to retrieve a dumbbell, retrieving ANY dumbbell could be rewarding. If you say "Take it" as you THINK she's found the right article, but she happens to be thinking about or getting a scent off the article next to it, so picks up the wrong one, where are you then? You told her to Take It, and she DID. This is the problem - scenting becomes confused with retrieve.

If my dog knows how to retrieve, I will let her have the goo to reward finding the correct article, and a treat from my hand if she happens to think about bringing the article to me, but I STILL won't click. After a while she will link "find the scented article" and "bring mom the scented article", but I'm in no hurry for that to happen.

"Does the article with your scent on it have only your scent, or is it overlaid on a stranger-scented article?"

It doesn't really matter, it has certainly been successfully taught both ways, but I've done enough trials to know that the dog will find the job easier if your scent overlays a stranger scent, and a stranger has scented ALL your articles.

SHAPING

Free Shaping Tips

What I'm doing with Stitch is just a tiny bit of shaping before each meal. Small things. Pick a chair and shape the dog to touch the chair. That's it, thank you very much, here's the rest of your breakfast. Go out the door into the next room. That's it, thank you very much, here's the rest of your supper. Lift your right front paw and hold it up for 2 seconds. Thank you, here's your breakfast. Put your muzzle on my suitcase. Thank you, here's your supper. Etc.

Free Shaping

Sue, you wrote this talking about freeshaping on Stich's blog.

"I still have trouble not thinking of how easy this is for Scuba, but today I'm noticing all the things that Scuba knows about shaping that Stich doesn't know yet. That if the clicks are leading her toward an object, it's a good bet she should interact with the object. That if the clicks are pinpointing where her nose points, she should go in that direction. That she can experiment to see what the click is actually saying. This all makes me feel better - these are specific skills that I need to teach her rather than a generic *she's not good at this*."

*"My question is how do you teach the specific freeshaping skills? My greyhound *gets it.* My GSD does not. "*

Don't be ridiculous. Hounds are not an Obedience Breed, they are too stupid to train. You are wasting your time!

Now that we have that out of the way, let's get to the GSD.

What I'm doing with Stitch is just a tiny bit of shaping before each meal. Small things. Pick a chair and shape the dog to touch the chair. That's it, thank you very much, here's the rest of your breakfast. Go out the door into the next room. That's it, thank you very much, here's the rest of your supper. Lift your right front paw and hold it up for 2 seconds. Thank you, here's your breakfast. Put your muzzle on my suitcase. Thank you, here's your supper. Etc.

Or maybe you could set him up to watch the hound..

Beginning to Shape

"I've tried all sorts of verbal encouragement, to no avail. Maybe I'll try a whistle."

You don't need more encouragement. You need to forget about the distance work, sit down in front of her, and start clicking her for NOT looking at you. For flicking an ear. For dropping her nose. For glancing somewhere else. For shifting her weight. Verbal encouragement is just luring with your voice. Take the time now to teach her to be shaped (and yourself to do the shaping). Click anything that isn't staring at you, and toss each treat on the floor away from you. Get her mobile, and get her understanding that staring at you isn't the only way to earn.

Pure Shaping is Communication

"Focusing on one particular positive training method is not necessarily the most efficient approach for a given dog and a given behavior."

You're right. Pure shaping is a terrific learning experience for dog and human, and I try to purely shape at least several things every week (rather like imagining one impossible thing each day before breakfast!), but in real life, pure shaping rarely is. Even where you deliver the treat (toss on the floor closer to the table, closer to the chair, etc, hand deliver, spit, whatever) colours the purity of the shaping - and adds an element of luring. Whether I'm standing up or sitting down changes what the dog expects to happen next, etc.

I'd call pure shaping an extremely important tool to learn, both for the dog and for the trainer, but, once learned, it becomes a tool to be used in the art of communication.

Couch Training

"Can someone please explain couch training to a newbie?"

Welcome to the list! Couch training is a LITTLE bit of a joke, it started when someone asked what can be trained while in a cast, and I responded with a list of 101 Things To Train From The Couch, and we've been adding to them ever since. The Couch IS a metaphor for the ease of training with a clicker, and for keeping your hands off the dog while training. The benefit of couch training is that you can teach the dog virtually anything at any time with shaping, you can train the dog in 30 seconds bursts, you can catch neat things you weren't expecting to happen. It takes your mind off how "serious" training is, how certain exercises "have" to be done correctly from the beginning or some dire warning will come true, how "horrible" it is that your dog has decided to break the sit-stay, or whatever - just sit down on the

couch, relax, and have a good time with your dog. Since I made the list, my dogs have learned to lie upside down with all four paws in the air, to give a huge smacking kiss in the air when I ask if they love me, to ride a skateboard, to do scent discrimination, to back up, to stand on cue, (and if I must confess, they are currently working through my hysterical sit-stay "problem"). Couch training stands for teaching anything at all in the simplest, most fun way.

Engagement Presents

"Why is it so darn hard to just click "nothing" anyway? It's nearly painful for me (but the dog isn't doing what I wanted yet!!)"

It helps me to call these "engagement presents" or "re-engagement presents". The "treat for nothing" isn't really for nothing, it's for entering the game, trusting me, sticking with my ideas, coming back to try again when you were frustrated.

Freeshaping the Pole

"Having some difficulty with the going around the pole"

OK, there are three ways to get a behaviour - first, wait for it. When I'm waiting for a behaviour, I do a lot to set the dog up to succeed. For instance, I might put the pole in or near a doorway so the dog has little choice but to go around it. Or I might walk near the pole so the dog naturally walks around it. Or, you can freeshape it. The trouble most people have with freeshaping in the beginning is not clicking enough. Click, for instance, X10 for glancing in the right direction. X10 for taking a step in the right direction. etc. If the dog is pawing the pole, you need to click BEFORE he gets that close to it, focusing him on the

space beside the pole. I might do a bit of luring during this by tossing the reward to the other side of the pole, or turning my body to face the other side, thus drawing the dog into the correct position. Finally, luring. And luring doesn't have to be following a treat. It could, as I said, be following the front of your body, it could be following a stick or your hand.

More on 101 Things with a Box

"I have not heard of '101 things to do with a box or chair' up until I read through the training levels. Where can I find this info???"

"101 Things" is a creativity exercise. Bear in mind I have very little memory now (brain injury), but I think Karen Pryor described it with a dolphin in 'Lads Before The Wind'. Basically, you put down an object - a chair, a box, a stool, whatever, as long as it's safe for the dog to push, pull, and drag - and then start clicking the dog for ANY interaction with it. Do this without preconception. You aren't aiming at any particular behaviour, but accepting what the dog will offer you. The next time you play, the only rule you have is that you will NOT reward the behaviour the dog gave you before. Eventually you get to the point where the dog understands that you will not click ANY behaviour more than twice, after which the dog has to think of something else to offer you.

You'll notice that "101" isn't on the list until Level 4. Not that you can't challenge any behaviour at any level, of course, but I've seen a lot of people encouraging absolute beginners to start with "101". Personally, I think shaping is one of the most difficult things about clicker training, and IME shaping without even having a goal other than "creativity" makes this an extremely frustrating thing to present a beginner with. I like to have people have some success with shaping simple behaviours first, to have seen the dog working to make the click happen, and to see

that the dog is thinking about what will work before I point them at something as esoteric as 101.

OTOH, when the trainer and the dog understand the game, it's a real high. I put a chair in the middle of the room. Scuba runs to the chair. She puts one front paw on it. She gives me that behaviour twice, then that isn't good enough anymore. Next she puts the other front paw up. Then both paws. Then she climbs onto the seat. Sometimes she'll put one, the other, and finally both paws on the back of the chair while she sits or stands on the seat. One time she did this and then rode the chair over backward. When I put the chair back up, she figured she'd only been clicked for it once, so she did it again. When those things don't work any more, she gets off and rests her chin on the seat, then ducks her nose UNDER the seat, then starts going through the legs: north to west, then north to south, then north to east, then west to south, west to east, west to north, and so on. Once she retrieved the chair. Once she knocked it over and then started jumping it in different directions.

Questions on Training Move

"How do you teach the sidestep? Without words, just clicking? so far that has just been frustrating for this person."

What would you call the side-step AWAY from you? And how would you train it? From the heel position, the dog moves to the left, still parallel to you. I don't think this movement is in the levels, but would be an often used and helpful behavior for an AD.

"What would you call the side-step AWAY from you?"

I haven't taught that, but I'm guessing I would make it a combination of the eye contact cord and a cue to get away from me - mine is OUT. I'd start very slowly so I could fix any drifting with the contact and swing cues.

Shaping and Luring Used Together

"Any practical suggestions of how I can duplicate the effect?"

Yes, it's called "shaping", and this is a really good opportunity to learn how to do it. Instead of clicking continuously, you click when she looks in the right direction, and give her a treat. Then you click again when she looks in the right direction, and give her a treat. Then she looks in the right direction and leans that way, click and give her a treat.

Or, you can continue to lure, and just start luring less and less - so if you had to stick your hand right in front of her nose and "drag" her all the way around to start with, you can start dragging her nose 3/4 of the way around and then removing your hand. Or make just enough of a gesture to get her started, and then click to thank her for starting, and toss the treat further along the path you want her to take.

Shaping Everything

"Do you use shaping to teach ALL your behaviors?"

Not at all. When luring the nose up to get the bum to go down works so well, I see NO reason to shape Sit - well, not entirely true. I got a 2 yo Giant once - dumb as a post (rare) but a real sweetie. He knew how to stand, show his muscles, and get the light to glint off his teeth for show, but it apparently never occurred to him that TWO legs could bend while two other legs remained straight. He either stood, or lay down. In his whole life he had never sat. I took this as a challenge, both for his brain AND his body, so I shaped him to Sit. It took 6 weeks.

If I had a TV dog like the amazing SPOT from Oz who had to learn new things all the time on the -ahem- spot, I would lure the behaviours I need right NOW. I might spend the entire day luring. But when I got

home at night, I'd do some shaping, just to make sure I didn't get his brain in a rut from all the luring.

Shaping Goals

"Paw touches Nose touches positions within a room (go to your corner as an example) Body position (sit, down, bow) Things to do with your body (spin, dance, etc) Things to do with your paws (wave, high five, etc)"

Hmm, a little fuzzy in the criteria there, IMO. I see my dogs approach something expecting to use paws somehow. Anyhow. Then switch on cue to muzzle. So I'd include anything to do with paws in one bunch, anything to do with muzzles in another bunch.

Things to do with your paws.

Things to do with your muzzle.

Things to do with your body.

Position within a room.

Directions to face.

Moving in regard to objects or areas (away from, toward).

Things or directions to look (look at me, look at my hand, look where you're going, look in the distance, look at objects on the floor, look at scary things).

Interaction with objects (also defined in agility as commitment to obstacles).

Game playing - things that are deliberately "wrong", like withholding a retrieve toy, tugging instead of giving, running away instead of coming, going around instead of over - things the dog appears to find funny, whether through training or just naturally.

Shaping "Nothing"

"What should I have done when she sat and stared at me?"

Look closer. She's not sitting and staring. She's glancing away. She's dropping her nose a quarter inch. She's shifting her weight. She's lifting a paw. She's moving her tail. She's breathing. She's blinking. She's panting or swallowing. Click ANY movement of ANY part of her body. Click and toss so she has to get up to get the treat. Then click her on the way back to you for moving her paws.

Shaping the Jump

"Is it a case of it's never too early to do training from a chair? or is that a more advanced concept that I should present later?"

It is never too early to train from a chair. When people learn to shape, they learn a) to avoid lumping, b) to watch the dog more carefully, c) to be happy with tiny improvements, d) to give the dog room (both mentally and physically) to learn, and e) to allow the DOG to be in control of what happens next. What an incredible feeling of power, awe, and teamwork you allow them to achieve by teaching them to shape!

"Should they be sitting next to the center of the jump, like the comp. ob. Broad Jump handler position?"

It's probably easier this way to add a TINY bit of luring if you have to in the course of the event - by tossing the treat for the LAST behaviour to a point which puts the dog in a good position to offer another interaction with the jump. You don't have to start with them 20' away ;-), but don't plant them right on top of the jump, either. And I would start with the bar on the floor, so the dog can easily step from side to side. I have found the idea of "get from one side of this sucker to the other side" to be a very powerful one, and one which translates very easily into "go over this no matter how high, no matter how broad, no matter what it looks like, no matter where I am". In the Broad Jump in obedience, for instance, this means that the dog is responsible for jumping over the boards - not for cutting the corner, not for walking on, not for walking through, not for avoiding. This frees the handler from the responsibility of "keeping the dog on the jump" - which is basically the whole point of making the dog operant. IMO, people should learn shaping BEFORE they are allowed to lure!

Teaching the Sidestep

"How do you teach the sidestep? Without words, just clicking? so far that has just been frustrating for this person."

Once the dog knows how to get and hold eye contact, and once he knows (and has a cue for) the swing finish WHILE maintaining eye contact, the sidestep is a natural result of these two behaviours. Think of each behaviour as producing an elastic cord - the eye contact pulls the dog's eyes forward toward your eyes. The swing finish pulls the dog's butt to the dog's right toward your hip.

When you had eye contact but no swing, the eye cord pulled the dog forward, allowing the butt to swing out to your left as you moved. Once you had the swing, the butt cord held the dog in and back - the two cords together produced heel position. The dog can't forge or come in

front of you because the butt cord holds him back. He can't lag or tuck in behind you because the eye cord holds him forward.

From there it doesn't matter WHAT you do, the two cords are going to hold the dog in heel position. If you step straight backwards, you cue a swing finish and the butt cord gets tight, pulling the dog straight back with you. If you step to your right, both cords get tight at the same time, so the dog moves smoothly to his right to stay in heel position. If his head drifts to the left, you cue the Watch to tighten the eye cord. If his butt drifts out (or stays behind) as you step right, you cue the swing finish to tighten the butt cord.

Does that help?

Splitting Freeshaping into Specific Skills

Another freeshaping session for supper. This is much, much better today as well. I still have trouble not thinking of how easy this is for Scuba, but today I'm noticing all the things that Scuba knows about shaping that Stitch doesn't know yet. That if the clicks are leading her toward an object, it's a good bet she should interact with the object. That if the clicks are pinpointing where her nose points, she should go in that direction. That she can experiment to see what the click is actually saying. This all makes me feel better - these are specific skills that I need to teach her rather than a generic "she's not good at this". I get four behaviours out of one meal today - on the couch, head under the couch, front feet on the chair, and going around the coffee table.

STAND

Separating Back Up from Stand

"Won't she not be able to understand "Stand" alone but rather always link it to the end of backing up?"

She should. Backing up into a Stand is a much more secure method of getting the dog to stand up than leading her forward is.

Back to what I said before. When you want to teach Back Up, you click the movement. You add the cue to the movement and you have a complete behaviour: Back up.

When you want to teach Stand, you click the stop. Or you click just as she stands up to start backing. Pretty quick she's swinging her butt up and leaning back rather than moving backwards. Add the Stand cue and you have the complete behaviour.

Separating Back Up from Stand 2

"Later, you can separate this into backing up and STAND"

If you click for movement, you get movement, so if you click the dog while she's backing up, she's going to back up harder and faster next time.

If you click for standing still, you get standing still, so if you wait for her to stop backing up and click when she stops, she'll stop faster next time.

Stand Stay

"How can I get some duration for the stand stay? "

Have you lured him back into a stand, or only forward?

Luring forward raises the dog's nose and puts his body in a position where it desperately wants to sit. Luring backwards lowers his nose and makes his body want to stand.

Teaching Stand

I've found the easiest way to teach a stand, especially when you're thinking about going to a moving stand, is to get the dog to back up. When the dog is pulled forward with bait or a target (or a leash), it puts the body in a position to want to sit. When the dog is moving backward, the centre of gravity shifts so the dog's body wants to remain standing. This can be accomplished many ways:

Shape backing - simply sit and click when the dog's weight shifts back, or a front foot moves backward.

Lure backing - put the bait or target at the dog's nose and then move it backwards right along the dog's underjaw toward the throat. Click when the weight shifts back or a front foot moves backward. Luring produces a natural hand signal which lowers the nose and asks the dog to back.

If your dog has a good swing finish (that is, a swing finish where his head remains in contact with you and his tail swings around - NOT the kind of swing finish where he walks behind you, turns around, and walks back into position), you can also get the dog backing by asking him to watch/heel, asking him to swing finish, and start stepping backward. The heel/watch cue keeps his head in position/contact, and

the swing cue ensures that his butt doesn't move out to his left - just like a horse, ask him to move, don't let him move sideways, and tell his head it can't go forward, and he has to move back. Click when his weight shifts back or a front foot moves backward.

All of these will give you a dog that you are clicking for backing up while remaining standing.

I put this into heeling, then cue the stand as we're heeling backward. This quickly translates into heeling forward and giving a little jog backwards with the stand cue, and then to nothing but the hand cue. The first time I tried this with a dog who had a very good swing finish, it took about 3 minutes to explain the entire Moving Stand exercise.

STAY

Click and Stay Question

Since the click ends the behaviour, no matter what I did from there, I wouldn't click and then leave without another cue to Stay.

Chutes and Ladders Question

"I find that I will do 10 reps of one or two second duration, to reinforce success."

Good way to start.

