

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

by Jeff Martin



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Every year while judging Solms, AZP or VGP tests I see many older experienced dogs fail these tests through no fault of their own but rather their trainer. It's typically a dog going out on a track or across water for ITS reward but upon reaching game, the wheels fall off completely. Dogs will blink game and runoff entirely or pick up the game then run in the opposite direction often burying it before returning to its handler with "didn't find it boss". The doozy was a Drahthaar that collected the blind retrieve and

continued 10 yards to the opposite bank then plucked and ate both breasts completely in plain sight of its handler. That dog wasn't hungry rather that duck had become an object of torture and it had zero bond with its trainer, in fact I would say it hated him. The crazy thing is nearly every embarrassed handler has said he was going to go home and give it more force, **the exact mistake that caused the problem!!**

From my observations based on 50 years of training, these dogs have without exception had every desire for game completely punished out of them, the exact opposite to what good training is supposed to achieve!! There is a mania for force training that is the motivation for this article. I would like to shed some light on good training in the hope of correcting this needlessly recurring problem.

An **overview and goal of good training** is when every single task is broken down to its smallest steps, each taught separately before ever putting it all together as a completed task. The dog rarely needs a correction as it's mastered the previous step and training goes so smoothly it thinks it's his idea, the dog builds confidence and boldness with every step. Conversely **bad training is setup to fail**, too complicated with no step by step teaching with the dog likely to fail and be punished excessively. Put yourself in the dog's shoes, training is not pleasant in fact it's torture. Imagine the first time you set up your VCR or for younger readers your first laptop and printer with the salesman standing behind you with a riding crop hitting you across your head at every minor mistake, how would your learning progress ?? it doesn't help at all and you would hate the whole experience. I know people that routinely train unsuccessfully like that and blow me down tell or show others to do the same.

Remember nothing succeeds like success, make sure your training is setup that way under controlled conditions to succeed.

I can't overemphasise the importance of building confidence and boldness in a dog. You need an abundance of these as it's the dogs desire to pursue game, its initiative to think independently on a wounded game retrieve and so much more, that we harness in the hunting situation. Bold dogs are easy to train as they were born wanting game, they have developed a "can do" attitude rather than dejected and anxious wondering when the next thunderbolt is going to strike. Its NOT our ability to control their every step like a robot, if that's what you desire you can get all the parts needed at Radio shack and stop what you call training your dog.

I can't possibly outline my program to a finished versatile dog as that is the realm of a book rather than a newsletter article. I have written articles about "Mastering the water blind" which involved how to start memory blinds leading to cold blinds followed by live duck search scenarios. Another titled "Total Steadiness, Start at the Finish" laid out the step by step approach to VGP quality steadiness with no commands needed to be steady to a shot, flushed or fleeing game. Use these articles as further direction for positive successful training if that's what your dog has progressed to in its training schedule

I hope however to give a real life (L) examples to illustrate each of my points. An example of a **successful setup** is an older pup that hasn't been trained to be steady on point or flush, is brought on a long lead from downwind across the scent cone (preferably on a cool morning with a healthy breeze so that the dog encounters scent at a good distance) thereby encouraging the dog to point at a distance. There is zero chance of the dog catching game, no mistakes have been able to occur, no commands needed and its been nothing but encouraging praise. Conversely is a **bad setup** with the same dog where a bird is planted or dizzied, the dog is then set free to go search, it typically runs or tracks its handler to the end of the field where the birds are always planted, scoops it up crunches it to death before spitting it out to run off and look for another. There is nothing but multiple terrible mistakes in this second scenario, but people do it?

Typically, when training field work, I have a pigeon with 5 flight feathers on one wing taped together in my training vest. I start sending my dog off with the wind at my shoulder or 45 degrees across the wind. Initially I concentrate on a good search or quartering pattern with the dog maintaining contact and keying off my direction of travel. When I want to reward an industrious search, I quickly plant a bird with its beak locked under and between its wing feathers, this is unseen by the dog still searching up wind. I continue walking before calling the dog in, leash it up before doing a large circle downwind to then be well downwind of the bird. If the dog is advanced in its training and steadiness, I allow it to search and point, if its younger I bring it up on lead to avoid any chance of catching birds. Wild birds don't get caught before or after a flush, so DON'T ever train like this. You can place a bird at any time during the field search and it's a good idea to mix it up. This method avoids a lot of problems I commonly see like

following the planters tracks to the bird or poor quartering with the dog running off looking for the bird field or pointing orange tape or fibreglass rods or releaser antenna.

