

CHOOSING A REWARD

[November 2, 2016](#) ·

Training Tip Tuesday (a day late): Choosing a Reward!

I hope you all got the treats you were hoping for this Halloween! Do you know what your dog's favorite treats are? Finding what motivates your dog is a huge part of being able to successfully educate them.

* The reward must be meaningful to your DOG; not you. Just because YOU think your pup should just love those new, all natural, organic, very expensive treats you just bought doesn't mean they automatically make a good reward. See what your dog thinks of them!

* The reward doesn't always have to be food; toys, affection, play, environmental rewards – can all make great motivators!

* Whatever you are using; find things of different levels and learn when to use what. Low value rewards are fine for easy skills in a low distraction environment; but make sure you have higher value items for harder tasks in more challenging environments!

* There is no science to finding the 'right' rewards; just pay attention to your dog! What gets them excited? What makes them start throwing behaviors out trying to get more of it?

* Food is also a good indicator of stress and mental state. If your dog usually loves his cookies; and is suddenly refusing to eat – there's a good chance he's overwhelmed with his environment, or has gotten too frustrated with the task at hand. Time to take a break and retire to a quieter area!

* Also – if using food; aim for treats that are small and chewy (instead of crunchy). Crunchy treats take longer to consume, and the resulting crumbs often end up being a distraction to your dog.

* Don't discount human food; you don't always have to buy premade! Hot dogs or cheese cut up into small pieces works great, as does chicken. I aim for healthier versions and try to find hot dogs that are nitrate free. Cut up carrots can also be a favorite (I had a lab that would do anything for a carrot!)

So – play around! Try different things! (As long as it's safe for your dog) Spend time just watching and seeing what really excites him, what holds his attention, what can distract him away from other things. What makes him start offering everything he knows in the hopes of getting more? If given a choice, what does he choose over everything else?

<https://youtu.be/wQL3guy83g4>