A Working Stay Explained

"But doesn't this ruin the dog when you do your shaping exercises. I am confused please help!!!"

If it wasn't so confusing, it would be amusing, all these people terrified to let the click end the behaviour! The click ends the behaviour. If you want the dog to stay for 10 seconds and you especially want to tell her she's right when you're 20' away from her, click when she's been staying 10 seconds and you're 20' away. The click ends the behaviour. Maybe the dog moves when she hears the click, maybe she just stays there thinking "Gee, she's going to bring me the treat and then we're going to do another stay, I might as well sit here!" Either way, doesn't matter, the click told her she did what you wanted.

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Once she's trained, I'm not using a click any more, I'm using her GO cue to tell her she earned the right to run.

When you're far away from her, and she's decided to stay sitting after a click, it will naturally take you a long time to get back to her to deliver a treat. Just remember she's sitting because she wants to, because she already did the behaviour you wanted. If you want her to stay until you

return to her, then you don't click until you return. Don't let them confuse you.

Ailsby Rule of Laziness: Sit and Stay

"Have a problem between clicking to mark the behaviour and giving the reward. As soon as I click, Tyler comes closer to me to get the treat... Even if I stand right in front of him he moves over to the side closer to the treat pocket... What am I doing wrong?"

Two very small things, easy to fix.

First, it's perfectly OK for him to move after you click. Click ends the behaviour. 80% of what he's learning about the behaviour is coming from what he's doing when you click. That's a high percentage, and it's plenty, so a), stop worrying about it.

Second, Aha, you're not ready to train when you start training. Have the treat **IN YOUR HAND**. I bet I can get 3 or 4 repetitions of a behaviour in while you're still shuffling in your pocket for a treat for the first rep.

Now, I do draw a line between teaching the dog to **SIT** (plop your fuzzy little butt on the floor, Bubba), and to **STAY SITTING** (park it and leave it there). In the beginning, I'm working on getting the Sit behaviour so good that I can add the Sit cue to it. I **WANT** the dog to move after he sits, which gives him another opportunity to offer me the Sit (Hey, look, I folded up my back legs! Click!), so I usually toss the treat away from where he sat so he has to get up to eat it.

When we get past that part and I'm starting to work on remaining in the Sit for some time before he gets the click, I usually hand him the treat or drop it right at his feet so he can eat it without getting up. Here Ailsby's Principle of Laziness kicks in. "We just did 10 Sits varying from

1 second to 10 seconds. I bet we're going to do 11 seconds of Sit next. NOT much point in me getting up, eh?" and he'll start remaining in the Sit even after you click.

The bottom line, though, is that you should have the treat in your hand before you expect to work on ANY behaviour, so there's no pocket-shuffling going on after the click.

Clicking the Stay

"I think that the dog understanding that continuing to do something such as holding that SIT gets them another Reward every 5 seconds,"

I don't see this as a different circumstance at all. If I'm paying for SIT, then when the click sounds and the behaviour is over, I need the dog to get up in order to be in a position to offer me the behaviour I'm paying for again. The click ends the behaviour. Here's your treat, now what will we work on? How about another SIT?!

I'm paying for sit-stays right now. Give me a 5-second sit-stay, I'll click and treat. When the click sounds, the behaviour is over. However, as WHERE the treat is delivered accounts for maybe 10% of what the dog knows about the behaviour, I'll go forward (most of the time) and give the treat to the dog. The click ends the behaviour. Now what will we work on? How about another SIT-STAY?! Well, pretty soon Ailsby's Principle Of Laziness takes over. The dog says "Hey, we're working on sit-stays. SHE is going to deliver the treat, and then we're going to do another sit-stay. I can just sit here!"

To this point, I expect our observations of the actual behaviour are identical.

What *I* think is important here, however, is that THE CLICK ENDS THE BEHAVIOUR. Therefore, IF I click and the dog gets up,

stretches, and walks toward me to get the treat, HE IS CORRECT. The click ended the behaviour. He probably WON'T do that, since I'm paying for sit stays, but IF he does, that's fine. What'll we work on now? How about Assuming The Position and we'll try another sit stay?

Is Stay Command Necessary?

"Is it really necessary to have a separate command? I was planning on teaching my dog that 'sit' means get into the sit position and don't move until I click or give another command. "

No, that's the way it should work. However...

The benefit of having a separate Stay cue, in my life anyway, is for emphasis.

Lead Feet

" Any ideas how to explain to the dog that lead feet are required?"

This is a criteria problem from the beginning. I see it a lot. You (generic "you") start out happy the dog is remaining in place (and now that I have a bumblebee puppy, I can certainly understand how happy you can be to have a dog remain in place), and don't notice the shifting feet. You extend the distance, extend the time, still don't notice the shifting feet. If you're clicker training, you might even be building in foot-shifting as a necessary part of stay. Stay-And-Dance. Stitch stayed, but whined under her breath. If I had clicked her for Stay-And-Whine, well, next year she'd be doing 5 minute Stay-And-Whines.

The answer is not to draw attention to the foot-shifting (as the owner has tried to do with the bells), but to start over with the correct criteria. I'd start with DownStay, where it's easier to get absolute stillness (I don't care if the dog moves her head, but I'm happier if she's just looking at me). Work that up to about 20 seconds, then start on SitStay. Start with 1 second, body and feet silent. Then 2 seconds, body and feet silent. Up to you whether you can define a weight shift as silent, but not lifting a paw. Sometimes I pretend there's a bug under her feet. If the bug escapes, she blew it.

Never

*"The doggie *never* got the treat in the hand because "leave it" means you *never* get what you were told to leave."*

I just don't see the point of this. "Stay" really means "Stay until you get to do something different". Something different could mean assuming another position (Down instead of Sit), it could mean chasing a ball, it could mean Come, it could mean roll over and play dead, it could mean I come back to you, praise you, and release you.

By the same token, "Leave it" means "Don't touch that until you get to do something different". Something different could mean Come, it could mean Heel on past it, it could mean grab it, it could mean dance on your back legs, it could mean get liverwurst from my fingers. What command EVER means "never"? If you teach your dog NEVER to go out the front door without you going out first, does that mean you expect him to burn to death if the house is on fire and the front door is open?

Agility has a very good example of this on the sticky contacts. The dog is taught to stop dead in the contact zone at the bottom of the teeter, A-frame, and dog walk. He can NOT proceed past the contact - until he's told to do so. With that established, the handler can release him off

the contact at any time - when he's been standing on it for 10 seconds, when he's been standing on it for 5 seconds, when he's just landed a single paw on it, BEFORE HE HITS IT if she's sure he's going to hit it. Until you're released.

Sit Stay Question

"I'm not sure in my mind how I'm supposed to be going about this! "

If you're working on duration of a behaviour, try real hard NOT to use a cue at all, but get the dog in a position where she's offering the behaviour you want. OR just lure her.

So: Lure Sit. one. c/t Now, if the dog gets up to get the treat, fine, lure Sit, one two, c/t. If the dog does NOT get up to get the treat, fine, one two three, c/t. one two three four, c/t.

"I can't help thinking sit should mean sit whether I'm going to tell dog to do something else or leave and return. Is there a right or wrong way to go about this?"

No, there isn't. I've seen a lot of people use Wait and Stay and frankly, I have never seen a difference in the dog's behaviour. And it doesn't make sense to ME, either. ANY cue means basically "do what I'm asking you to do until some other cue or event supercedes it".

SIT. Dog Sits. STAY. Dog continues to Sit. Handler walks away from dog. Handler returns to dog. CLICK or OKAY. These are release/end of behaviour cues, dog stops Staying.

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If there was a STAY cue to mean "park your butt there and don't move it until I tell you to do something different" and a WAIT cue to mean "stay on your matt or in that corner until I forget about you" or "having gone to your mat, stay on the mat, but you can lie down or sit up or turn in circles or lie upside as long as you stay on your mat", I could understand it. This whole business of STAY means I'll come back to you and give you another cue, while WAIT means I won't come back to you to give you another cue - well, it never did make any sense to me, but if someone wants to teach their dog several cues for the same behaviour, it doesn't bother me any, as long as they don't get their knickers in a twist trying to make me do the same thing!

Stay and Wait

"What is the difference between the stay and the wait command? When should I use wait and when should I use stay...???"

Did you find a bobble in the Levels? I'm not aware of a wait cue. Personally, I never use one. To me, the word Stay means hold your position and place until I tell you to do something different.

Stay vs Wait

"When I ask my dog to wait, he can sit, down, or jumprope or do backflips (okay, we're still working on the latter 2), for all I care about is that he waits to do the next thing. Stay, means to stay put in position, a stand, sit, or down. Don't move until I release you!"

This is closer to my version. "Wait until I tell you to do something" and "Stay until I come back to you" has never made any sense to me, but I often wished I had a "Stay in position, you can move your head but

don't even THINK about moving a paw, rolling over, or changing position" cue and a separate "Park yourself over there and be there when I want you" cue. Now I do have the two - the first one is STAY and the second one is GO TO MAT (I use HIT THE RACK), which can be used for lying on a hammock, on a pause table, on my car keys, on a leash, or just on the floor in a particular location.

Stay

"But doesn't this ruin the dog when you do your shaping exercises. I am confused please help!!!"

If it wasn't so confusing, it would be amusing, all these people terrified to let the click end the behaviour! The click ends the behaviour. If you want the dog to stay for 10 seconds and you especially want to tell her she's right when you're 20' away from her, click when she's been staying 10 seconds and you're 20' away. The click ends the behaviour. Maybe the dog moves when she hears the click, maybe she just stays there thinking "Gee, she's going to bring me the treat and then we're going to do another stay, I might as well sit here!" Either way, doesn't matter, the click told her she did what you wanted.

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Sue on Chutes and Ladders

"Chutes and Ladders method. Specifically, why do we train to the point of failure?"

The dog **MUST** fail in order to proceed. If you're clicking, for instance, for five seconds of eye contact, and the dog is perfectly able to give you five seconds of eye contact, you'll never get past five seconds. Countless people have trained their animals to do something "three times and then he quits" because that's the general extent of the trainer's attention span. According to Bob Bailey, the most efficient time to move on is when the dog is exhibiting 80% accuracy at your current level - in other words, when your dog gives you 5 seconds of contact 8 times out 10, move on to asking for 6 seconds of contact.

When I explain this, however, people go back to their old traditional habits of working the dog almost **CONSTANTLY** at failure - hey, he did 20 seconds last month, we'll go for that - so 6 seconds and failure - **NO! I SAID WATCH ME!** and 8 seconds and failure - **NO! WATCH!** and 3 seconds and failure - and so it goes. You have only to read the posts here - where really **GOOD** trainers are trying really **HARD** to be

fair to the dog and explain things clearly and keep the dog in the game, and STILL we fail in our duty almost daily (it seems I do, anyway). With 300 Peck, even in the very beginning, the dog is NEVER failing more than 50% of the time. As the count goes up, he's getting a MUCH better return for his investment - at 10 seconds, he's going to be rewarded 9 times before he fails at 10. If you consider that, since he failed, he is not yet able to perform at that level, you go back and explain the whole matter again, in easier stages, in easier levels, ANOTHER 9 times before he fails again.

Will the dog see that failing makes things easier? A possibility, but not, it seems, a fact. So far I haven't seen it happen. Because of the very high initial Rate Of Reinforcement, the dog is so into the game that they are working to make the click happen. Incidentally, it's called "300-Peck" because of the pigeons trained to peck 300 times for ONE reinforcer.

And yes, when Alex Kurland first wrote about 300-Peck Walking with her horse, she reset to the original high level. She was working with an extremely clicker-savvy animal who was falling out of the game to amuse himself with an unwanted behaviour. I read this, and saw that it wouldn't work the way she described it for less sophisticated learners - IOW, it would work brilliantly on Scuba, but Stitch would walk off and find a chew toy, leaving me to play by myself. Alex later confirmed this.

"Do we know if Chutes and Ladders builds duration faster (or better, in some way) than a more variable schedule (1, 3, 2, 4, etc.) "

I don't know, but IMO, it doesn't matter if it does or not, because most humans are completely incapable of training a variable schedule. I tried for years to teach variable schedule, and people were simply not able to use it, though many tried valiantly. 300-Peck is MUCH easier on the human, and fast and accurate and easy on the dog as well. We have rhythms built in to us, like it or not, and they will come out. I've seen people clicking a variable time schedule, counting, for instance, oooooonnnnnnnneeee-click. one two three-click. ooonnnnee ttwwooo-click. one two three four - click.

Yes, they were counting different numbers, but the clicks were all totally on a fixed schedule! At one point I wrote out a series of variable schedules with signs and put them up all over my training room, and STILL couldn't get decent compliance. 300-Peck Rules!

"And, even though, Sue, you said it didn't matter if Chutes and Ladders was ³faster or better,² you then described precisely why it is faster and better. :-) It's better because it is easier for the trainer. If it's easier, then the trainer can do it successfully. If the trainer can implement the method successfully, her animal will learn faster AND better! Ooooh, I like that!"

Training Duration

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Use of Stay Cue

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No, that's the way it should work. However...

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Using Wait or Stay Cues

"When I train for example the sit, I expect the dog to stay/wait until I give the next cue. Seems like that makes the stay/wait cue not necessary."

Yes. But.

You're absolutely right. When actually trained, the word SIT includes duration, distractions, difficulty, and should therefore be performed until SOMETHING ends it - usually a new cue, whether a voice or body language cue, that says the behaviour is over, or there is something else that needs to be done.

Here's the But:

But STAY is an incredibly handy cue, being one of the very few cues that dogs tend to generalize both easily and well, so that I ask my dog to Paws Up on me so I can put a jacket on her, she Paws Up but hasn't yet been taught a Paws Up duration of 40 seconds, so she'll give me the behaviour for the 10 seconds we've worked on, and then get down. OTOH, If I ask PAWS UP and then STAY, she'll stay in that position until released. When I was routinely teaching competition obedience classes, my usual But was But you can legally give a Sit cue AND a Stay cue in the ring. Granted, your dog should include the Stay in her Sit cue, but it's a stupid thing to fail on if the dog happened to not hear the Sit and you COULD have given a Stay cue but didn't.

TARGET

Beginning Targeting

"Is it my understanding that in order to teach a puppy or dog to target you have to first start using your hands as a target?"

Not at all. Teaching hand targeting first is usually an easy way to start, but not at all necessary. I've started with my hand, my foot, a stick, the end of a stick, a dumbbell, a table, a wall, a leash, a chair. We've taught llamas to target our hands, their halters, a fence, a weave pole, a brush, a stick, a tree. I usually have my hand with me ;*D , so I tend to use that as the first target, but you can start with anything you want.

"Do they use paw or nose for this task? Are both ok to teach?"

The first few times I taught these, I let the dog decide whether to use her nose or her paw, but next time I'll teach both specifically and have specific cues for each of them. Scuba can be very gentle with her mouth (pick up a credit card, for instance), but once she gets her paws in the action, that sucker's coming up off the ground whether it's in one piece or not! And sometimes I'd rather have her touch a light switch or something with her nose so as to spare the paint around the object. Other times I'd rather get her paw in the action right away rather than have her dent her nose on something very difficult to push.

Training Close the Door

"He has target training down, and we tried doing that (touch this spot on the door). What happens is he runs up to the door, touches it with his nose"

You need one more behaviour - "punch", or hit something with the PAWS. I teach this by asking for a nose-touch to my hand again and again, then I put my hand over a chair or coffee table or something low like that so that the dog must put his front feet on the chair to get his nose to my hand, and asking for a nose-touch to my hand. Then I click when his paw touches the chair instead of waiting for the nose to touch my hand. This luring with your hand also produces a very nice signal for the paw-whack, which will help him translate the behaviour to walls.

When you've taught him to paw-whack ten or fifteen horizontal things like chairs, just walk him up to a vertical surface like a wall and use your hand lure to help him figure out how to put his paws on the wall.

Once they understand how to whack walls, they can start closing doors.

Or, you could simply shape the dog to touch a target on the floor with his paw, then transfer the target to your door.

Teaching a Go Out Paw Touch

"What training tips, suggestions, warnings, etc., can you offer for teaching a go-out that would be suitable for utility work?"

I teach the go-out with a paw-whack on the wall, then teach the dog to whack whatever is directly in front of me by standing 2' off the wall and cueing the whack, c/t, then moving 4' or so down the wall and cueing another whack, c/t, etc. Eventually we get to where we are standing in the middle of a room, I face one wall, send the dog out directly away from me, whack, c/t. Then we start again from the centre, facing a different wall, etc.

The benefits of whacking are many: a) most dogs really enjoy it, b) the handler is not required to go out ahead of time and lay out a mat or dowel or target or whatever - many dogs will not go back unless they can smell that the handler has been there ahead of time, c) you can vary the behaviours as you see fit, as in go-back, whack, sit, whack, sit, whack, sit, jump; or go-back, sit, whack, sit, whack, jump. As the whack is intrinsically rewarding, there's a lot of enthusiasm built up.

Naming Touch

"When adding the cue, what cue do you use?"

If I had one or two specific things I needed the dog to touch, I might use a specific cue for those things, but I'd use the name of the thing, like "Door", not "Touch Door". Since Scuba is my Service Dog and I hope Stitch will assume that roll, I need them to touch any of a billion things, so I'm only using the cue "Touch" for nose, and "Hit" for paw. That way I can point them at anything and get the behaviour.