The dog is never rewarded by running off, self hunting and finding birds without you which is a terrible habit as a result of poor training.

Let's look at **you as a trainer** before getting into specifics. If this is your first attempt at training a dog, **you have far more to learn than the dog**. I liken it to riding a bicycle, at first it seemed impossible but once mastered you never forgot the lesson. You can and should read, watch or talk to many trainers. You be the judge of their qualifications or the finished ability of **versatile dogs they have trained and IF there something you want to emulate** BEFORE ever committing to train with them or following their methods. I have seen naive new owners send their versatile dogs to professional retriever trainers or field trial pointer guys and the results are always what you would expect, limited at best and often disastrous. They don't have the tools for the car you want them to work on.

Set out a plan and keep a diary for your long-term reference. Constantly review how today's lesson went, if it was successful or was it a disaster not to be repeated?? When things go wrong its **always best to blame yourself** for setting it up incorrectly. Dogs when developed correctly as youngsters want to please, so its far safer to blame yourself when looking for a solution or change in the method.

Long time experienced trainers have developed their start to finish methods and rarely change the overall schedule except for subtle changes to suit a particular dog but remember a dog **is always a direct reflection of its owner**. If any trainer has a weakness in his methods, all too often every dog he trains will show it until he corrects his method and himself, so as a new trainer **never stop evaluating your dog and methods**. No book or video can ever completely cover every situation, **its up to your judgement to evaluate** the myriad of situations that can occur and progress as a trainer, learn how to ride that new bicycle just like Lance Armstrong.

Another saying I like is "dog training is **about pulling a string not pushing it**", the latter never works. Its another way of making the point I stated earlier about nothing succeeds like success. A RL example of pushing a string was a guy who was training his first Solms dog. He brought out a huge domestic rabbit and commanded the force fetched dog to retrieve. That was its first introduction to rabbits and the dog refused. He damn near pulled its ear off before resorting to his trusty E-collar. As in a lot of situations like this, the dog saw no way out, so just bared down, gritted its teeth, took the torture and screamed its head off, rabbits were now firmly associated with torture. Neither he nor the dog ever ran a Solms test. A few years later he contacted me to tell me his dog had learnt to catch wild cottontails around his yard and would bring them to

his back door, clearly nothing wrong with the dog, as always just the attitude of the trainer. An example of pulling a string in this situation is having a smaller more manageable sized pet rabbit in a small hutch around the back of your shed that even a puppy can learn to harass without getting into trouble and build high desire before ever being expected to retrieve it. It just may stare down the rabbit and point, frantically trying to catch it when it hops around and pointing again when it stops. Take the hutch to your mother-in-law if this becomes a household problem in your yard, its done its job. Introduce this dog to retrieving dead rabbits once retrieving is polished on canvass bumpers using a step by step process and **I guarantee Fido will take to rabbit retrieving like a duck to water.**

I believe the first 6 months of a dog's life to be critical in its future development that if messed up or missed is near impossible to fully regain the lost potential, the concrete is set whether good or bad.

This early period is virtually only developing confidence with non formal training, hikes and exposure to all the sights, tweedy birds, mud and smells in the swamp or field, while at the same time being mindful of not creating problems that need fixing later. You can even go to a city park to have Fido chase ducks into flight or swim after them, its all good as a youngster. Be mindful of needless negative experiences such as a beating at the dog park by an 80 lb out of control mongrel (puppies have been killed like this) these outings are nothing but positive and fun, so I try to avoid dog parks and crazies.

