

WHO CARES ABOUT TRICKS

[March 9, 2017](#)

Training Tip Tuesday (a few days late): "I don't want to learn a bunch of tricks, I just want my dog to listen to me!"

I have this conversation probably once a week. Back when i first started my journey down the path of dog training i remember listening to a world-renowned behaviorist explain how he taught every dog to 'shake paws'. I thought to myself, well that's stupid – who needs their dog to shake? They need their dog to stop barking and lunging, walk nicely on a leash, come when called – not shake paws! Now, years later, I get it. I finally learned. And I incorporate some trick training into all of my lessons. While it's true that the trick, in and of itself, doesn't necessarily serve a purpose - unless you happen to be in the performance industry - the training process does have a multitude of uses. Teaching your dog to 'shake paws' builds your relationship, helps form a bond, teaches you to communicate, and lets you have fun with your dog! It also helps your dog learn how to learn, and helps you learn how to teach. It lays a great foundation for other skills, and helps overcome challenges you may be facing. You've heard me talk about building up confidence through success (for both dog and owner), what better way than with tricks?

Think about the statement 'I just want my dog to listen to me'... wouldn't it be better to say "I just want my dog to understand me" or "I want us to work towards the same goal." or "I want to have a better relationship with my dog." All of these statements would result in your dog 'listening better' and all can be accomplished with a couple of tricks!

Trick training changed my whole point of view on training, and I think it's for the better. I don't care how hard you try, you CANNOT force a dog to learn how to get a bottle of water from the fridge when you say "I'm thirsty". If I punished him for not listening, he wouldn't go back to the fridge. If I forced him to put a bottle in his mouth, then how would he know to keep his mouth open for the door pull? What I can do is figure out how to communicate to him what I want, and using positive, reward based methods encourage him to keep trying new things until we've got it right. (by the way - the trick in the video below took about 20 min to teach)

So, before you discount trick training as silly and unnecessary – think about everything the learning process brings to the table. If you want to improve your relationship with your dog, maybe a good 'shake' is all you need!

<https://youtu.be/TefIH-Mzk5s?list=PLhrxmoB8-xDkNmpmNWc6o-aX06lY3VvZq>