Not Targeting the Pole

"Using the cue for target might have sped progress up a little at first, I didn't want to fade it."

IME, targeting anything is quite a strong behaviour. I taught one dog to target a weave pole as a preliminary step to doing weaves, and it was a VERY big mistake. Took MONTHS to get rid of the targeting behaviour. From then on, I've been very specific about shaping going AROUND the pole, not AT the pole, right from the beginning.

Paw Targeting

"I have been trying to teach the lads to target with a paw (they can target with their noses OK)"

Then you're 3/4 of the way to paw-targeting!

There are several problems that are helping you get stuck - first, the dog has no idea what you're talking about. Second, the dog is trying to nose-target, and the nose-targeting idea is getting in the way of the paw-targeting. How *I* overcame the problems was to first do a couple of nose-to-hand touches (or nose-to-targetstick, or nose-to-margarine-tub-lid, or whatever, but for the sake of example, I used my hand, and that's what I'll talk about). Now the dog is secure and knows what you want. Now set up something like a chair or a stool or a cement block - something the dog can put its paws up on to reach something higher.

Gradually move your target over the stool until the dog has to put his front paws on the stool to reach your hand with his nose - and click/treat the second his PAW touches the stool. Do this a few more times until the dog shows signs that he realizes you're only asking for the paw

to touch the stool rather than still expecting the nose to touch the hand after the paw touches the stool.

Once he's got that, you can start fading the hand, pull it out of the way as he's starting his approach to the stool, then just gesture at the stool.

Once he's solid on touching the stool and not actually reaching for your hand, you can switch to a chair or the couch (there's that ol' couch again ;-D) or a stair or a curb - anything you can still put your hand over and ask for a nose-touch again if he starts to slip.

With a Giant Schnauzer, I originally taught this using the meat freezer in the dog room and the grooming table and a chair.

When he knows about all those things, you can try making the gesture and voice cue at a wall, and chances are you'll get the result you want. I had the MOST fun one day when Song knew about touching walls and doors. I have a pipe about 4" wide going from floor to ceiling in my training building. I asked her to touch the pipe. It took her a second to figure out how to put one paw on top of the other so she could target the pipe with both front feet, and then it was her favourite target and she'd v-e-r-y carefully place one foot above the other.

Pole Targeting

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Shoulder Targeting

"I'd like to teach them to target my hand with their shoulder area."

That sounded like fun, so Stitch and I worked it for supper last night.

At first she was so busy nose- and paw-targeting my hand that we couldn't do anything, so I thought I'd explain that we were doing something else. I found a fairly stiff leather collar I use to tie the llamas out.

First I shaped her to put her head through it. That involved waiting out several attempts to nose-target it and several more to take it from me, but once she realized she wasn't going to get clicked for any of that stuff, she tried branching out. Very quickly after that she put her nose inside it, then her muzzle, then her eyes, and finally her whole head.

Then I put the collar on the floor and shaped her to put her right front paw in it. That took 3 or 4 minutes. She was really In The Game, but thought I might want her to bat it around the room. We stopped as soon as she figured out that putting her paw squarely inside the collar was the clickable action. This had a very positive result - this morning when we went to the car and I spread out her car harness, she stepped right into it instead of me having to lift her paws into the holes. Sweet.

Then, since she'd had some luck targeting the middle of the collar, and no luck at all targeting or retrieving the collar itself, I held the collar near her shoulder and lured her forward until her shoulder touched it. Did that about 15 times before she realized what was happening and started moving toward it on her own. I didn't work on having her target my hand at all.

To end the supper session, I started shaping her to put one back paw up on a stair. We didn't get to one paw, but she very quickly figured out that I wanted paws on the step, and I occasionally got both back paws on and no front paws as I withheld the click and she started to walk off the step. Then she'd stop in that position and I'd click/treat several

times, each time tossing the treat a little further away from her until she finally walked her back paws off the step as well and I'd stop clicking. Hey! What's the matter? Oh, oh, right - paws on the step!

Fun.

Simple Target Behaviors

"Which simple behaviours could I train using the clicker"

How about teaching Sunny to touch your hand with her nose, and then to use her nose to touch your left knee, and then your right knee? Targetting is an infinitely useful behavior, and you'll certainly be able to tell when she's doing it. Also, if your original try doesn't work so well, you haven't done any damage. I always like to start a new trainer off with teaching something that isn't really important at the moment.

Training a Gentle Paw Touch

"But when touching people or other things with her pad I would love to teach her a gentle...how would I go about doing that?"

My Giant Schnauzer lives to thwack, and she is NOT gentle. We taught her a gentle touch by clicking her paw just BEFORE it hit the thwackee. She learned to aim for the spot above the actual thwack, and the actual strike became much more gentle.

Teaching a Vertical Paw Touch

"How did you get a paw whack, what cue do you use for this?"

I started with the nose-touch, but I couldn't tell at 40' away whether she was actually touching the wall or just putting her nose near it. When I switched to the whack, I discovered that not only can I tell at 200' whether she is whacking the wall or pretending, but the whack itself seems to be immensely satisfying to most dogs.

I started with the nose-touch to my hand, then held my hand over a chair (curb, whatever) so the dog had to put her front feet on the chair in order to be able to reach my hand with her nose. Then I simply clicked the paw touching the chair instead of waiting for the nose to touch my hand. Coffee tables, couches, curbs, grooming tables, the freezer, front step - when she'd whacked enough things, I took her to a wall, gave the same signal derived from pretending to hold my hand for her to touch, and cued "go touch". She stared at it for a second, then translated from the horizontal to the vertical surface, reared up, and punched it with both paws.

Zen and Targeting

I had a six month old Golden Retriever bitch this afternoon. Nice mom and three kids, all at wit's end. The Golden had 'lots of problems' ---- her mother nearly died giving birth, the pup was bottle-fed, then the breeder got sick, then after the owners got her, she was sick for two months, hadda, hadda, hadda... The pup arrived on my face. She wiggled and clawed and mouthed. She jumped on Song {Sue's Giant Schnauzer}. She jumped on the kids. She jumped on Mom. She didn't stop. She was AWFUL. I couldn't help it, I said, "You've been LIVING with THIS for four months?" She had NO attention span. If wiggling/clawing/ mouthing/jumping didn't get her

what she wanted immediately, she was off to try it on someone else. Talk about ZERO social skills.

I tried just holding a piece of hot dog concealed in my hand, but she "attacked it" until she lost interest, and then she was GONE. I had a hard time pairing the click and the treat because her eyeballs never focused in one spot long enough to see the treat fall, and she couldn't take it out of my hand because by then she was in my face again.

Song finally gave her a correction for climbing on HER, {i.e. the older dog growled} which she took extremely well (!), got off, then tried all kinds of things at a decent distance to get Song to play with her, including snapping in the air which freaked out Mom and the kids even worse. Since she took the correction from Song so well, I gave her the same one when she clawed my eyeballs the next time, which allowed her to stand still long enough to notice that I'd clicked and saw a treat I had tossed for her hitting the ground.

I spent a long time clicking her for coming back into the circle, for staying on the floor, for sitting (she started to offer sits), for making eye contact, for getting off Song again, etc., and she gradually started to settle down.

Finally I was able to go back to the food-in-hand self-control "trick". {You hold the food in the closed fist until the animal gives up trying to get it, and sits back politely. THEN you click, and open your fist and give the treat. KP} She licked-licked-licked-mouthed-bit then finally started to lose interest: Click/treat. By this time she had enough attention span and was calm enough that she noticed what had happened. We did it again. And again. And again. She understood.

Then I thought these people probably desperately needed a real trick, so I started on targeting my hand {shaping the behavior of touching the nose to the trainer's hand, and then following the moving hand} to a chorus of "She won't do that," and "She'd have to be smart to learn that!" I said not to worry, I'd take care of getting her to touch my hand, but THEY had to watch carefully and tell me when she understood

that there was NO food in the target hand: that she had to touch it, in order to get the food from the other hand. Uh huh. Yeah. Right. Sure.

Well, I started. I suckered her into touching my hand. Click and treat from the other hand. And again. And again. And again. And again. "See, she won't learn this!" And again. And again. And again. Suddenly, she let out a yowl that sounded a dying cat. She looked at me full in the face for maybe five seconds, then screamed again. Then very tentatively, she reached her nose out and touched my hand ---- click/treat.

She didn't take the treat. She looked at my face again, then she EXPLODED. She spun in circles, she dropped her butt to the floor, she ran around the room six times. She crashed into things. And half the time, she was making this awful yowling noise. Suddenly she landed in a heap, sitting directly in front of me, and started BANGING my hand with her nose and looking in my face waiting for the Click, CLICK!, CLICK! TREATS!! I started to cry. Mom started to cry. The kids started to cry. My God, it was like The Miracle Worker. Then she started to learn "down", and the kids and everybody did round-the-room recalls {i.e. calling the dog from one person to another, with each person c/t the dog for coming} and then they did loose-leash {teaching the dog to walk on a loose leash, by clicking} ---- it lasted 2.5 hours, it was an ORGY of learning. I've got goose bumps. What a great day!

TRICKS

Put Away Toys

This is a fairly simple behaviour after you have the dog retrieving. If there are few resources for putting things away, there are plenty for clicked retrieves.

When the dog retrieves, get a wicker basket or a low box. Sit with the basket between your feet. Ask the dog to retrieve something and deliver it to you. Hold out your hands to take the object, but "drop" it at the last second. Basically you're telling the dog that you're going to receive the object, but you sucker him into letting go of it. Click him for letting go.

After a couple of these, hold your click that extra half second until the object hits the basket. Don't let this whole thing scare you. Basically, there is no difference between teaching the dog to put something in your hand and teaching him to put something in a basket. They understand the concept of the object going in the basket almost immediately. As you are successful, reach less and less toward the object until your reach has become nothing more than a gesture to indicate that the dog should put the object in the basket.

When the dog is doing well but manages to miss the basket, just sit and wait. If his retrieving is good and he's "in the game", he'll wait for his click, realize something is amiss, and then pick up the object and try again. One of my dogs figured out that she can get a whole bath towel in a laundry basket if she flicks it in, while placing it gently in requires her to pick it up again and again and again in order to get the whole towel into the basket!

When the dog understands putting the object in the basket, start again with another object. Another extension of this behaviour is to move the basket away from your feet, and further and further from you.

Applications: not only putting away toys. Taking clothes out of the dryer and putting them in the laundry basket. Picking up dirty clothes and putting them in a laundry basket. Picking up garbage and putting it in the garbage can. Picking up cans and bottles for recycling and putting it in the recycling bin. One of my two dogs gets the dog dishes from the dish basket (sets the table), and the other dog puts them back in the basket when the meal is over (does the dishes) _ a fair division of labour ;*D . One dog gets the remote off the coffee table, and then puts it back when I'm through with it.

3 Ways to Teach Back Up

"How do you train a dog to step back?"

a) Sit on the couch and stare at him. If ONE front paw moves backwards, click it. Then two front paws, then three, etc. This is a behaviour that most dogs find extremely funny - they really enjoy doing it.

b) Put a piece of bait right in the dog's nose, and then lure by trying to drag his nose down on to his Adam's apple (do dogs have Adam's apples?). Another way to describe it - pull the bait down over his chin and along tight against his bottom jaw toward his throat. If he starts to TURN his muzzle to get the bait, you a) went to fast, and b) didn't counteract the turn by pushing the bait slightly in the other direction. He will step back to get the bait. Click when he shifts his weight back, then when one front paw moves back, etc.

Stand with the dog in front of you looking at you. Put your hands behind your back so you are not luring his nose upwards. Step one step

at a time into his personal space. If he LEANS backwards, click. then click one front paw moving back, etc.

Everything Interferes with Everything

*"And if it hadn't been "go around" it would have been something else.
Question: Will working on "go around" begin to help with the rest"*

This staring at you default behaviour isn't a bug, it's a feature. EVERYTHING we teach the dog will interfere with something else we want to teach the dog. Picking it up will interfere with dropping it, down will interfere with sit, come will interfere with stay. Looking at you is a GOOD (GREAT) thing, he just needs to learn other ways of earning the treat. Yes, go around will help.

Here's a specific behaviour that will also help: sit him in heel position, tell him to stay, show him a treat, get him really interested in the treat, toss the treat out in front of you, click when he glances at the treat as you toss it. This is a very spectacular trick but dead easy to teach. Once he understands he'll be rewarded for looking at the treat on the ground, you can start adding a cue - Scuba's cues are WATCH (look at me) and LOOK (look at the treat), and when they're alternated, it makes her look inCREDibly intelligent!

Paw Tricks

*" Teaching the dog to do a *trick*, in place of jumping on someone."*

I TAUGHT Scuba to jump on people as a puppy because she developed a small submissive urinating problem. When SHE jumped on THEM, it didn't happen. When she was old enough not to feel the need any more, I needed to get rid of the jumping up trick. This got a huge boost at a dog show where they were selling delicious fries and there were a lot of kids. I'd go to ringside (conformation of course), plant Scuba in a sit near a family with fries, and then start asking her "her" questions - "Which leg is white?" (the answer to that is her right front, which she holds boldly forth for all to see), "Are you hungry? Did you wash your hands?" (the answer to this is to sit up and put her front paws over her head and hold them there so I can see that the pads are "clean"), and "Are you going to be a big dog? Soooooo big!" (same trick as washed hands, but standing up on back legs). All of this quickly resulted in plates of fries, and before the weekend was out, Scuba was initiating the scenario by approaching kids and showing them her clean hands and white leg, both of which need to be done from a sitting position. Problem solved!

Roll Over

"How to teach Zoee to roll over inside"

Use a bed 8*) Lie on the bed with her, get her all stretched out and relaxed, then start luring it. Lure her nose back along one side of her ribcage. As she follows the treat, when it gets to the middle of her ribs (front to back), start moving it slowly toward her spine (click and give her the treat as often as necessary to keep her confident, in the game, and following the lure). In order for her to put her nose on her spine, she has to start the roll. Once she's started it, pull it out away from her so she follows it and completes the rollover.

Teaching a Whisper

"How do you progress to teaching whisper, growl, loud etc"

It's a most amazing thing. Dogs in general don't learn by watching, but if you put your face near your dog's face and, in response to his WOOF! you say woof, pretty soon he'll respond by speaking more softly. And if you wait until he's looking at you and trying to communicate with you and you make talking growly noises at him, and move your mouth, he's liable to do it back to you. THEN you can reinforce the noises that you want.

At least that's what's worked for me. But Giant Schnauzers, Miniature Schnauzers, and Portuguese Water Dogs are extremely talkative breeds.

Teaching Get a Tissue

"I feel like i'm going in baby steps whereas I might be able to get by teaching a more global behavior."

It's certainly possible to teach this behaviour from scratch, but IMO getting a tissue is a tough thing to work on from scratch - tissue disintegrating, box moving, location of box, etc. And retrieving is such an enormously useful and impressive thing for a dog to know, I'd start with the global behaviour - his toys, a stick, THEN facecloth or sock (if you want him to retrieve clothing), THEN into the dissolving tissue.

Teaching Left and Right Turns

"The verbal cue is always given from the dog's perspective. So if he is facing you, and you want him to go to your right, you say left because that's the direction he needs to go."

I was sitting in an airport several months ago, working with Stitch on Left and Right. She was facing me, so the cues were "backwards". A woman sitting nearby finally started waving her arms and said "Oh, oh, I get it now! You're telling her the opposite so no one else can command her!"

And it's precisely for this reason that herding people use Away (move in a counterclockwise direction) and Get By (move in a clockwise direction) - clockwise and CCW are the same no matter what direction you're facing.

The Point of Tricks

"How proficient should she be on that trick? Can I count barking on cue as a Level 5 trick, instead (OK, I want to cheat... :-D), since it was captured?"

That's not cheating at all. The point of the tricks is to a) get you to practise each method of getting behaviour, and b) to "force" you to have fun with your dog. If you've captured barking, certainly you can use it as your L5 trick! How proficient? Can you show it to the neighbour without getting embarrassed because your big deal trick dog won't do the trick?

Trick of the Month

"The challenge this month is to train our dogs to stretch on command."

OK, I'll begin. A play-bow would be nice, but we haven't worked on it yet. Scuba stands up on her hind legs and stretches her front legs up, up, up (cue is a finger pointing up and "Sooooo big!"). She also does spins in both directions (one direction better than the other). One of my favourites is she comes up between my legs from back to front (so I have her waist between my legs and she is facing the same direction I am), then she can target my hands on either side, thus bending and stretching to left and right.

Trick of the Month 2

"People could also continue working on last month's trick."

Report: I decided to work on getting Scuba to touch the coffee table with her hip. Didn't go well.

I'm a bit frazzled with my nephew living with us - it's been years since I had to arrange school bus, lunches, socks, etc. Also smoke from forest fires in BC are causing me headaches and assorted other allergy frazzles. Bottom line, I didn't think it through enough when I started.

She's done so many different behaviours on the coffee table, from circling it to getting the TV remotes off it to getting shoes and magazines out from under it. So she was thinking very hard about all the things she'd done before.