A puppy's brain is as developed as an adult at 7 weeks just with no experience and they can learn an awful lot with positive reinforcement BUT their body is growing and undeveloped that overexercise and strenuous work **can physically ruin a dog for life.** Things to avoid as puppies are excessive jumping, running down flights of stairs, slippery hardwood floors, jumping off the tailgate, socializing with the neighbour's adult Rottweiler where it gets bounced into a gate post. I have seen all these and more where a pup has been injured permanently or have to be euthanized, so its best to be cautious to avoid them. These are babies so treat them like it.

Be realistic in your expectations with your training program. A dog is similar to 14 human years in its first year and 7 every year thereafter.

Your dog is likely to be 12-15 months old at its derby and another 4-5 months older at its Solms test. You can see that a derby dog and a Solms dog can be a similar age so **you must train according to the age of the dog** NOT delay training to the requirements of the first test you've entered. You just don't have a lot of time with 4 months between them to elevate a derby dog to a dog proficient in Solms requirements in that time.

Lets now look at the pup's mental health I've talked about what you should be doing in the first 6 months to set the foundation for more formal training.

You have probably read you are training the dog from the moment you brought him home and I've already, written dogs reflect their owners, both absolute truisms. I could expand that to say you are therefore intensely ingraining your own good habits as a dog handler, if this is your first attempt at training and you intend doing it right. They should be so ingrained that there almost automatic.

The worst case is when a puppy is purchased by assume dad the hunter. He's busy leaving early for work and getting home late with zero time spent with the new pup. The puppy is left with your wife to feed, the kids to torment and play tug-a-war with anything brought back to them after throwing and chewing on all manner of toys in the backyard. Just for good measure the two older family pet dogs have formed a pack order and are hellbent on making sure the newcomer is at the bottom of it!! At 6 months old he knows nothing other than how to eat, poop and be timid. This covers many mistakes I've witnessed and guys like Caesar Milan "the dog whisperer" have made millions of dollars correcting. If you don't have time to devote 30 minutes morning and night, usually 7 days a week **don't get a dog to train.**

You must have the goal of making that puppy **yours and yours alone** in that first 6 months. If you feed it, walk it day and night, spend as much time one on one, taking it outdoors on hikes a few times a week and are its invincible protector you have a good chance of forming the all important bond you need as a dog handler. In short try to live up to everything your pup thinks you are.

These European bred versatile dogs have a mindset that they just want to breath the same air as you and in Germany you often see them accompany their owners into a pub or restaurant and lie under the tables after hunting. So, **if your short of time to bond,** bring your pup into the house to sleep on the couch while you watch TV or sleep at your feet on its designated matt if the couch is out of bounds. If those are problematic, bring it inside after being fed and put it away nearby in the security of its crate. I avoid interaction with family members other than a pat and general socialising unless they themselves understand the keys to dog training. Everyone wants to spoil and play with the cute new puppy, make sure you alone do 99% of it. You might consider putting a crate in your truck and taking the dog to work with you with outings through the day.

Older dogs are more often than not problematic, if you are trying to create a confident individual dog. I've mentioned the problem of growling and them ensuring the new pup is submissive but the common mistake in the field is having it frantically follow the older dog like a tracing missile, missing the opportunity to learn to key off your direction and no chance of developing its own hunting instincts. I've seen a couple of

instances where the older dog barks frantically at any minor noise in the house, the pup instinctively follows the lead and starts barking frantically at nothing, to the point it's a spooked neurotic barking nutcase by 6 months old with zero security. Pups will learn every bad habit of the older dog so keep them separated.

The **very first training lesson** after bringing the pup home doesn't relate to game or detract from a love of game, so I do it for a number of reasons. It's the command "quiet", this is typically **the litmus test if your going to train him or he's going to train you!?!** Its late in the evening your new pup has had a full day, been fed, just been put outside to empty out and brought back inside to the laundry so you can retire for the evening. He begins barking despite having a radio with the Top 40 playing next to him. You command "quiet" with little or no response from Fido. The only thing you can do is enforce the command by **running** into the laundry repeating the command "quiet" as you grab his muzzle, maybe slap the muzzle at the same time, even growl "agh" like his mama would do as you repeat the command to reinforce the negative association. The punishment has to be just that, unpleasant and understood your not pleased. That may be enough for some pups but if not, you repeat the scenario as soon as he barks again. If you go back in and the pup is wagging its tail, you're not being firm enough, you want a reaction in him "oh no not this again". By being consistent & insistent you are establishing a great ground rule that there will be consequences for bad behavior, **this owner ALWAYS follows through.** You have to win this battle, it's a battle of wills and the first at establishing you as the pack leader. Big medicine as a last resort is to pick the puppy up by the scruff of its neck and shake it appropriately as you command "quiet".

