

How Dogs Learn

4 Key Concepts to Remember



Bo McGuffee

Puppy Tutor Dog Training



Thank you for downloading!

May your training be filled
with joy and wonder!

May you and your dog grow
closer than ever before.

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Canine Learning Theory Has Evolved!

Hi, I'm Bo McGuffee, owner of Puppy Tutor Dog Training in Beloit, WI. My methods are force free and pain free. I never use intimidation, fear, pain, or violence to motivate a dog in any way.

Why don't I do that? For me, it's an ethical issue. But, I am also committed to force-free methods because of what the science behind modern dog training teaches us. And that's what I'm outlining for you here today.

In the last half of a century, we have learned so much about how dogs learn. It's downright amazing. And it seems like we're learning more and more every day. In this presentation, I want to highlight the most significant features of canine learning theory so that you can better understand how dogs learn and how the methods you use affect the overall behavior and well being of your dog.

How Dogs Learn: 4 Key Concepts to Remember

For simplicity's sake I have boiled canine learning theory down into four key elements that you need to know. As I go through these, I encourage you to consider your own life with your dog. Can you see how these elements play out in your lives together? Hopefully, when we are done here, you will become even more sensitive to the dynamics involved in your dog's learning and be able to take advantage of them.

Learning through Association

The first key element I want to emphasize is this: dogs ascribe meaning to most things through association. Sure, there are a few things that have meaning inherent in themselves, such as food. Food is necessary for survival, and therefore food is inherently good. But for the most part, things acquire meaning as the result of how a dog experiences them.



In this, dogs aren't a whole lot unlike humans.

When I was young, my parents took me on vacation every summer to see my dad's family in Mississippi. It was a very long car ride. Fourteen hours, if I remember correctly. And, it was extremely hot down there. I wasn't good at making friends, so I didn't really have anyone to play with. For my parents, it was an opportunity to see family. Meanwhile, I felt isolated and miserable. It really wasn't a "vacation" for me.

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We did this year after year, until I was in my late teens and could opt out. Up until that point, every year I would absolutely dread it. This, of course, had a lasting effect.

Even though the last vacation I went on with my parents was more than thirty years ago, to this day I absolutely hate taking road trips. Even the thought of going on a “vacation” somewhere spikes my anxieties. It’s probably no surprise that my ideal “vacation” is the “staycation”, where I basically get to stay at home with my cat and dogs.

Hearing this, you may think, “how odd”. After all, having an aversion to travel does not seem to be the case with most people. In fact, most other people seem to love to drive across the countryside or go see other countries. That's because they had enough good experiences on trips for them to have learned that when they hit the road it's probably going to be fun.



We all draw on our experiences in order to try to anticipate how things are going to turn out in the future. Those experiences shape how we feel about similar things and how we ascribe value to potential events. We then act accordingly. (In my case, I avoid road trips like the plague.)

Consider these questions:

- Is getting a dog good or bad?
- Is going into a church meaningful or meaningless?
- Is getting on a rollercoaster fun or scary?

Pages Omitted for Brevity



Learn to Apply Canine Learning Theory

My Canine Coaching Course will teach you (in your home or over Skype) to leverage canine learning theory in your own training.

- Session #1: Learn how to move your dog without physical touch.
- Session #2: Learn how to set a dog up for success in your training.
- Session #3: Learn how to teach your dog impulse control.
- Session #4: Learn how to use training opportunities to intentionally strengthen your bond with your dog.

Two Expansion Sets are available:

- "Deluxe Version" (6 sessions total)
- "The Complete Puppy Package" (7.5 sessions total).

Would you like to open a door to a new future with your canine companion? If so, contact me today!

www.puppytutor.me/canine-coaching-course/