Then I quickly realized my criteria was fuzzy - was her TAIL whapping it going to cause a click? Or was I holding out for an actual hip? Then I realized I couldn't TELL when her hip touched it unless she actually bumped into it. Then her tail started knocking stuff off it

and she had to bring me each thing she knocked off, just in case that was it. At one point the poor dear backed up all the way around the table trying to figure out what I wanted. My brain at this point slid out from under me and I gave up.

Then I decided to teach her to target my hand with the underside of her jaw, thus getting her to rest her head in my hand. She knows a lot of tricks with her front paws, so is quick to offer her paws, which often results in a rake, so I thought resting her head in a hand on cue would be a good way to meet frail people. This was a simple matter of luring her nose into position a couple of times and saying YES (can't hold a clicker, lure, and use hand for target at the same time), then luring without food in the lure hand, then refining her head-weight and position on the hand.

Then I switched to the other hand. OHO! ****TOTALLY**** different behaviour, she had NO idea what I was talking about, had to start again from scratch. Interesting demo of a known fact - change one thing and you have completely changed what you're asking for. So that turned out to be a 5-minute behaviour, complete with cue ("Precious" - as in "Isn't she precious?" or "Who's my precious?").

"I'm also going to go back to working on Lizzie giving out candy in a basket."

When we lived in town my Giant Schnauzer did this. I would hide behind the door, open it, and she'd walk forward with the candy basket. This would naturally result in squeals of joy, surprise, and astonishment - lots of fun. Once, however, I opened the door, she walked forward, and there was dead silence. Oh no, I thought, I've given someone a heart attack or something! So I peeked around the corner to see - my Giant Schnauzer holding her basket of candy, facing another Giant Schnauzer in a clown suit holding an empty basket, with her owner hiding around the corner! The two dogs must have thought we were totally insane!

Trick of the Month – On Your Head

Well, usually I'm too swamped by Life's little Challenges to think about training challenges, but this one happened to hit me on a perfectly quiet day with the llamas all fed and bedded down, my nest empty, and the dogs staring at me trying to get me to do SOMETHING other than watch the Monk marathon on USA!

I've posted two photos of Scuba (Head Balance Challenge), one with a pad of paper on her head, one with an empty Diet Coke can.

The first challenge was to get her to stop touching them with her nose. An extremely strong default behaviour - anything that comes within 6" of her head Will Be Touched. We did the paper first, the touching behaviour came back full force for the Coke can, as she's responsible for rounding up cans and putting them in the recycle bin, an equally strong default.

The next challenge was to get her to stop ducking her head as if she were sliding into her collar. I didn't realize how ingrained this was either - if she can't touch it or hold it, she should probably be wearing it, and the obvious way to wear something would be to duck your head into it.

On both challenges, I went slowly, clicked her for holding her head steady, and pulling the object away for a second if I went fast enough to allow her an error.

Once she figured out that I was going to put it (unassisted) on the top of her head, she had already been clicked many times for keeping her head steady - that is, not reaching up to target or ducking down to accept it - so by simply putting it on her skull and not letting go of it, I was able to click almost immediately for a steady head, and was able to let go and get the photo after only a minute or two more, and I was able to start adding the cue "Steady" by then as well.

Fun to watch her glancing left and right trying to see what was going on without moving her head.

I wonder if this would translate into a good command for not moving anything - she has a great stay, but it's a PLACE stay, not a position stay. I'm thinking (on this nice calm quiet day with no apparent emergencies) of maybe getting a CD on her this year (she's 7 yo, it's about time!) but she'd have to learn to hold a 3-minute sit stay without lying down. Might have been good in the beginning to actually do a little (gasp) TRAINING on having her hold still to have her cape put on. I never did actually train it, just asked for Paws Up, told her to stay, and put it on. Which worked, but training is always better, eh?

Teaching Modifiers - Left/Right

Going clockwise or counterclockwise around something is, for me, a matter of body language, something I use in agility, but I'm not heavy enough into highly competitive agility that I've ever bothered putting a word on it.

To use left and right as modifiers, I started this way:

I taught the L1 Hand Target. Then I hold my right hand to the left of the dog's head (dog is facing me) and get the volunteer Touch, so the dog is turning her head to the left to touch my right hand. When she's got it, I give it the cue Left.

Then I did the same thing with my left hand on the right side of her face, so she has to swing her head to the right to touch my left hand. The cue is Right.

When she's good at both, I put both hands up, one on each side of her face. I generally have to cue Watch to keep her from randomly bopping whichever hand she pleases.

Then I cue Left, Touch or Right, Touch.

This has hopelessly confused many people. One woman finally said "Oh, oh, I get it! You're telling her Left to touch your Right hand so nobody else can give her orders!"

Then I had her sit facing me. I sat down and put my feet on either side of her and got her to whop my feet with whichever paw was closest to it, eventually cueing Left, Touch and Right, Touch.

Then I had her sit facing AWAY from me and put a treat out about 2' to her left, and another 2' to her right. Then I cued Left, Get It or Right, Get It.

Then I put out pencils instead of treats and again cued Left, Get It or Right, Get It.

All these cues presuppose that she responds correctly to the modifier before being cued to do the actual behaviour, thus she has to look to her left on the cue Left before I cue Get It to have her do the Retrieve.

We then proceeded to Left, Spin and Right, Spin.

Now, facing toward me or away from me, we're working on agility equipment: Left, Go Through or Right, Hup.

This winter we'll be working hard on really getting this down pat, because for Draft Dog Excellent, she has to speed up, slow down, stop, turn left and right, and go straight ahead, pulling her cart, with me walking behind the cart.

I expect it might also come in handy in water trials on the 75' reverse retrieve if things go bad and she gets off course. Or if I send her from

the boat to land to get a line and she can't find the line on shore. Should we ever get to Courier Level.

There's a Directed Retrieve in American Utility obedience where you very carefully pivot the dog into position, carefully signal the correct glove, and then send the dog. I've had visions of merely standing still and cueing Left, Get It. Or, more realistically, not signalling for the Directed Jump, just saying Right, Hup. Should we ever get to Utility.

Teaching the Dog to Find the Door

I've never thought of teaching this to a dog in just that way, but it's something I teach to every llama - when I wiggle my hands (the Queen wave, only fast), find a way out of wherever you are. And I do it by just standing in a small pen, wiggling, and stopping immediately when they exit.

So for a dog I'd probably start in the bathroom or some other very small space, walk toward the door, and click when the dog dekes out. Then add a cue, then change to another room or space that they know, and finally move to strange new spaces.

The Trained Pull

OK, back to the subject. Some dogs are good at natural fetching - I don't call a natural fetch a "retrieve" because a retrieve is a trained behaviour. Fetching is good, fetching is fun, but it isn't in any way, shape, or form a trained retrieve.

Now, tug. Scuba is a natural tugger. Stitch, while a rowdier dog in general, just never seemed to think that tug was a polite way to interact

with humans, so she never did it. Or maybe she asked me to play tug, but with the bad disk in my neck, I couldn't do it, so she stopped asking.

For my girls, who are Service Dogs, a trained tug is a necessity - they tug to retrieve heavy things. They tug to open doors, to pull off my socks and shoes and jackets, etc. They need to be able to pull things when cued to do so. So I taught each of them to pull - NOT a natural play tug, but a trained behaviour. I did this by first teaching the Levels Retrieve, then gently pulling on a soft item the dog was supposed to be holding, and clicking any resistance she gave me. That progressed very quickly to her understanding that she was to pull back on the object.

Once the dog understood the trained pull, we just started playing with it a bit, and she soon discovered that tug was a wonderful way to play with people, and now hardly an hour ever goes by without her dropping some likely toy in my lap and hoping I'll initiate a game of tug.

WATCH **(Focus)**

Eye Contact

This is the same problem as when you're teaching him to hold a dumbbell, and he's giving you GRABoff. Really helpful people always tell you to simply wait for a longer hold - well, you've been clicking the dog for a lightning-hold, and you're not fast enough to notice and click the TWO-billionth-of-a-second anyway. What works for me is to go for TWO. Once he's In The Game with you, giving you the lightning-

glances he thinks you want, stop clicking one and click the second one. Pretty soon he'll get lazy. It's easier to just look at you than to look-look. Like, how about if I just glance, pretend I looked away, then glance again? Would that work? And you can agree that yeah, you'd probably be able to accept that instead...

"How many ways might I usefully respond when he breaks off for a few minutes?"

In the beginning I'd wait him out and start again when he's ready. After he's got more experience, I'd get up and walk away with the rest of his lunch. Another game I play is to drop a bit of kibble on the floor, and when she's really into looking for it, I cover it with my foot. Eventually she gives up and comes back to me and gets another kibble from me. What I'm trying to explain is that if it's right there, grab it, but if it isn't, you've got a sure thing back here with me, or you can waste a bunch more time sniffing the floor.

A Watch Glitch

"If it was a glance at substantial distraction AND a quick return to eye contact---I want to click dog's decision to avoid looking at the distraction and then reward her."

I do this too, BUT when I start to NOTICE I'm doing it, that tells me that it's happening quite frequently, which means the dog is learning that my criteria for Watch includes glancing away a lot, so I stop.

Eye Contact – Brain Contact

"I won't expect Honey to make eye contact with me while I'm zooming in a powerchair. "

When zooming, I only ask for Loose Leash Walking. Once I've got that, I click the dog to walk closer to me if necessary, or shorten the leash. Even a very short leash should be loose, so the shorter the leash, the closer the dog is to me. Watch Me I save for times when I NEED the face turned toward me. Zooming with eye contact is difficult mentally and physically.

Here's where many people don't understand - EYE contact helps both you and the dog understand where his focus is. But eye contact isn't necessary for there to be BRAIN contact. In LLW, the dog's brain is in contact, or he wouldn't know where you were to keep the leash loose. In retrieving, the dog's brain is in contact because he's doing what you asked or what his job is, knows where you are, and is bringing the object back to you, but obviously he's not making EYE contact or he wouldn't be able to move away from you to get the object!

Eye Contact

"I havn't been able to get my pup to keep eye contact for over 25 seconds... he is a 12 week old"

Congratulations, you have made instant enemies of every other person on this list. 25 seconds is PHENOMENAL. If there is any justice in the universe, when he gets to 16 weeks, he'll drop back to 10 seconds and we'll all love you again.

Eye Lock

"Would you clarify something for me? I have been using your training levels for years when teaching my dogs, and I am very pleased with the method and results. When teaching the WATCH levels, I have always looked right at the eyes of my dogs. They respond very well. However, other trainers have repeatedly told me to not stare them in the eyes, as a dog will find that threatening. When training the levels, I have not found that to be the case, even though I would not stare at a strange dog, since I have read that an eye stare is a threatening signal. Am I correct in this, or am I interpreting your "eye lock" incorrectly? "

There's nothing wrong with your interpretation. There's no similarity at all between two testosterone-and-beer-poisoned thugs glaring at each other across a pool table and the soft and gentle eye lock of two lovers. Of course you wouldn't stare at a strange dog, but when there's a relationship and the dog is volunteering, it's a beautiful thing.

Let Me Explain It Again

"Couldn't we say something like "Oops!" when the dog looks away? This would signal going back to the beginning. I know you don't actually say to your dogs "Let me explain that again!""

No, I don't actually say that to the dog ;*) , but think this to yourself:

Dang, we were playing this really great Watch Me game, where you watch and I give you treats. And you went and BLEW it. Too bad! LET me explain that AGAIN.

During that time, you've been NOT giving the dog the opportunity to make eye contact. If she's in the game, she's been trying, but your eyes aren't available. When you get through with those four (silent)

sentences, lock eyeballs and start again. So yes, I use a No Reward Marker, technically, but it's a body language marker, not a vocal one.

Look and Move

"How do I reach my goal when Honey won't look at me and move at the same time?"

If Honey won't look at you and move for more than four steps, I'd think you've taught her that there is a good chance of reinforcement when you're still, but very little chance while you're moving. If you're in a you-powered chair, I'd start with just the motion you make to get the chair started, click and treat if she's looking at you. Click for that X 10, then make the motion and actually move one of her steps. If she's still looking, C/T. If she's not, go back and click her looking during your motion another 10 times, then move one step. If you're having trouble wheeling and dealing (the treats) at the same time, maybe put the treats in your mouth and spit them at her - an icky thought at first, but lots of people do it. One can get quite accurate with practise!

Work this up in non-distracting circumstances until she can do it - I do my best work in the 5 minutes before each of the dog's meals, usually using the kibble from the dog's meal as the rewards.

When she's doing it on cue for the distance you want at home - and remember this is an escape-from-petters behaviour, not a comfortable way of walking through a store - get someone to help you. Have the helper stand quite a distance away and talk to the dog. Click for her making eye contact when you're still, then work her up again FROM SCRATCH to be able to watch you when someone calls her.

Another thought - if she's not making progress on the look-and-move, how about teaching her to target your knee or some part of your chair.

Then when you need to escape, you can cue the target behaviour and she'll be right with you.

On Attention Training

"Why are you putting so much emphasis, in attention training (Level 2), on watching the handler's face?"

It doesn't have to be the face, it could be the hand, or the knee, or the thigh, but I find people have a hard enough time, especially in the beginning, in seeing when the dog is looking them right in the eye, never mind being able to tell when he's looking at their knee. Couple this with the fact that, given an interesting event happening north of the training, all the dogs in a class will immediately swing subtly around to position their trainers so the trainers are facing south and the dog can glance north without seeming to not be watching. IME, without attention, there is nothing. I spent many years, pre-clicker, yanking a dog's body around getting it to be in the right place. Now that seems totally backward. I know now that if the dog's attention is where it should be, the body will be easy to place. I am asked so often "How do I make my dog retrieve?" when I look at the training and the dog's head is somewhere else totally. They're not working with a retrieve problem, but with a basic attention problem. To me, this is the entire basis of training. The dog and I are working together. If the dog isn't with me, I need to cut back to basic attention rather than trying to flog the dead horse of drop on recall or whatever. One thing people ALWAYS comment on when they see Scuba is how she pays attention. When people think their dog is giving them attention and I see the dog glancing at them once in a while, I'll frequently give them Scuba to work for a couple of minutes. And the response is always "Wow, I had no idea!" because Scuba gives, not attention, but EYELOCK. I use this eyelock as a way to teach heeling - in Stitch's blog I'm trying to get eyelock and then turn my back on her and have her come around looking for the lock again. This is the start of heeling. She naturally

wants to bring the dumbbell to me because the closer she is, the better eyelock she can give me. Once you have a dog that can give and hold that lock, there's an incredible amount of stuff you can teach just by moving your shoulders or your eyes.

"Was there any reason you did not include attention training in "Level 1"?"

Yes, I want people to be successful early and often in Level 1. When I was running classes, I had several students doing classes and private lessons for people in general - I was, the last few years, working just with people who wanted to compete in something. Students had to have an initial session with one of my students, and Level 1 was the entry level - needed to be completed in order to get IN to my classes. And, attention isn't easy. I think of Level 1 as something that can be accomplished with a puppy in a week or so. And, attention isn't something that comes naturally to most people, so I wanted them to see more experienced dogs giving that eyelock in order to make THEM want it.

Training Example

"When I say "look" if he does not look at me the first time I reach down and place my hand under his collar and with my thumb i raise his head and say "look" He pulls away from my hand and i have to do so again this time saying "NO" "Look""

OK, stop. You're not teaching him to look at you OR to stop. You're using a cue before you have any behaviour to go with it, so what you ARE teaching him is to ignore you when you talk to him. If you want to teach him to look at you, read the Levels book about Watch and then teach him to watch you. Do NOT include Watch in with a bunch of other behaviours until he has ALL the behaviours that you want individually. As for stopping, if he's keeping the leash loose, he pretty

much HAS to stop if you do, otherwise the leash will tighten, so my advice would be to stop working on trying to make him stop, and go back to working on Loose Leash Walking, while keeping QUIET until you actually have a behaviour to pin a cue on.

Any time you try to force the dog to do something, any time YOU are doing the work and the dog is just trying to avoid you, what you're doing isn't working.

Watch

"She's also terrible at WATCH - only making around 5 seconds consistently, unless I hold my hand up to my face, when she watches for longer (that's where the treats come from, those fingers!)"

Careful with that - I have a hard time with people trained to train autistic children. They're constantly moving a finger from the dog's eyes to their own eyes. This may work for kids, but for dogs, it just focuses them harder on your hand. When the dog's looking at your hand, she's NOT looking at your face! When I find the dog looking at my hand, I'll first put the hand out of sight so she can focus on my face better, and then put my hands out to the sides so she has an obvious choice - far left, no click, far right, no click, face in centre CLICK!

Watch and 300 Peck

"I know that you do not use a NRM (No Reward Marker), but for an exercise like 300 pecking the watch, would it be helpful to use something like "Oops!" when the dog looks away? This would signal going back to the beginning. I know you don't actually say to your dogs "Let me explain that again!" but sometimes I feel like I need them to know that they made a mistake here. I'm sure you have some great insight as to why this would or would not be useful...so I'm ready for it..."

No, I don't actually say that to the dog ;*) , but think this to yourself:

Dang, we were playing this really great Watch Me game, where you watch and I give you treats. And you went and BLEW it. Too bad! LET me explain that AGAIN.

During that time, you've been NOT giving the dog the opportunity to make eye contact. If she's in the game, she's been trying, but your eyes aren't available. When you get through with those four (silent) sentences, lock eyeballs and start again. So yes, I use a No Reward Marker, technically, but it's a body language marker, not a vocal one.