If you can't do this with a puppy how are you going to be successful with an 80 lb adult? If you do all the other things I've mentioned to be a mega god in his eyes, this will in no way reduce the dogs love of being with you, you are firm but fair.

Conversely if the pup barks and you come running and heavens forbid reward bad behaviour by letting poor little Fido out, he is doing a wonderful job of getting what he wants and training you!! When you go hunting or overnighting at a hotel, a barking dog is a total nuisance. If you arrive at your hunting spot and the dog is going crazy in his crate, don't let him out and reward this bad behaviour but rather command "quiet" and if that known command is ignored, dragging him out and slap him up the side of the head as you repeat the command before being roughly thrown back in the crate. You continue getting your hunting gear together until YOUR ready to go. I've seen people mistakenly let 2 dogs out of their crates as they knock the owner out of the way, which then unleashes the chaos further with dogs running in all directions with a barrage of unheeded, unenforceable commands. Always slip a choke chain and lead onto a dog coming out of the crate to **avoid all this sloppy behaviour** even if its for walking 20 metres away before releasing him to go hunt.

The quiet command is also extremely useful with the neurotic barking pup that has learnt this from reacting to a stupid older dog. Always keep them separate as I've advocated but you get after it with the quiet command and don't allow this neurotic behaviour, this also works if your growing pup shows aggression to another dog you meet while on your daily walk, simply take it aside correct the bad behaviour and walk away from the other dog. These are problems you often encounter visiting the dog park and see numerous untrained dogs that think there the boss and their owners are simply the chauffeur that also pays for the groceries and mortgage. I hope your getting the picture that your daily habits and what you tolerate in this development phase is setting the groundwork for future training.

Things you should **do in this non formal training period** are as follows

Retrieving: use a tennis ball as it's a size made for puppies and there is no wrong way of picking it up. Send the puppy with an enthusiastic "fetch" as its still bouncing down the hallway as if the ball is still moving it encourages a quick pickup of its prize. You can also hold the puppy ever so momentarily after throwing it down the hallway before saying fetch as you release him, the pup will be inclined in future to wait for the command as he's never known breaking without this command. Do this down a hallway with the doorways closed and the pup can only come back past you. When he returns DON'T immediately take away its prize but rather pat and praise the dog profusely.

You avoid him developing the habit of avoiding you as the bad guy who steals his prized ball. In fact in the initial few lessons if he stops halfway back go to him and praise him to show your not interested in his ball, he will then start collecting the ball and coming all the way to you because it pleases you and he gets praised for it. If he drops it stop praising and grab the ball immediately. After some praise and if he has held it the entire time command "give or dead" and roll the ball out of his mouth immediately with no negotiations or tug-a-war, just take it immediately.

If he is mouthing it, as can happen, while your praising him, use your spare hand to hold it under the yolk of his bottom jaw so he can't do this and create a bad habit that will need fixing later. Do this retrieving a couple of times and tease him to develop a mania before throwing the ball. You can even tease him frantically and finish without throwing it at all. DON'T do this 20 times until he gets bored and quits you are trying to build desire does not diminish it.

Just think about the crazy Frisbee or tennis ball catching mongrels at the dog park with no training and yet with our purebred dogs bred to retrieve, we need to force them to go get the object, make sure you build desire as youngsters before you try to polish it, is my point.

Anytime your pup **carries anything** lead, stick, the garden hose, your dirty underwear whatever, praise it profusely and let him know you're pleased. Stop the praise when he stops carrying, you can easily develop a retrieving mania starting this with a puppy.

Pointing: most new owners can't wait to see their new pup point and get out the trusty fishing rod with wing attached, then do it until he tires of the whole boring game.