Holding Eye Contact

"Is HOLDING the eye contact something new you have added to the Get Lost Game?"

Holding eye contact isn't new to the Get Lost game, but I frequently don't get to do more than mention it in clinics because I frequently don't get any dogs in clinics that are yet able to get contact and seek it again when they've lost it. Holding onto it is usually a very quick next step to having it, losing it, having it. That would be Ailsby's Principle Of Laziness - like holding onto the dumbbell rather than grip-spit-grip -

it's easier to hold onto something than to lose it and have to find it again.

"Where is the pole? next to the dog? next to the handler? I'm not getting this one."

To use eye contact to get the dog around a pole, I'd get the dog in front of me grabbing contact, with the pole sort of poking into my right armpit. Then I'd turn toward the pole and past it so it was poking into my left armpit. Thus the dog would have to go on the outside of the pole in order to refind or hold onto my eyes. Then I'd turn back to the left so he had to go around the pole in the other direction. And I'd gradually move further and further from the pole as the dog successfully went around it.

Ultimate Chutes and Ladders Explanation (formerly 300 Peck Method)

"So by the time I get 10 second eye lock using Chutes and Ladders we have done 3,000 to get up to 10 seconds."

Only if she doesn't get it yet. If she gets it, you're doing:

Contact, click, treat.

Contact, 2, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, click, treat

Anytime she doesn't make it - Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, break - ooh, darn it, we were playing this great eye contact game and you blew it! Let me explain that again:

Contact, click, treat.

Contact, 2, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, click, treat.

Contact, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, click, treat.

Etc

Zen and Eye Contact

Re watching you - You frequently GET eye contact from hand Zen - like the dog looks at you demanding "Hey, did you die up there? Cough up the treat!" However, I'd be careful to make Zen and Watch two different behaviours. I can only think of two situations right now where they'd need to be separate, but remember I'm really fried right now - brain on overload and undersleep. If Scuba was herding sheep, I'd want to be able to tell her to stay away from them (sheep Zen) but NOT to take her eyes off the sheep. In conformation, I'd want to be able to put a treat on the floor and tell Stitch not to touch it, but to keep her eyes on it.

Oh, here's another one from conformation - I hold bait in my hand. If I have the bait in my thumb and index finger, I'm about to hand it to her, she's going to get it. Food held in my last three fingers is a gravity Zen - it simply doesn't exist. So if I want to show the dog's bite to the judge, or fix her topknot or adjust the leash, I hold the bait in my last three fingers and she totally ignores it. But her eyes stay where I told her to look. And sometimes (frequently) when we're going somewhere,

she's holding the leash loose and walking nicely but not heeling so not looking at me. I'll see some cat poop or another dog or something ahead and cue her Zen. I just flashed back to sled dogs - when you're approaching something on the trail that you don't want the team to get into - like another teamed stopped, or a loose pet dog on the trail, kid eating a hot dog, whatever - you cue "On by" and the team just sweeps on by BUT I certainly can't have them looking at me, they have to keep looking where they're going.

ZEN

A Matter of Self Control

"Why it is not acceptable for a dog to acknowledge friends as long as the dog is behaving appropriately"

For me it boils down to the whole "Life is a series of self-control issues" thing. Scuba sees my husband. Scuba gets all silly, totally ignores me, pulls on the leash and leaps on him in her glory to see him.

OR Scuba sees my husband. Scuba really wants to greet him. Scuba pays REALLY close attention to me. "Look ma, I'm paying attention! I'm watching you! Drop something so I can pick it up! Fall down! C'mon, ma, do SOMETHING gimpy so I can help you!" So because she has given me that truly special attention and not gone all "civilian" on me just because my husband is there, I tell her "Go see daddy!" and THEN she gets goofy.

The difference is she maintains her focus. This is a very smart, very excitable dog, and if I let her abandon her post to go see daddy, she'll start trying to go see kids, go see flight attendants, go see total strangers

walking down the street. She LOVES people. If I make go-see-daddy a condition of BETTER work, she still gets to see daddy, she still gets to be silly, but she doesn't have working the room as a default behaviour (which she is certainly capable of). And people in public see a dog that was INVITED to go see daddy, not a Service Dog that just got silly when daddy showed up.

A Pee-Zen Plan

"I was very tired and have health issues."

Well, it's a good thing you're a smart person then! Wouldn't it be great to be healthy AND smart again? Oh, wait, I don't think I was probably very smart when I was healthy, but it was a long time ago so I don't remember all that well...

Here's a plan.

Spend 2 days doing Zen in all the ways you can think of: floor Zen, hand Zen, food dish Zen, going-out-the-door Zen, toy Zen, dog Zen, people Zen - whatever you can think of, so at the end of 2 days, he's really, really got Zen on the brain.

On the third day, put the leash on and go to a place where there are TWO pee-able objects 2 or 3 meters apart. Maybe a tree and a bush, or two trees, or a fence post and your mother-in-law...

Walk him close enough to the first object that he's interested but can't get to it. Cue Zen. c/t when he stops trying to get to it. Work Zen on that object a couple of times, then walk him directly over to the OTHER object and tell him to pee on it. c/t

Or, do the same thing, but use the second object and permission to pee on it as the treat following the click (that was a good idea).

Pick a second set of two pee-able objects and do the same with them. Then give him a longer leash and go for a walk as you usually do. If, on your walk, you happen to see another two useful pee-able objects, practise pee Zen on them. If you don't, that's OK too.

When you see that he's getting the idea, start 300-Pecking the whole idea. pee-Zen TWO objects and cue him/let him pee on the third. pee- Zen THREE objects and let him pee on the fourth. And so on, until he's peeing on cue at the start of your walk, somewhere in the middle, and at the end, but not in between.

Using this plan, you're teaching him two things at once - you're working on DO NOT PEE ON EVERYTHING, and you're working on PEE ON CUE.

How does that sound?

"Just to be sure I am doing it right. I am a bit insecure.

The Zen of the food, I know it (at least I think....). My dog turns his head, and when he really really wants it, he backs off fast and with a great distance.

'going-out-the- door Zen' 'toy Zen', 'dog Zen' 'people Zen'

*When should I click? For what kind of behavior? Only backing off?
That's it?*

*Just like the food zen? Only a bit of backing off? Or coming close to me
(besides my knee)?*

*(When I wait and back off (like describe in the levels) or stand still the
dog comes back to me (I am practicing loosh leash walking on and on))*

Or Eye contact?

-I click, give the dog a treat, and then he will get the reward of going out the door, getting the toy, going to meet the other dog, going to be pet by people?

When should I start giving the cue? Normally I would say wait until the dog is very good in the behavior. With the food zen I started learning him the cue, when he almost all ways backs off when he saw the food, then I started naming it.

Thank you again. For you helping me!"

The reason I wanted you to work on all kinds of Zen for 2 days was so he would be really thinking about Zen and the Zen cue. It isn't possible for us to train for every single thing that comes up. Eventually we have to rely on the training that came before and just expect that the dog has enough education under his collar that he can generalize. I've trained food Zen, floor Zen, people Zen, dog Zen, and all kinds of other Zens I can think of, but when a waitress dropped a plate in a restaurant recently, and the plate shattered and went all over the floor, I quickly cued Leave It and then Stay. It wasn't good enough for Stitch to come toward me, I wanted her to stand still - and that's what she did, even while the staff swept and mopped around her.

We've done squirrel Zen and cat Zen and white Muscovy duck Zen, but in her recent water trials, Stitch retrieved her buoy rope right out from under a flock of wild ducks. Neither of these events are things I could possibly have trained for. A Levels dog is a dog with a lot of experience in different behaviours, and a really good foundation of on-cue self-control.

"When should I click? For what kind of behavior? Only backing off? That's it? "

HA - I can make it more complicated if you want me to...

"When I wait and back off (like described in the levels) or stand still the dog comes back to me (I am practicing loose leash walking on and on)"

It doesn't matter if he comes back or just moves away from the thing. Click for moving away and if he comes back to you, that's fine. If he's willing to give you eye contact, then you're teaching him to use eye contact to ask permission, as Lauren described (Lauren who teaches marking with not marking).

All Things Come Through Me

"Clarify how purely positive training is going to help me train my stud male not to leave the obedience ring to meet "sweet conformation bitch in heat" on the other side of a 2 foot high ring barrier??"

There is one thing this dog doesn't know yet, and that is that all good things come to him **THROUGH YOU**. If you asked him to stay and he went to the bitch instead, he simply didn't understand that the bitch comes to him **BECAUSE** he obeyed you.

I have four active stud male llamas. I put a female in the breeding pen, then I go across the yard to halter a male and lead him over to the breeding pen. If he is crowded up against the gate so I have to push him out of the way to get into his pen, I turn around and walk away. If I get into the pen but he's too busy looking at the breeding pen to give me his nose for the halter, I leave the pen and walk away. If I get the halter on him and he tightens the leash on the way to the breeding pen, **MY** penalty yards go all the way back into **HIS** pen, halter off, bye-bye, bozo. And if I have to put him back in his pen or walk away twice, the second time I turn "his" female out and get another one to be bred to a different stud. Thou shalt **NOT** come unto the **Kingdom of Heaven** save by **MY** rules, bubba! What this gives me is four studs who give me space, give me their noses, and walk very politely on leash.

When we're out in public, I can frequently tell when the stud spots another llama (or sometimes even a horse trailer, as that is how females arrive) because he suddenly becomes extremely polite and attentive to me, and concentrates very hard on keeping the leash loose.

All Things Come Through You

"How do I make the treats more motivating that the great outdoors, so I can get back the lets do more attitude. "

This is not a problem with the cues or the behaviours, this is still the same problem you were talking about before. He does not know that you possess every bit of joy in the universe, he thinks that it is HIS and you just get in the way by slowing him down. When you have solved the screaming/running problem, you will have solved this problem also.

Ankle Biting

"I really think I don't want him biting hands or feet at any strength."

This is a perfectly valid idea, but not one I am enamoured of personally. My dog will go "armed to the teeth" throughout her life. I want her to know as much as possible about how to use her weapons. No, she is never allowed to use her teeth to touch strangers, but if she DOES (nothing is ever 100% in a living organism - my 2 yo son, carrying a huge metal toy truck, fell down two steps onto a sleeping Giant Schnauzer matriarch who woke up with a dizzying whack on the skull from the truck requiring stitches. She put her mouth over his skull before she realized what was happening. She COULD have killed him right there, but her bite inhibition THAT MY DOGS AND I HAD

TAUGHT HER stopped her before she put even a mark on him) - ahem - if she DOES put her teeth on a stranger or friend, I want her to know what is a reasonable grip and what isn't.

There are a lot of great things you can do with teeth as well - I can tell her to grip a rope with her molars, for strength, or to pick up a credit card gently without denting it (they don't work very well when they are dented ;*D).

Avoiding Confusion

"How do we avoid confusion when training zen and hand-targeting?"

Part of the general education of the dog is that he starts to look for whatever is paying off right NOW, which means that it's HIS job to figure it out. Other than that, we use a fist, palm down, for Zen, and fingertips/thumbtip together, palm up, for Target.

Come as Zen Experience

"There must be something that Sue is thinking that I'm not thinking"

There's a Come through milling people, and a Come through milling dogs. Some dogs will find the people almost impossible, some dogs will not be tempted by people at ALL but will find the dogs very difficult.

Zen is the same. Some dogs won't want to take food from strangers at all, others will have learned that mom plays Zen but strangers have FREE FOOD.

Think of this like obedience trials. Usually you get the score you deserve (usually you have to diligently train each behaviour), once in a while you get royally shafted (sometimes you hit a behaviour that's much harder for your dog than was intended), and sometimes you get a much much better score than you deserved (sometimes you have to "train" a behaviour the dog can already give you in her sleep). That's the way life works, so to balance your won't-take-food-from-strangers dog, consider MY dogs, who, left to their own ideas, would cheerfully knock down anybody who walked by them to get a piece of gum out of an inside pocket.

Control the Resources

"I can't ALWAYS use positive methods... the dog will walk all over me, and I won't have control."

This is a common misconception among both people who don't know clicker training AND among some people who DO clicker train.

In fact, I tend NOT to have control over my dogs. Or my children. Or my llamas. What I have control of is the available resources. The dogs, children, llamas, etc have control of THEMSELVES. If the dog is on leash, and wants to get from A to B, *I* have control of B - that is, I have the leash, I can say how fast or IF we go to B. The dog has to control herself in order to give me what I want - I want a loose lead. I get a loose lead, that lead goes to B. I don't get a loose lead, the tight lead goes AWAY from B.

Positive methods do NOT mean total permissiveness. In fact, I would put the lifestyle behaviour of my Portuguese Water Dog up against the lifestyle behaviour of pretty much ANY force-trained dog.

And speaking of positive methods and lifestyle self-control, I have a young clicker-trained llama stud (he's been breeding for two years now)

being handled by a 14 yo 4-H boy. We went to a show a couple of weeks ago. That guy was in the waiting ring with intact females and other breeding males, and he was quiet and calm and attentive the entire weekend. Besides that, he was Best Male in halter. Then they went in Obstacle and Pack classes, and earned qualifying legs in each with 95 out of a hundred points! The judge said those were the best runs he'd ever seen.

Control the resources. Let the dog control herself.

Control the Situation

"He made me stand in the back of the class for the whole session and every couple of minutes he would ask me to say it and I would repeat that I couldn't remember it. "

And that takes me right back to Zen - "common" sense knows it doesn't control the universe. "Common" sense doesn't say "If you get pregnant, don't even think about coming home!" Common sense rolls with the universe and does its best to control the situation so its students learn. Ommmmmmmm

Doggy Zen

"Work on reactivity when you are not worried about doing agility. I take Rocky to show n goes. He is really good inside the building, so now we sit outside and watch dogs go in and out, which is more difficult. I only ask him for REALLY easy things, and we also work on automatic check ins."

This is a lovely post about fixing a problem calmly, sensibly, and reasonably.

Floor Zen Help

"Can anyone think of any other exercises to help teach the dogs to ignore the treats on the ground? Or ways to deal with this?"

Not diving for treats on the ground when moving is LOOSE LEASH WALKING - you start out teaching LLW toward the treat and away from it, then gradually get to the point where you can walk past it at a distance, then closer, clicking and treating for the dog staying with you.

Stand near a grate and cue Zen, then start tossing treats INTO THE GRATE. If the dog breaks the Zen, he won't get the treats anyway. Click and treat when he gives up on the grate and looks back at you.

Do the same thing sitting in a chair with the dog on a, say, 4' solid leash, and toss treats 7' away from you. Let the dog try to get them, and try, and try, and try. Click and treat when he looks back at you.

Play Monkey In The Middle with everybody teasing the dog but nobody but the owner treating. Then play it with everyone having a treat on the ground but covering it with their foot before the dog gets to it.

Food on the Floor

"No worries about an agility dog stopping during a run at a trial when they encounter something that might be a treat?"

If the dog's that... umm... slow... incompetent... uncommitted... I wouldn't have her entered in a trial. I've had dogs surfing the grass in practise, when we're standing around waiting to do something, but NEVER in a trial, never in an obedience trial, never in any kind of competition. That's what Zen is for, to show the dog that treats may appear anywhere, but they're only available if they followed a click.

Strange - the first food-based obedience class I taught was sandwiched in between two regular obedience classes. The instructors of the class that followed ours got very upset and made us vacuum AND wash the mats after each class. Seems THEIR class dogs couldn't concentrate on the training if there was any leftover food on the floor. Interesting that one of the chief "complaints" about food- trained dogs is that they'll always be looking for food everywhere, but it was OUR dogs who could work with food on the floor, and THEIR dogs who couldn't...

Great Zen Example

"I was thinking that you are using zen when you show a dog a treat while they are barking. They can choose to bark further, or be quiet to get the treat."

Nope, that's a bribe. With half a brain, the dog will pretty quickly start barking to get you to produce a treat. Zen means they get what they want by controlling themselves, but what they want and the correct decision happens BEFORE the "bad" behaviour. For instance, the dog sees a cat, wants to chase the cat, and at THAT point chooses to keep the leash loose in the hopes that she might get to chase the cat because she was quiet. Or the dog hears the doorbell, thinks about barking to get you to open the door but realizes BEFORE SHE BARKS that only quiet will get the door to open, so she decides to be quiet.

Greeting Zen

"His exuberance on first realizing that someone is going to LOOK at him, and even TOUCH him is just too much for him to handle without almost breaking his spine in two with the wiggles."

I really like Zen for any part of "stand for examination", whether it be the formal one or greetings. Define an appropriate behaviour for greetings - whether it be a staid formal stand, four-on-the-floor, sit, whatever. Then train your greeter. They look at him from a distance. If he's giving the behaviour you want, they go to the next level. If he's not, they turn their backs on him until he's giving the behaviour again.

If he was giving the behaviour when they looked at him, they can take ONE step toward him. If he's still giving the behaviour, they can take ONE more step toward him. If he's not, they turn their backs and go back to their starting place.

Just explaining Greeting Zen to him. He has to control himself in order to get what he wants.

Is This LLW?

"LLWs like a champ."

Cissy, since you solicited suggestions - I'd like you to look at that statement again, in light of the other things you wrote:

"It is difficult (impossible) to keep his attention when another dog is approaching."