It's far better to do the following. Take the pup to your training field ideally with open cover with tufts of higher bushes or grasses that can conceal a pigeon at dog height. Use electrical tape to tape together the last 4 or so main flight feathers. Also attach a light 10 ft piece of twine to one of its feet to catch it easily at the end of training. Bring out Fido on a long lead with choke chain (not a pinch collar) tease him while hissing encouragement with the bird and hoist it into the wind so that it flaps down 20 or more yards upwind, unable to then be seen by the dog in this type of cover. Zig zag across the wind as you get closer to the scent cone but DON'T let him catch it. He will likely sight point momentarily before jumping in to try to catch it at which point you bodily pick up the pup and take him out of the picture. You can then go collect the pigeon and repeat the lesson. If you have a good helper, you can have them hold the dog while you go grab the string or tie the dog securely to a bush and collect the bird to repeat the lesson one more time. If your pigeon is walking off through open cover let it and take the pup out of sight before searching again for the scent cone. You will find this typical first sight pointing will probably evolve into scent pointing and may even into roading which in hunting is cautious catlike trailing a moving bird to enable you to get a shot and bag it. Cautiously relocating on a running covey of chukar is excellent and productive dog work. There is absolutely no need for commands with this puppy training, just gentle praise for correct behaviour, the dog can do no wrong because its onlead and set under controlled conditions to succeed.

Tracking: this has to be the simplest thing to teach a versatile puppy, it's akin to training a pig to be dirty. Grab an open mesh orange bag like those used for onions or oranges. You then put a fist sized chunk of ground beef or any fresh meat you have cut into tiny pieces. Set it up as you are always going to do in future, dab it a couple of times at the start (mark this spot with a ribbon nearby) then drag it only in a downwind direction. Go maybe 30 metres with this first lesson with blood and pieces of meat falling out enroute to reward his progress down the track and then place a small amount of meat in a food bowl at the endpoint to reward the pup, if you need to mark this end location, do it. Never return back up the track but circumvent away from it back to the truck to get your pup. When doing this as blood tracks later I always have a pocket full of pegs tied with iridescent marking tape and place the track in the same downwind direction placing a peg at human height on trees as you go. You can use electronic GPS devices which work great until the battery goes flat.

Bring out your puppy who has seen none of this preparation, have him on a broad collar with a long light lead attached. Take him to the start while you point at the starting point maybe saying “where is it” as he extends out a yard or two down the track praise him to keep going until he gets the short distance to the end. He has now taken a giant step associating following the blood track to his reward, food.

A lot of people make the mistake when preparing for the Solms of not doing any fur or feather drags until the dog is proficient at retrieving. This is the classic case of what I advise against, looking at the entire task instead of breaking it down to its simpler components.

You can do both with very young dogs and even though the test can be 350 yds, in training a young dog it will ideally be shorter. Tie the young dogs lead to your tailgate, get the dead rabbit or chukar or duck your going to use and tease the dog until its grabbing at it, maybe even going crazy trying to get it. Put the dog away in his crate while you set up the drag. Pluck fur or feathers to mark the spot and drag the game downwind just as in all track setups. The first track maybe 20 yds, what’s important is for the dog to associate following a track to getting its prize. Bring the dog out on a long lead and handle it as outlined for the blood track. When it gets to the end, he doesn’t have to retrieve it but quickly holding him back by his collar, scoop it as he gets to it and repeat the crazy teasing you did back at the tailgate. If he catches it very occasionally what bad habits can happen , he cant run off and eat it, he cant kill it as its dead just praise him enthusiastically before commanding dead and taking it quickly to put safely away in the back of your hunting vest. Think about how customs detection dogs are trained to detect fruit or food just for the reward of a tug-a-war with there favourite chewy toy to understand the value of praising and teasing the dog to build desire.

Water: the rule of thumb for water is don’t introduce the pup to it until its warm and you would go in with your bare legs. DONT make the common mistake of throwing an object in the hope of him retrieving it. He may but if he doesn’t you have set the dog to fail where he has learnt obeying a command is optional. The simplest way is put on your waders and go walk around the cattails in the swamp, if its only 2 feet deep or running depth that’s great. Just go with no commands or force and he has no choice but to follow or get left behind. If its ideally shallow and warm he just might start chasing nesting blackbirds or tearing all over the place enjoying this new wonderland. Isn’t that what your aiming for??

Field search: You can see by what I’ve written so far there are many poor training situations setup to encourage the dog to runoff and self hunt. For example, you may discover an area you walk your dog that has patches of brush that holds birds. Your dog soon clues into this running to destinations bumping and chasing birds completely out of

any control and oblivious to you its handler. This is clearly not an area to bring your dog to maintain good training and must stop at the instant you see it. However, change the method and you just may be able to use it for good training. Walk your dog on lead to within 100 yds of these hotspots before releasing him and use it for pointing work. Leash your dog before it can flush and chase and so you move to the next one on lead and repeat it.

It is so **easy to teach a dog within the first 6 months to maintain contact with you** and turn to follow you on a single command. These DK dogs are running and searching dogs which unravels new owners that want them no further than the end of a retractable leash. Here's how to train it, with Fido sent off to search correctly across the wind, turn as you command his name and "come" (or the whistle you intend using in future). One command and you're on the dead run in the opposite to your dog, run until the pup catches you and continue on ensuring his good quartering pattern. If he doesn't listen the first time, he gets lost and hide until he is in a major panic, hide and watch this evolve thoroughly before showing yourself and repeating the command and have it come running. Your dog will do his job of keeping in contact and heading in your direction with no commands or corrections needed whatsoever. Whenever you see him getting too confident set him up again to learn his lesson the hard way or whenever you use the command you are on the dead run away from him. There is one proviso in this with a young dog under 6 months, **NEVER give this command when he is unlikely to obey**, because if you do and he doesn't listen, you are simply teaching it that you are background music that doesn't have to be obeyed at a distance.

The **undisputable GOLDEN RULES to an obedient dog**. These are things that should never be broken, they are the rules you need to ingrain in yourself as a good trainer.

1. Once a dog knows what a command means **only give one firm command and expect a response immediately**. I more often than not train obedience on a long 10ft lead making it easier to catch and demand obedience in a millisecond response from you.
2. Goes hand in hand with rule one which is **don't ever give a command you can't or won't enforce**.
3. **demand correct obedience to a known command every single time**. If you demand it 90% of the time that dog will test your authority for the rest of its life (and maybe yours), if you correct every single time the dog stops testing it and obedience becomes automatic. If you want perfection you must ingrain the habits of perfection in yourself

Let's give some RL examples of the above rules, you commanded come to a dog sniffing grass 20 metres away. He lollygags almost ignoring it, your immediate response should be to run over as fast as you can, throw the lead at him if need be, to get his

attention to let him know you will always get after him and quickly repeat the command and demand the correct quick response and praise for it. It's his choice to obey with praise or your after him to punish him. You only get a dog listening to you at 100 yds on land or water if you've demanded obedience at distances shorter than that. Another example is the annoying habit of the dog stopping to pee 20 yds away from the handler while completing a retrieve. This is often substandard work that the handler has tolerated in training. With any command you MUST expect correct work. If not perfection in training where you can correct it, as you can't in a test.

Learn to communicate and talk dog. Every dog ever born instinctively learns to key off your body language and tone of voice, humans do the exact same thing, so make sure you use them both to communicate effectively. I often see people act like robots or mild people who couldn't show enthusiasm, praise or anger if their life depended on it. By using these your young dog should understand when you are pleased and when you are clearly not.

Praise and punishment should both have a consistent connection to a warning command before you actually do anything. By this I mean a slight short "agh, agh" might mean not quite right. While "good dog" might mean well done keep going with the correct behaviour and an animated jump for joy enthusiastic "good dog" might mean I'm so proud of you, you are the greatest dog ever.

Conversely a growling "grhh" like momma used to do might mean you keep doing this stupidity ignoring a known command your heading for trouble. A loud growling "NO" means you are likely headed for a licking if you don't stop immediately. The big punishment for out and out disobedience that you may have to use is to pick it up by its collar and eyeball it as you shake it severely. While I don't condone excess force, this is something you may have to do once or twice in a dog's life and that is totally dependent on the nature of the dog. Some may never need it but work purely for your praise. All commands should be given with the same firm spoken voice; with the tone you expect it to be obeyed. I often see people give a pleading command which generally signals the dog you are sure he isn't going to obey, and it runs off accordingly, dogs read you like a book.