"Pull, pull, pull to pee spot."

"The second he's released, it's pull, pull, pull, get me the hell out of here as fast as you can."

"The second he senses it's time to leave, his total focus is in getting out."

Now I'd like you to think about redefining your version of LLW. There IS no release for LLW, because LLW is a default behaviour. NOTHING is more important than LLW. How can he pull, pull, pull to the pee spot if he's LLW? He can't. What he doesn't know yet is that THE ONLY WAY TO **GET** TO THE PEE SPOT IS TO KEEP THE LEASH LOOSE.

No reward bigger than dogs? Fine, but Sue A REWARDED him for sitting by giving him dogs. Take it now a step further, and reward him for attention with dogs. THE ONLY WAY TO **GET** TO DOGS IS TO SIT AND GIVE YOU ATTENTION.

What you're describing is a dog that gives you what you want when it's convenient, and then tries to figure out how to get what HE wants (not all the time, but as a base idea of how life works). What you need is a dog who knows in his soul that all good things come THROUGH YOU, not because of you, not in spite of you, but THROUGH you.

It also occurs to me that all this avoidance behaviour you're describing might be too much responsibility. Myself, I'd cut back on what you're asking him to be responsible for re public access, etc, and step up what you're asking him for re base behaviours such as loose lead, focus, etc.

More on Everything Zen

"Thanks for the answer but - sorry to say - I am still in the dark. How does one teach "hand-Zen", picnic-Zen, etc?"

Teach hand-Zen by putting a juicy piece of wiener in your hand, showing it to the dog, then closing your hand around it so the dog can't get it no matter how much he licks your hand, paws your hand, sniffs your hand, mouths your hand, thinks about your hand. Sooner or later, he gives up and moves his nose away from your hand. At that exact

instant, you click, and drop the treat out of your hand onto the floor so he can eat it. Start again with a new piece.

You are teaching the dog the concept of self-control. The more he wants the treat, the less he has to want the treat ;*D - the more he wants the treat, the harder he has to concentrate on controlling himself. The only way to get the food out of your hand is to stay away from your hand. Leash-Zen would be the same as loose-leash walking, the only way to get closer to that cool dog over there is to concentrate on keeping the leash loose. Picnic-Zen - the only way to get that lovely potato salad is to stay off the blanket... Seems to me that self-control pretty much DEFINES clicker training..

Never

*"The doggie *never* got the treat in the hand because "leave it" means you *never* get what you were told to leave."*

I just don't see the point of this. "Stay" really means "Stay until you get to do something different". Something different could mean assuming another position (Down instead of Sit), it could mean chasing a ball, it could mean Come, it could mean roll over and play dead, it could mean I come back to you, praise you, and release you.

By the same token, "Leave it" means "Don't touch that until you get to do something different". Something different could mean Come, it could mean Heel on past it, it could mean grab it, it could mean dance on your back legs, it could mean get liverwurst from my fingers. What command EVER means "never"? If you teach your dog NEVER to go out the front door without you going out first, does that mean you expect him to burn to death if the house is on fire and the front door is open?

Agility has a very good example of this on the sticky contacts. The dog is taught to stop dead in the contact zone at the bottom of the teeter, A-frame, and dog walk. He can NOT proceed past the contact - until he's told to do so. With that established, the handler can release him off the contact at any time - when he's been standing on it for 10 seconds, when he's been standing on it for 5 seconds, when he's just landed a single paw on it, BEFORE HE HITS IT if she's sure he's going to hit it. Until you're released.

Self Control

"What you can teach is a collection of specific behaviors that certain humans may call self-control, but to the dog are really, "Leave the cookie alone", and "Don't chase the car", and "Don't jump on Grandma", etc."

In fact what I teach to the DOGS is how to get what they want. What I teach to the humans is how to get what THEY want. Since the humans start out defining their problem as a lack of self control in the dog, that's what I pretend to work on.

"Self-control" you cannot teach, because it isn't observable or measurable."

A good point. In fact "self-control" is one of the key things that I teach. What I usually neglect to tell the students is that it is THEIR perception I'm interested in, not the dog's. The dog is already doing what he can to get what he wants. In order to have a dog that can generally be described as having excellent self-control, the HANDLER needs to change her idea of what behaviours will get the dog what it wants.

"self-control takes a lot of work to teach a dog"

Dogs ALWAYS do what is right for dogs, according to what they know about the universe and the way it works. So do people. Thus I would say that self-control is a major part of life.

Where doggie self-control comes into conflict with human expectations is simply when humans have failed to teach a dog WHAT KIND of self-control is required. In fact, it takes no more work to teach a dog to walk on a loose leash than it does to teach him to walk on a tight leash. It takes no more work to teach a dog to sit for greetings than it does to teach him to jump up and squeal. It DOES however take a lot more concentration on the part of the human. You WILL be teaching the dog to give you the behaviour required to get what he wants. If you pay attention, you teach him the behaviours YOU thought would be good (controlled walking, sitting before going through doors, polite greetings, no countersurfing). If you don't pay attention, you teach him (or allow him to learn, which amounts to the same thing) behaviours you DON'T want that get him what he wants (tight leash, dashing doors, knocking people down in an orgy of enthusiasm).

Shoe Zen

" I have to put up every shoe in the house"

One of the best things about clicker training is that you're teaching the dog to pay attention to what is being rewarded RIGHT NOW.

So far you've taught him that retrieving stuff is rewarding. Now you have to teach him that retrieving unless asked - or retrieving shoes - or whatever you decide - is not what's being rewarded right now. What's now being rewarded is SHOE ZEN. Do NOT pick up shoes.

So, start from the beginning, teach him shoe zen just like hand zen. Don't forget to keep rewarding him from time to time.

Substitute Stuffed Toy for Food

"How do I teach our Golden Retriever just not to pick up the stuffed animal in the first place? He is very good at "leave it.""

Level 2 Zen involves the dog staying off a treat on a couch, and Level 4 is Floor Zen. Just use the toy instead of a treat. When you click, give the dog a treat or a DIFFERENT toy instead of the stuffy.

IOW, when you hear "I can't use food to train, my dog just gets hysterical. He can't think in the presence of food," you know that the trainer has taught the dog that he has to get hysterical in order to get the food. It's just a behaviour. *I* would have taught him that he has to pay attention to get the food (and will, if given half a chance ;*D).

Leave It Means Leave It

"So... what's a good way of teaching "leave it means leave it"?"

That's just a matter of being consistent - and I rarely actually SAY leave it - mostly I allow a consequence. That is, I babysit, but I let the dog blunder. I don't go around chanting Leave It every time they see things. To me, this seems like *I* am responsible for them leaving it, whereas I want THEM to be responsible. So if we're on leash, I take the loose leash as a default - the only cue for LLW is having the leash on. For stuff I drop, I don't say anything, I just let them dive for it and find my toe on top of the item. I don't pick it up until they've backed off (standard floor Zen at this point) withOUT a cue from me. At that point, they may or may not get a piece of it.

This Isn't Zen

"Zen: It surprised me she waited till asked to get the treat. I did reinforce her with a stay cue. She did very very well once I told her to stay."

Nyuh uh uh - this isn't Zen. This is stay. Yes, stay is a Zen behaviour, and good the stay is strong enough to keep the dog away from the food, but the point of Zen is that the DOG figures out how to get the treat away from you. The way to get the treat away from you is to stay away from the treat. Say NOTHING. Show the dog the treat, wrap your hand around it to keep it safe, then put it down right at nose level. Do nothing. Let the dog nose your hand, bunt your hand, bop your hand, lick your hand. He can't get the treat. He can't even get a TASTE of the treat. Poor doggie! Finally he gets disgusted and gives up. His nose moves away from your hand. Click! And you drop the treat on the floor. Then you start again and he comes to your hand with renewed vigour. But STILL he can't get it until you drop it when he moves away. Suddenly the room lights up with the lightbulb over his head - AHA, the way to get the treat is to stay away from the treat! I've GOT it!

" see if you can spot the other 'zen' exercises that aren't labelled as such."

Now THAT should be a homework question!

When to Begin Teaching Self Control

"I have recently be re-thinking at what point we should begin to train pups/dogs for the self control needed for public access."

Good points, all. Granted that you are correct, there IS frequently too much pressure put on young dogs to perform in ALL venues, so don't think for a moment that I'm arguing against this point.

OTOH, there are far too few dogs being brought up with the entire idea of self-control. "Oh, he's only three months." "Oh, he's only a year." "Oh, he's only five, he'll have plenty of time to learn to walk on a lead and not jump on people when he's... what? Twenty-seven?"

IMO, self-control is the foundation of civilization. This does NOT mean asking too much of puppies (or children), but it DOES mean using good foundation behaviours right from the beginning. I do NOT expect a baby puppy to walk on a loose lead for an hour at a fair, but I DO expect him to walk on a loose lead from the house to the car, and it's up to ME not to put him in a position where he can't control himself enough to give me a loose lead. Or carry him.

I don't expect a puppy not to greet people, but I DO expect him not to chew on people, not to bowl people over, and not to put his paws on people. To this end, I'll have him meet people who will teach him what I want him to know, and people who can't simply won't get to meet him.

IMO, there's never anything like "he can jump on people until he's 8 months, then we start training". The kid can't screech in movie theatres or throw food in restaurants until he's twelve. It's my job to teach him not to screech and not to throw food, and to keep him OUT of those places until he understands the rules.

Why Doggy Zen?

"And - while we are at it - How does zen enter into any other exercises compared to, for example, simply doing a click/treat approach?"

To me, Zen embodies the entire click/treat "thing". When I go out to feed llamas, they initially crowd around me, shoving and pushing, spitting at each other, trying to push my arm out of the way so they can get at the oat pans. I would liken this to a dog about which the

owner would say "Oh, he can't work for food, he just goes crazy if there's a cookie around". This isn't, IMO, a bug, it's a feature. We just need to tell the animal that pushing and shoving - the direct approach - isn't the way to the reward.

I take one llama at a time, stand in a pen with her, holding a pan of oats which I have covered with my hand. She can push, prod, nibble, whine, change sides, whatever, she isn't going to get what's in that pan. When she decides it's useless and moves her nose away from the pan, she gets the click and I hold the pan out so she can grab a bite. Then it comes back in to the protected area. It usually takes only two or three repetitions before she realizes that, if you want the oats, you have to stay away from the oats. I don't think of this as a leave-it exercise, though of course it leads fairly naturally in to a leave it, I teach this as a default behaviour. The **ONLY** way to get me to give up those oats is to stay away from me and the oats. Now the animal has a chance to observe what else is going on, to get clicked for other things (lifting her right foot, for instance), and enter willingly (and perhaps consciously) into the training game. ANY time I have an animal - dog, llama, whatever - that thinks the way to the treat is to climb all over me, the first thing I teach is Zen, not when I say to stay away, but as a way of life. Any time I have an animal that appears shy or reluctant, the first thing I teach them is to target my hand. Thus the bold animals are taught to sit back and think, the shy animals are taught to come forward and offer a behaviour, and we can get on with what we came to learn. In essence, Zen ***IS*** simply doing a click/treat approach, but **WHICH** approach you use is based on what the animal needs to learn to best prepare for the rest of its life.

Zen - General

"Zen: It surprised me she waited till asked to get the treat. I did reinforce her with a stay cue. She did very very well once I told her to stay."

Nyuh uh uh - this isn't Zen. This is stay. Yes, stay is a Zen behaviour, and good the stay is strong enough to keep the dog away from the food, but the point of Zen is that the DOG figures out how to get the treat away from you. The way to get the treat away from you is to stay away from the treat. Say NOTHING. Show the dog the treat, wrap your hand around it to keep it safe, then put it down right at nose level. Do nothing. Let the dog nose your hand, bunt your hand, bop your hand, lick your hand. He can't get the treat. He can't even get a TASTE of the treat. Poor doggie! Finally he gets disgusted and gives up. His nose moves away from your hand. Click! And you drop the treat on the floor. Then you start again and he comes to your hand with renewed vigour. But STILL he can't get it until you drop it when he moves away. Suddenly the room lights up with the lightbulb over his head - AHA, the way to get the treat is to stay away from the treat! I've GOT it!

"She quickly caught on to what I wanted, but each time I presented my hand she would quickly touch it first before leaving it."

These are the smart dogs that figure this out. On the good side, you've successfully taught your dog a chain - bop the hand, back off, get a click. While I do NOT try to teach Zen by keeping my hand away from the dog - the point of Zen being that the DOG stays away from the hand, not the hand stays away from the dog - once in a while you'll get a dog that develops this unwanted chain immediately, In this case, the fastest way I've found to get rid of the bop is simply not to let it happen once you've noticed it. So I put my hand down to the dog, she reaches to bop it, I pull it away, she settles back a bit, I put my hand back down, and click her for not being near it. Do this for a couple of days, and she'll stop the bop.

" I thought before that if he had a good 'wait' that self control would follow with maturity."

Yes, Pxxxx, it's difficult to tell the difference between Wait and Zen until you've seen them. What I like best about Zen is that from the dog's POV, the handler has nothing to do with it. I talk a lot about self-control, but in point of fact, it isn't. A dog that wants something will do what's necessary to get that thing. Dogs will climb huge fences, squeeze through impossible holes, mug people, whine, etc to get what they want. What Zen is, really, is just convincing the dog that the way to get what he wants is the counter-intuitive behaviour (like staying away from food) rather than the intuitive behaviour (like jumping up, knocking it out of your hand, and grabbing it). The key point there, though, is that the winning behaviour isn't the counter-intuitive one because the handler says so, it just is. Like gravity.

Some of these Zen behaviours I call "gravity behaviours" because I want them that deeply ingrained in the dog. For me, loose leash walking is a gravity behaviour. The leash isn't loose because I'm paying attention and commanding it, it's loose because God made these weird leashes that only go forward when they're loose. The fact of wearing the leash is the only cue the dog ever gets that God is expecting LLW.

I'd compare that to a Wait command where the whatever isn't available because *I* said so, where, for instance, the dog would ordinarily be free to eat whatever she happens to find if she's loose in the car, but I'm transporting a birthday cake and I need to get gas, so I tell her not to touch the cake while I'm pumping the gas.

For the initial stages of hand Zen, I use my fist with the fingers down. I never use this particular configuration for a target. If I wanted to use a target fist, I'd have my fingers up or thumb up - just so it's different. When I say Zen should be a gravity behaviour - well, a sandwich in my hand, that's a gravity rule. Scuba'd have to have a lobotomy before she'd think of grabbing food from my hand that she wasn't offered. Food on coffee table, same thing. Don't even think of asking. The fist configuration, though, quickly gives way to a cue like Leave It.

"His exuberance on first realizing that someone is going to LOOK at him, and even TOUCH him is just too much for him to handle without almost breaking his spine in two with the wiggles."

I really like Zen for any part of "stand for examination", whether it be the formal one or greetings. Define an appropriate behaviour for greetings - whether it be a staid formal stand, four-on-the-floor, sit, whatever. Then train your greeter. They look at him from a distance. If he's giving the behaviour you want, they go to the next level. If he's not, they turn their backs on him until he's giving the behaviour again.

If he was giving the behaviour when they looked at him, they can take ONE step toward him. If he's still giving the behaviour, they can take ONE more step toward him. If he's not, they turn their backs and go back to their starting place.

Just explaining Greeting Zen to him. He has to control himself in order to get what he wants.

Zen - Teaching the Concept of Self Control

"You are teaching the dog the concept of self-control." "Aha! Is this, then, what is meant by the references to "Zen"?" "

Precisely! This concept pretty much describes training - and civilization, if it comes to that - the dog learns counter-intuitive ways of getting to Heaven ;*D - going straight to the treat doesn't get you there, concentrating on the loose leash gets you there. Jumping up doesn't get you closer to a person's hands and face, sitting gets you there. Clawing open the hand doesn't get the treat hidden inside, backing away from it gets it.

Zen

"I open my palm and she won't touch it again. Would that pass?"

Try it another way. Show her your closed fist. Give her a cue - like No or Off. THEN present the open palm OR closed fist and she stays away from it. What we need here is response to the Off cue so she doesn't approach it and stays off for 5 seconds.

Zen

""you are asking for college level work from a kindergarten level dog""

Just before he started kindergarten, my son came home sobbing from the babysitter's. He was inconsolable. When I finally got him calmed down enough to talk, he said "I'm gonna have HOMEWORK!" Yes, I explained, that's just a little more work just like you did in school. "You don't underSTAND" he sobbed. "I SAW Todd's homework! I CAN'T DO THAT!" It took me quite a while to convince him that he'd have kindergarten homework, while Todd was doing Grade 12 homework.

Zen

"I don't think (please correct me if I am wrong) that Sue is advocating lack of control. She IS advocating different control. Instead of physically controlling the dog's body she is controlling the special resources to help the dog understand what it is that gets him/her what he/she wants. In a sense she is moving to control the situation, including the expectations of the dog and how the dog eventually looks at the situation."

That's exactly where I'm going. I use the leash to keep the dog from getting hit by a truck while we're working. To teach the dog, I control the resources. The dog is ALWAYS learning. If you don't control the situation, you don't control what the dog learns. Take that statement to the logical extreme. You must ALWAYS control the situation to ensure the dog learns what you want her to learn.