You need to use these consistently for the dog to respond consistently and you will find if you can ingrain them in your habits **you can take anyone's dog and have it understand and respond to you within minutes** as if you've owned it all its life . People think this is some form of magic, it isn't its just a sign of how much your dog will respond to someone who's learnt to communicate in dog language.

You can go from praise to a warning in a millisecond when training a dog and it will learn quickly if applied correctly. A RL example is say when you are teaching a dog to

hold a canvas bumper. The first time it might pull away, the moment it stops fighting you use a soothing “good dog” and take it out as you say “dead”. In no time it will accept holding the bumper for praise but then maybe start mouthing or chewing it, in which case you say a scolding growling short “ agh agh”, if that isn’t enough to get the correct response a slight slap up the ribs or finger tap on the muzzle with the accompanying “ no” is usually enough to get the dog to stop mouthing, in which case you immediately go back to praise. Never panic a dog with punishment as it can’t learn, use just enough to get it to do as asked. You can see in this scenario you have gone from talking praise to the dog, to punishment to threatening punishment and back to praise in seconds and your dog will learn quickly if you are consistent in using them. I want to mention the **huge difference between intimidation and respect**. People mistakenly seem to think you need to intimidate a dog that every side glance from the trainer has it panic wanting to find a crack in the ground to hide. This is very poor training.

Respect is when the dog is always obedient and always has its tail up but knows you will enforce any command in a millisecond, anywhere and anytime. You are consistent and fair in your habits, your dog is obedient and thinks the sun doesn’t rise until you get out of bed in the morning. You train dogs because you enjoy them, and they reciprocate the attention because you are like this. Make sure your interaction isn’t all work and no play as it makes Fido a dull boy.

E-collars?? I have purposely not mentioned these until this point as some people think there is no way to train a dog without them. I even know owners whose dogs wear a collar every day of their existence even while in their backyard. Any reader with this mindset is going to discount the merits of this article before even reading it.

I once bought a collar to ensure a trained dog remained so in its first hunting season on chukar which is terribly hard going up and over hills. I stopped using it as it served no purpose with the dog concerned and have never used it since.

This article covers **the development of a dog worth training and training with ease**. At this age you should definitely NOT be using an E-collar and you should train a youngster as I’ve outlined whether you intend using a collar or not.

They are crude even in the hands of experienced trainers, just try imagining going from praise to warnings with an E-collar ?? it can’t be done.

Just to illustrate one negative real life situation is you wanted to correct the dog at a distance, it gets no response because the electrodes aren’t contacting the dog, so you increase the power and re-correct this time over using the degree of punishment and the correction is delayed for too long. It’s very hard to use praise with a collar effectively as

a manufacturer will try to tell you. In the hands of a novice it comes down to the common denominator of being able to punish and shut the dog down at a distance. New trainers often don't want to learn to train correctly they want a quick fix, so go buy a collar, some pay a puppy deposit and order an E-collar at the same time!! In every single case I've witnessed this, the owner stops learning to train and progress as a trainer. These same guys have dogs who routinely run through the collar self hunting and out of control having learnt no communication with the handler, go figure.

I heard recently of a so-called professional pointer trainer nicking the DK for moving after establishing point and wonder why his young students were ruined and blinking birds as a result of it having associated birds with lightning bolts. The same common scenario is nicking the dog returning with a retrieve that is dropped, guess what it takes a millisecond for the dog to associate retrieving as punishment hence resulting in the situations I mentioned in the introduction. **The point to remember is any training that takes an ounce of desire for game out of your dog is poor training and a giant step backwards.** Remember in a test you are going to have to take it off so don't become reliant on them.

E-collars are a North American phenomenon and are banned in most countries around the world on animal cruelty grounds. The result is many great working dogs have been trained effectively for centuries and continue to do so without E-collars.

Enjoy good training and I hope to shake your hand with a well-deserved Prize 1 Solms or VGP in the future.

Jeff Martin