NEVER be afraid to get out of a situation if it isn't going the way you want it to. There will always be somebody near a bad situation bellowing "Don't let her get away with that!" Ignore them. "Getting away with" has NOTHING to do with a learning situation. If the dog isn't learning what you want her to learn, get out of the situation as fast as possible, then sit down and think about what happened. Decide what you need to do to ensure that you don't put the dog in that situation again until she can handle it, and then TRAIN FOR IT.

Zen

"You are expressing your opinion that both the ethology of canine social communication and positive training fit together in a training program"

That's exactly what I was looking for. Talk about "dominance", talk about heirarchy, talk about benevolent and responsible leaders - however you wish to phrase it, I want you to think about the possibility that allowing the misuse of "dominance" to make us so sick of the whole subject that we toss the baby out with the bathwater may be just that - throwing away something that can be infinitely useful just because some bozo on TV is using an exaggerated mis-read of it to make himself feel macho.

Have I mentioned how much I like Miss Manners?: "Many adults believe that the opposite of "polite" is "creative". Poor little mannerly children, they think - how suppressed and inhibited they must be.

Actually, the opposite of "polite" is "rude"... Miss Manners has... observed that when children are truly allowed to express their preferences, uninfluenced by the dreary adult expectation that they must all be artistic and original little noble savages, they come out resoundingly in favor of rigid traditionalism.

"The devotion to ritual exhibited by the average toddler in regard to his bedtime routine would make a nineteenth-century English butler look like a free spirit... A parent who does not civilize his child leaves civilization the task of defending itself..." Judith Martin

Zen

"I've been wondering I understand the concept of "Zen" being basically self-control and this expands into all areas of training (not going out of doors, not grabbing food, holding positions, etc.). But what I'm wondering is do you use "zen" training as the underlying flavor/lesson of the behavior you are working on and STILL label with other "commands?"

Good question. The idea of Zen, or self-control, permeates everything we teach the dog and everything we expect the dog to do in order to live in our society.

For a lot of the specific Zen behaviours, I don't use a voice cue for at all. Loose leash walking, for instance. The only cue I use for keeping the leash loose is that the leash is on. If the leash is on, the leash is loose, end of story. There are other possible variations on this idea - if the leash is on a harness, that might be a cue to track. If the leash is a skinny little cloth choker, that's a cue to lead out and put a quarter-ounce of pressure on it for conformation. But if the leash is on the collar, the leash is loose. I work this leash behaviour until it becomes DEFAULT, which partly means that the dog thinks it's so natural that she doesn't think about it at all anymore, and partly means that the

non-verbal cue of the leash and collar have become so powerful that no other cue is necessary.

Not going through an open door to my front yard is another example of a default behaviour, as is not getting out of the car until invited, and staying on any mat-like object. These things don't have voice cues, I just expect them to happen.

That said, I DO have voice cues I can use for those situations. For instance, as I've told you, squirrels are Stitch's evil nemeses. If I see a squirrel running across a sidewalk in front of us, I'm probably going to say "easy" or "be careful" - maybe to help Stitch out a bit, maybe just to make myself feel better. When there are farm machines driving around in my yard and the front door is open, or when I've parked on a busy street and am getting out of the car, I will likely say "stay" and give a hand signal, just to emphasize what I need, for the sake of safety - or again, maybe just to make me feel better, since the dog is no more likely to jump out of the car in traffic than she is in my driveway.

You always have to be aware of the real consequences of the dog making a mistake, though.

Then there are the behaviours that ARE Zen, but which step away just a bit, and they tend to have their own cues. I get eye contact as a default whenever I'm working with the dog, but I need to be able to ask for it as well. If my dog and I are out for a walk, the leash is loose, and we're just sauntering along, the dog is free to sniff, pee, watch the squirrels, taste things - but if I see a dead bird in our path, I will cue "leave it" to keep her right away from it. In other situations - when she's doing Service Dog Walk, when she's heeling, when she's doing Show Dog Trot - she has a default leave it and the voice cue isn't necessary.

I have cues for her to go IN a crate, get ON a mat, get IN the car - but, unless I'm stressed about the situation as I mentioned before, there's no specific cue for her to STAY in the crate, on the mat, or in the car. That's a given, as is staying away from anything I might be eating, whether I put it down or continue holding it. The cue's there anyway,

though, so I can tell her to get away from my mom, who has probably been feeding her under the table from time to time.

"Or do you not even use those labels and required that the dog look at that situation and apply their own learned "zen" behavior to accomplish it."

So you see I DO have cues for almost all the zen behaviours, but the more I train, the more the dog is In The Game working to get what she wants by giving me what I want, and the less I USE the cues to control the dog rather than working ahead of time to control the situation, the stronger the idea of Zen becomes in the dog's mind, and the more default Zen becomes in her behaviour.

One of the large controversies in Service Dog training is whether the dog does a default retrieve of anything I drop, or whether she picks up only things she's cued to pick up. Personally, I trust my training enough to want my dog to pick up anything I drop. She has picked up knives, and coins, and pills, and handed them back to me. If I see her going for a needle or a razor blade, I'm going to cue Leave It. I could, of course, teach her the opposite - not to pick up anything without a cue - but that doesn't work well in my life.

The more work *I* do to control the dog, the less work the DOG has to do to control herself, and the less control she learns.

"When you say "make it your own"

When I say make it your own, I'm encouraging trainers to take the particular behaviour and think of ways to apply it to their own lives.

I don't own a car" doesn't mean you don't need to teach your dog not to jump out of the car, but you can apply that behaviour to whatever you DO have - not to jump out of the tub, for instance. Not to dash out of an elevator. Not to step off a curb without an invitation.

Zen Cue

"We can TRAIN a cue which says "what you're doing is not allowed" and we can remember to use it as a prelude to redirecting the dog to behaviour that IS allowed."

Can anyone explain to me (or direct me to an explanation) of exactly how to specifically train such a cue?"

Personally, I use my Zen cue for so many things, it's ridiculous. For the first 15 years PTT (post traditional training), I didn't trust myself to say No without screeching, but now I do, so I use Out and No pretty much interchangeably (because I do, not because I should).

So approaching the Christmas goodies on the coffee table is Out, sniffing around the presents under the Christmas tree is Out, having her eye on a particular tree ornament is No, completely interchangeably for no reason at all except that's what would come out of my mouth.

Reminding the dog of Coffee Table Zen by using the cue once or twice should be enough to keep a trained dog off the coffee table certainly for the duration of the holidays at least. Theoretically having learned Coffee Table Zen two years ago, she should not even think about going near it now, but HA HA HA HA HA yeah right.

Anyway, the answer is "go through the Zen behaviours in the Levels to the point where you can use them effectively in your daily life."

"I never had to say NO for training Zen behaviours. Hopefully, little Bandit will be as easy."

If you have no cue, you have to retrain every Zen behaviour from the beginning. That's why I suggested you go through the Levels and train all the Zen behaviours, because training them involves not only teaching them to the dog but getting them on cue as well, so you CAN tell the dog to apply his Zen skills in new situations.

My sled dogs see a yappy little dog, or a cat, on the trail in front of them, and I cue "On by", which is a voice cue telling them that what they're thinking about (killing the cat) isn't going to happen today. I could also cue "No" or "Out", which are also my vocal Zen cues.

I drop a glass bowl on the floor, shattering it. It was full of stew. I cue "Out" which says "don't even think about coming over here!"

My niece is spending the day. She's 2, and I see my dog getting closer and closer and slowly opening her mouth. I cue "No" my dog goes and lies down, forgetting about the delicious cookie the child is carrying at dog-nose-level.

All these things were taught from the Levels Zen, including the voice cues.

Zen Cue

"Do you teach a "No" or "Leave it" or similar cue? If so, how? With my clients, I try to steer them away from saying "no" so much, as it seems to be overused so often. Is Zen intended to address all of this - they stay off from/away from everything unless given permission? I'm not quite clear on this."

It was nearly 10 years after I started clicker training before I trusted myself to be able to say "no" quietly, as an instructive word rather than one which tries to control the situation. I'm thrilled to be able to say that Stitch understands "no" to mean "that isn't what I meant" rather than "BOY ARE YOU GONNA GET IT!" or even "HA HA YOU BLEW IT!"

For instance, yesterday at the swimming pool, I pointed her at about 50 pairs of shoes and cued "take it". She wasn't aware that MY shoes were in the pile, so she bent to pick up the first shoe she came to. no. The

next shoe? no. How about this one? no. Suddenly it hits her - I want MY shoe! or maybe she got a whiff of mine from the pile. So she dived into the pile and came up with one of mine. yes! As far as I could see, she accepted the word as guidance in the task, not as a correction for trying or for getting it "wrong".

I DO teach Leave It as a Zen cue.

Adding a cue:

I add the cue in Zen Level 1. When the dog understands the presentation of your fist, and responds appropriately by backing off, AS she's backing off, I say (oh, by the way, that thing you're doing? We're going to call that) Leave It! Repeat the behaviour and the cue until you think the dog has heard it enough times, then try cueing Leave It BEFORE you present the fist, and see if she automatically gives you the Leave It behaviour. If she doesn't, practise another hundred times and try again. Thus when the dog has heard the cue 200 times, she's probably given you the behaviour 198 times.

You KNOW people need a Zen cue, and they WILL have one no matter what you think, so IMO, you're better off giving them one than having them just continue to bellow NO all the time. Give them the cue, show them how to teach it, show them how to use it, and once in a while they might actually get it right.

You can't train a default Leave It for life. IME, anyway. Stitch has a grand default leave it for popcorn at the theatre. For bouncing water toys at the pool. For the pool itself. For my food. For toddlers- walking-by food. For llama poop. For cats. Apparently (who knew?) for sandwiches in plastic wrappers that people on airplanes drop. She has no default Leave It for dead birds, dish towels, squirrels, or the stew in the glass bowl that I dropped and shattered all over the kitchen floor. These things require a cue, either because I didn't think of them in advance, or because they don't happen often enough for me to bother training for. Some people want their dogs NEVER to take food from anybody else. OK, teach that as a default.

Some people want their dog NEVER to pick up stuff when they're out walking. OK, teach that as a default. Some people want their dogs NEVER to go near toddlers. OK, teach that as a default. "You" pick your own defaults - things that are important to you - and for everything else, there's the cue.

Zen Discussion - Counter Surfing

" Even now, from a proactive OC standpoint, I could use much better management. I don't. The behavior gets stronger every month because of the variable reinforcement he is getting when he outfoxes me. "

Great post Debi. Scuba also can do cupboard doors (in a classroom, because one of the physios asked if a SD could get the kids' lunches for them, she jumped up on a 4' high counter and opened cupboard doors), etc, but isn't as bad as she could be because of two things -

ZEN - I taught her simple hand-Zen (the only way to get a treat out of my hand is to stay away from my hand - preferably 3' away or more), then built that up into floor-Zen (no food on the floor is for you unless I just clicked, and the way to get me to click is to stay far away from the food on the floor) and coffee-table-Zen and countertop Zen. This was working great except, as you mentioned, for the variable reinforcement supplied by me not training the dog every single waking moment of my life while the dog was learning every single waking moment of HER life. Which brings us to the other wonderful thing:

RADIO SHACK. Go to Radio Shack, and buy a motion detector. These are \$39 in Canadian money, probably \$29 American, about half the size of a paperback book, and you can put them ANYWHERE. Scuba was stealing dishcloths out of the kitchen sink, so I put it across the kitchen counter to detect anydog rising above the level of the countertop, and discovered that my Giant Schnauzer was also stealing apples. I put it across in front of the garbage can. I put it across the low

window in the parlour where they like to lean to see who's driving into the yard - voila, no more noseprints on the window, though they can stand back from the window a couple of feet, still see who's coming in, and not set off the detector. I put it across the bedroom door when we have company staying over so the dogs stay in the bedroom and don't wake up the guests at 3 AM, but I can still have the bedroom door open. I put it across the bathroom door in motels when you get one of those icky toilets with no lid (I absolutely HATE my dogs drinking out of the toilet). Yes, they know it is the motion detector which rattles on them, a couple of times I couldn't find it and I put a bottle of hand lotion on the floor by the bedroom door, and they wouldn't go NEAR the hand lotion hee hee, but once I've used it for a while in one place, they just start avoiding that place altogether - too much trouble to inspect the place carefully enough to be sure there is no detector there before they wade in.

And for those of you who have been thinking about it, I just got back from taking all three levels of Bailey & Bailey chicken camp - unbeLIEVable experience, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. I'm thrilled I didn't learn anything HUGE that I didn't know before, but I learned a gadzillion small improvements in training, and (count them) 32 new ways to improve my classes and seminars. If you have a chance, if you have to pass up five vacations, GO TO CHICKEN CAMP!!!!

Zen

"I've having trouble with the zen exercise , I put the treat in my fist , then I shove it near her nose , she then licks, paws and tries her tricks , finishing with down and looks at me expectantly . So, how do I proceed ?"

CLICK!

Never mind what her body is doing. Click when her nose moves 2 cm away from your hand. Drop the treat.

Start again. Click when her nose moves 4 cm away from your hand. Drop the treat.

etc

I started a VERY pushy teenage male llama yesterday. At first he thought if there was food in his pen, he could have it, period. I took in oats and protected the bucket by tucking it under my legs (I was sitting on a stool with my back to the wall). When he finally looked away, I clicked and held out a handful for him to eat. After 10 repetitions, I could hold the food in my hand and start telling him that food held at my body is unavailable, but food held away from my body is his. I did this by holding an open hand of oats at my waist. When he came inside my space to get it, I closed my hand. He moved away, I opened my hand, he came into my space again, I closed my hand, he moved away, I opened my hand, he came into my space, I closed my hand, he moved away. This time when I opened my hand, he looked up and made eye contact with me and didn't dive for it. CLICK! and I held it out for him to eat.

Zen vs Target

"Am I right in assuming that you don't attempt hand zen if the dog's threshold is, say, a foot or more? In other words, you would do this only if the dog lets you get close."

Right. If the dog is relatively "normal" in response to me, I start with Zen. If she doesn't trust me enough to come close enough to take food from me, I start with Target instead. If the problem is small, I could start with hand target, but that's not common. Depending on how bad it is, assuming the dog is far enough away from me in the room to be

comfortable, I can shape her to paw-touch or nose-touch my foot, or the client's foot, or a coffee table or chair. I mark and toss the treat near her.

My aim with hand Zen and Target is to balance the dog. At the extremes, a dog who'll mug me for the treat needs Zen, and a dog who doesn't want to get close to me needs Target. I'm always thinking about balancing the dog between trust and respect (that's respect taught with Zen, of course, not with an alpha roll!)(as if that worked). Monkey In The Middle is a balance game as well - between being comfortable with other people and paying attention to the owner.

So a dog who can't approach me doesn't need to be balanced more to respect, but to trust. Basically, the Sheltie initially needs trust, and the Golden needs respect ;*) When the Sheltie needs to be balanced a bit more toward respect, and the Golden needs to be swung a bit toward trust, my job is 99% done.

If the dog is NOT comfortable enough on the other side of the room, I need to deal with the clients in limbo, so I can get THEM to do some of the preliminary work on their own. I usually have them work my dog in this case, so I can see what they're doing, and then TRY to get them interacting with their own dog. In my own training building, I had spyholes in one wall so I could leave the room and still watch.

The Gentle "No"

The word "No" will tell her not to pick up something that I might want later but don't want now. This is a valuable lesson for Service Dogs, one that Scuba and I have used a lot in the last several years. It allows me to send her to a bunch of items and, from a distance, guide her to pick up the one that I want.

The Mind Your Manners Game

Start with one. Work hand Zen. Put that dog away. Bring out another & work hand Zen with it. Then bring out both. Work hand Zen with your right hand working one dog, your left hand working the other. When they have both figured out that self-control is what gets the treats to happen, start handing them treats one at a time - "This is for JOE" (hand treat to Joe), then "This is for PETE" (hand treat to Pete) & so on. This not only emphasizes the need for them to control themselves but also teaches that if the other dog is getting a treat, all you have to do is your job & you're almost guaranteed to get one as well, making the other dog getting a treat into a cue for MORE self-control rather than less.

Training Poop Zen

OK, back to refusing poop.

Since your friends aren't loyal enough to hold the poop or to step on it for you, you can start with the leash. Use the poop as your focal point, and work on loose leash until your dog can walk up to AND past AND over AND around the poop without tightening the leash. Sometime in there you changed your criteria from JUST a loose leash to a loose leash AND poop Zen. This means you're going to reward the loose leash with something other than the poop.

You can also work poop Zen with a stucco-wire or similar protecting mesh over the poop in case the dog has a relapse while you're working it. Once you've done all this great training, don't underestimate the power of No.

Training Food Refusal

The issue of floor-diving for food is a huge one in people's minds. When I first started exploring the idea of training without corrections, and using (gasp) food, I was teaching for a local kennel club. I had to WASH the mats after my class because the traditionally trained dogs "couldn't work with food all over the floor", even though, at the end of the class, my students always threw a "puppy party" and let their dogs gallop all over the room picking up any stray bits of food that were left over. "Unbelievably", OUR dogs COULD work with food all over the floor, because we TAUGHT them to work that way.

The key here, as I'm sure you can imagine, is training, self-control, environmental cues, and regular cues.

There are a number of ideas in this department - I'm not sure I'll remember them all at the same time, and I'm sure I won't get them in order, but here goes.

Zen, of course, starts in hand in Level 1. If this is a biggie for you, do it in all kinds of different hands - friends, strangers, kids, guys in turbans, people in uniform, women in long skirts, etc. Work with your hand both closed (as in the beginning), and open with food on your palm.

Play Monkey In The Middle with everybody you can find, with treats in their hands but only you feed the dog. They can call the dog, show him great stuff - work Monkey up to where you have only crummy kibble and everybody else has all kinds of delicious stuff (which doesn't matter anyway since he won't be getting it anyway, the choice is crummy kibble or nothing, not crummy kibble or garlic chicken). Work Monkey with everybody sitting in a circle, then with people standing up in a loose bunch chatting, then one or two at a time in "chance" encounters.

Move on to Level 2 - first teach the dog floor Zen, then play Monkey from the beginning again, but now everybody has their treats on the floor. If your friends are very agile, you can have them toss treats to

each other. Joe tosses a treat at Bill's feet, and Bill is then in charge of protecting it by putting his foot over it or exposing it, depending on how the dog is behaving. YOU feed the dog for refusing to get suckered. Work Monkey back up to the "chance" encounters.

Use Bill and Joe's feet to build an environmental-type cue into tossing treats. If the dog does something for you, and you're looking at her, and you click and toss a treat, she can hunt it down and eat it, but if you don't click or you're not looking at her, Bill or Joe will cover it up so she can't get it.

You can continue this thought with a city drain. Stand near a grate and explain this to the dog. Ask for something, click, toss a treat for her to pick up. Then look away from her and randomly toss a treat down the grate. She looks, she fusses, she fumes, she finally look up at you, click and toss a treat for her to pick up. Repeat, repeat, repeat, until she realizes that the only treat available to pick up is the one that followed a click. AND the best/fastest way to get a treat that did NOT follow a click is to look at you, because she'll never get that first one, but if she look at you, she'll get a click and another one.

Teach a hot dog retrieve - which morphs pretty easily into sandwiches-on-a-plane retrieves - which pretty much goes a step past all the "don't touch that" scenarios into "touch it but don't eat it", which is even more difficult. Once a dog can hold a steak in her mouth without eating it, walking over hot dogs to get to you isn't that much of a challenge.

Start with a frozen hot dog with a plastic wrapper on and a dog that knows a lot about a trained retrieve. Start from the beginning with targeting, opening the mouth - see why I want BOTH of you to hold the retrieve item?! - holding it for 1 second, etc. As you work, the hot dog will gradually thaw. When it becomes too hard for the dog, put it away and start again with another frozen one.

The key here is reward. Reward, reward, reward the dog for NOT helping herself, whether or not helping herself was an actual option (and usually it isn't). When you get to Level 4 Zen - out of sight Zen - remember that L4 Zen is *ZEN*, it's not a sit-stay. You can add a sit-

stay later, if you want, but the point of L4 Zen is that the dog practises Zen with you out of sight, not that she hold a sit-stay with you out of sight.

Then you can play Monkey with well-trained helpers, you out of sight. Reward the dog when you get back for refusing to be suckered by the helpers. This, of course, comes long after the dog has been successfully playing Monkey with you in the circle, with you out of the circle, with you away from the circle. Practise in the kitchen. Click and toss scraps at the dog, but sometimes just drop something and protect it with your foot if you need to. Click and give her something else when she refuses to be suckered into grabbing something just because it landed on the floor.

Work up to walking near and then over all sorts of goodies already there and people dropping goodies as you walk. I didn't even THINK about how hard movie theatres were before Stitch went to her first one. Holy cow, do you know how much popcorn is on the floor? When Stitch realized that there was actual popcorn mixed in with the popcorn pattern on the rug, she had to walk on tiptoe the rest of the time she was in the theatre! Not to even mention all the good stuff on the floor by the seats.

Zen and Eye Contact

Re watching you - You frequently GET eye contact from hand Zen - like the dog looks at you demanding "Hey, did you die up there? Cough up the treat!" However, I'd be careful to make Zen and Watch two different behaviours. I can only think of two situations right now where they'd need to be separate, but remember I'm really fried right now - brain on overload and undersleep. If Scuba was herding sheep, I'd want to be able to tell her to stay away from them (sheep Zen) but NOT to take her eyes off the sheep. In conformation, I'd want to be able to put a treat on the floor and tell Stitch not to touch it, but to

keep her eyes on it. Oh, here's another one from conformation - I hold bait in my hand. If I have the bait in my thumb and index finger, I'm about to hand it to her, she's going to get it. Food held in my last three fingers is a gravity Zen - it simply doesn't exist. So if I want to show the dog's bite to the judge, or fix her topknot or adjust the leash, I hold the bait in my last three fingers and she totally ignores it. But her eyes stay where I told her to look. And sometimes (frequently) when we're going somewhere, she's holding the leash loose and walking nicely but not heeling so not looking at me. I'll see some cat poop or another dog or something ahead and cue her Zen. I just flashed back to sled dogs - when you're approaching something on the trail that you don't want the team to get into - like another teamed stopped, or a loose pet dog on the trail, kid eating a hot dog, whatever - you cue "On by" and the team just sweeps on by BUT I certainly can't have them looking at me, they have to keep looking where they're going.

Zen

"I have Tigerlily look me in the eye rather than look at the food in my hand, but my students need to just stick with reinforcing the dog for backing off the item, I guess"

You're talking about two different behaviours - one is Zen (stay away from stuff), the other is eye contact. Eventually you can use Zen to GET eye contact, but, especially in the beginning, don't confuse the two, and don't teach the dog to confuse the two.

"But I think you're seeing a Zen/eye contact lumping issue pitfall coming up?"

Yes. There's nothing wrong with asking the dog for eye contact instead of at a scary/exciting/enticing thing BUT - I've seen this fail a LOT. Where it is fail? It fails when the dog loses eye contact. WHAM, he's back too close to the s/e/e thing, without the behaviour he had.

Let's say your dog is looking at cars. Wants to chase the cars. Gets all excited about cars. Nyuh uh, doggie, look at ME. Oh, okay, look-at-mom-look-at-mom-look-at-mom. As long as look-at-mom is happening, dog is under control, calm, able to think. Noisy car goes by, BAM, dog's looking at cars, car is close, dog is excited, day has gone to hell.

What you've done is substitute your own control (Look at me!) for the control you wanted to build into the dog. If the dog can't look at the car and think of Zen, YOU are the one controlling the dog and, when your control fails (and it will, oh, it will), there's nothing there to substitute. If, OTOH, you had moved AWAY from the cars and taught Car Zen, taught the dog to be able to look at cars AND think, you'd be able to work on eye contact THEN, AND have the self-control of Car Zen.

Zen: Hand Cue or Voice?

"How can I be sure she is responding to the voice cue rather than the fist cue? When testing, do I need to present the treat in the hand other than in a fist?"

It's Level 1. Calculus, Statistical Analysis, and rewiring your house come later. We're looking for early success which can continue due to small increments. We don't CARE if she's staying away because of the fist cue or the voice cue, we just care that she's staying away for 5 seconds. For some people, this is the first time they've been able to see ANY amount of communication happening with their dog. Do you need to present the treat in other than a fist? Not at all.

Rapid Fire and a Dog Who Loves to Swim

"How do you do that? And when do you use it? (For what reason) "

Rapid Fire is used to get the dog's attention once in a while. To overcome the fact that you and the dog are far too close to a distraction and there's nothing you can do about it. To let him know that you're on the planet with him and there are treats available to him.

How do you do it? It makes no difference whatsoever. ClickTreatClickTreatClickTreat, or ClickTreatTreatTreatTreat, or TreatTreatTreatTreat. WhatEVER.

What behaviour? The first three or four treats should get the dog focused on you. This is NOT something you want to do all the time - "Hey, pay NO attention to me, and I'll give you a million treats!" - but once in a while, it's a lifesaver. All the treats after the first few are given for paying attention to you, because you're shoving treats in his face so he's paying attention.

"But he was stronger than me...."

The short answer is to put him on a front-snap harness or a halter so he is NOT stronger than you. Also keep your hands into your belly so you have more power, and put all your weight on one leg behind you, with the other leg out in front for balance.

The long answer is to train him to walk on a loose leash and to look at you when he wants something so he stops thinking the way to get what he wants is to pull toward it. The way to get what he wants is to give you attention and a loose leash, but of course that's the opposite of what he knows now. Zen is the way to happiness.

"I want to teach him a word that tells him not to go swimming. "

That is also the opposite of how training works. Angry/annoyed/frustrated is what you both get when you concentrate on what he

should NOT do. Concentrate on what he SHOULD do, teach him how to do it, and give him good reasons for doing it, and you'll both be happy.

For instance, if he sees the water and thinks "Water! I have to give her Loose Leash and sometimes we go swimming!", you'll get your loose leash and he'll get to go swimming sometimes (without you).

Zen or a Bribe?

"I was thinking that you are using zen when you show a dog a treat while they are barking. They can choose to bark further, or be quiet to get the treat."

Nope, that's a bribe. With half a brain, the dog will pretty quickly start barking to get you to produce a treat. Zen means they get what they want by controlling themselves, but what they want and the correct decision happens BEFORE the "bad" behaviour. For instance, the dog sees a cat, wants to chase the cat, and at THAT point chooses to keep the leash loose in the hopes that she might get to chase the cat because she was quiet. Or the dog hears the doorbell, thinks about barking to get you to open the door but realizes BEFORE SHE BARKS that only quiet will get the door to open, so she decides to be quiet.

Zen Question

"I did start clicking when he backed off and that went well and moved forward. However he then started to back off right away and sit, every time. "

If the sequence is exactly what you're describing - you're clicking too late. Click the nose moving off or staying off your hand, BEFORE the dog has a chance to sit or down. If the dog is downing too fast for you to click, then how about starting with him in a Down already? Put your hand at his face while he's down, and THEN click his nose moving off your hand.

TESTIMONIALS

"Hi Sue

A long long time ago you gave a seminar in Abbotsford, BC, (I was the observer who looked really out-of-place with all these "dog people", yuk yuk.) Let me explain,, Long story short, Myself and my better half adopted a pup (well thought out), I knew I had to train for the first couple years to make the next decade go by effortlessly. We did a jerk & pull puppy class, I hated it, so did Penny. I forget how I found Karen Pryor and the clicker, and through that I found you. All I wanted was a dog that could be with us, just like a well behaved child,, a joy to have around. I read and studied everything I could get my paws on. And after your seminar,, I got it. I went on to train Penny to be a great citizen, taught her the weave poles from the couch, yuk yuk,, she NEVER EVER entered on the wrong side. Penny had a fairly large vocabulary, she loved playing the game,, she had a happy dance that she would do when she heard the clicker and "Game on". We played

our version of "Eye Spy", she never tired of earning those little pieces of cat kibble. I could go on and on about my Penny,, but that is not what this note is about.

I wanted to say thank-you for sharing your knowledge. The bond between Penny and I was rather amazing,, you taught me how to communicate with her,, and she taught me to be a good dog and human being. I work as a news photographer, and was taught by the people who brought me up in the industry,, to give back to your profession,, as it will come back to you ten-fold. I am currently sharing my dog knowledge with my sister, who at 50 has her first house after raising 3 kids on her own. She is adopting a 2 yr old dog from a family with young kids. It's a great scenario for everyone,, she gets to finally have "her dog", a family gets to grow from doing the right thing for an animal, a brother gets to share with a sister, a dog gets a home. From my profession I know that dragging your butt all over North America to do seminars / events,, can be a real pain in the butt sometimes. And one wonders if it is worth the sacrifices and effort. Please know Sue that what you do is appreciated by the masses,, and every now and then someone will be as honest as a dog and say thank you for sharing. Thank you.

I hope you and yours have a great summer. cheers"

Ward

"I loved the seminar. It was so much fun. Sue is a great speaker & has a great way of getting to the point every time. She is very consistent in her approach. I know for me the big light bulb moment was when I realized that I have a tendency to not back up far enough (chute!!!!) when working with Memphis & teaching a new behavior. Taking the time to build up his understanding of the new task is easily rushed for us (my fault of course) ;- I am looking forward to building on our leash work also. C/T for giving to resistance seems to be so simple, why didn't I think of that?"

"Sue, Thank you. The sensitivity and elegance of these descriptions are masterful. Wow!"

"I searched for an online training program, one that provides structure for training and still allow freedom for me to choose which behaviors, when and how often I work on them. When I found Sue's free online Training Levels I was doubly thrilled as it is a positive training program!

Almost immediately, I started working my 12.5 yo Golden Retriever and my then 16 month old mixed breed rescued pup & had immediate success success. Just 8 weeks of working this program with my pup created a bond that didn't exist before. We are having fun and she is now an eager worker. I also found a few holes in my own adhoc training for my old dog, who is titled in several sports.

The further I get into the levels, the more I find that it is ingenious in its approach-it goes far beyond a simple dog training class. The trainer actually learns how to train their dog! Not just the mechanics, but the thinking behind it. And you can then apply what you learned to any behavior you want to teach!

Each level builds on itself, and the requirements for that level support each other. A step by step approach makes it easy for everyone to follow. There is a built in component that has you take your dog to different locations to help him/her generalize the newly learned behavior. Practical behaviors such as go to mat and self- control are included too.

I think my favorite part is the emphasis on the eye contact at level 3. With just this, I have dramatically improved my Golden's Rally O capabilities and now have learned how to have precise control of my pup's movements!

I really like the Trainer Tracker where you can enter your training data and know exactly where you are for each behavior at any time.

As someone who is a hobby dog trainer who wants my dogs to be welcomed members of my community as well as have the potential for any other activity I choose to do with them over their lifetime (dog sports, assistance dogs etc), I highly recommend this program to anyone!"

Donna Hill B.Sc. (zoology) B.Ed. & Jessie Min Pin mix (Level 4)

"Hello Sue, You write you are a couch trainer, well, I am a couch reader. So I downloaded your lessons and your weblog about Stitch during some weeks. Yesterday I jumped on my bike and had all these pages printed and yes, I can read everywhere I want but mostly on the couch.

I'm totally convinced I'm going to raise my next dog this way. Since I like to talk about dogs I printed your lessons for three friends as well. I hope at least one of them will like this way of teaching and will think with me once in a while. On the other hand, as you write, we are on our own quite a lot of time. And the longer I talk with dog-owners the more obnoxious people I meet.

I'm sorry I didn't discover your site earlier. It might have rescued me from some problems. Since 2004 I raised three puppies for two different organizations which deal with service dogs. Most people here get a trained service dog. The puppy-walkers raise them from 7 weeks until 14 month. Or even until the wheelchair at one organization. When I got the last pup to raise I made the mistake by not questioning the genes. This was a Irish Setter X Meggelse (Belgium) sheepdog mix. Have a look at www.ennis.punt.nl Anyway, for me this wasn't the easiest dog and I wish I had known more about Zen, counting seconds, and a couple of other very basic thing which you teach.

One friend asked me to translate your site, but no, that will take me an awful lot of time. As we lived in Illinois US for four years I can understand what a countersurfing dog is. But to translate a kerflushiner pup..... I do love your style, many times I sit or stand giggling while I'm reading. For me, I think, it will help reading about Stitch while I'm using your lessons. You write so honestly that things don't always go as you planned them. I told my friend that I might write a weblog about training and living together with a pup according the lessons and principles of Sue eh Ailsby."

With kind regards,
Quirien Kusters Apeldoorn, The Netherlands

"Even trainers need positive reinforcement. Sue Ailsby is one unique trainer in how she has written "Training Levels" and shares her methods for clicker training your dog, on your own, at home (and on the road). And, she's there, on line, to answer questions about the Levels to anyone needing more information. Today, when people are busier than ever, having to make decisions what to spend their money on, or live in areas where dog training classes are few and far between, Sue is bridging these gaps so that you and your 4-legged family member not only create a closer bond, but are also welcomed wherever you go. The only thing better than using the Levels would be seeing Sue, in person, showing just how her "Training Levels" can positively train both you and your dog! "

Connie

"Hello Sue, I am writing to tell you how wonderful your program is and how it has made a difference to my relationship with our boys. We acquired our first boy at 10 weeks and thought we knew what we were doing. We started off with a puppy class and I was told to teach him

how to look at me and when I asked the instructor said you need to be more exciting.that didn't work. I then went to another trainer who used some correction, which really bothered me as I was taught to use a pinch collar for a while. After being asked to leave our agility class as I had no control over a very social dog, and many private sessions, several trainers tried to help me, even TTouch.....I was beginning to think that I was mad for trying to have a well behaved dog that I could take anywhere and have fun with. I really want to title him in anything. On the odd occasion, when we did Rally O, there was this eye contact that would just melt my heart, but it was fleeting and did not happen often.

The beginning of July I started your program with a friend and her dog. When we started Spencer had very stressed eyes....his top lid would lower and you hardly knew that he was looking at you and his lower lid was droopy so his eyes were very red looking. I am now able to see this wonderful little dog who tries so hard to please who today while out had beautiful brown eyes with no pink showing. We managed a 40' loose leash walk in a public park, dogs people, cars going by and a float plane taking off.

Words can never say enough, but I thank you so much for your program and I will continue with it and hope to reach level 7 someday."

Leslie Graham
Parksville BC