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TEACHING YOUR DOG SOMETHING NEW

Three ways to teach.
There are many ways to teach a dog to do a specific behavior. Three of the most common are:
- Luring.
- Shaping.
- Capturing.

Luring.
Luring means showing the dog what you want and then rewarding that. The most common way to lure is to put a piece of food right on your dog's nose (close enough that he can lick it) and move the food in the direction you want him to go. Where the nose goes, the rest of the dog follows.

If, for example, you put a treat right by your dog's nose and slowly lift your hand up and toward his back end, your dog's nose will go up and his bottom will go down. Release the treat to reward that body position and you are halfway to having trained your dog to sit on command.

Shaping.
Shaping means rewarding approximations of a behavior, and then building on that until you get the behavior you want. It is like learning to dance. You don't start by dancing the Viennese Waltz; first, you learn the basic steps, then you practice correct body position, and so on.

Shaping is the dog-training equivalent of this training method. Say you want to teach your dog the down command. First you would reward the dog when his head goes down toward the ground. Next, for bending one front elbow. Then for bending both front elbows. Finally, you would reward a full down.

Capturing.
This is the organic way to train dogs. Basically, you wait for the behavior to occur naturally and then reward it. Say your dog is getting up from a snooze and does a yoga-like doggie stretch. If you get your treats ready in time and reward that stretch every time you see it, you will soon have a nice bow you can then put on command.

What to use when?
Luring, shaping, and capturing are all fine training methods, and you can mix and match depending on what you are training and your personal preference. Some advantages of each are:
- Luring is a way to prompt a dog to do something. It can be fast at the beginning.
- Shaping really encourages your dog to think and works well on things that are hard to lure or that dogs don't do naturally
- Capturing is great for behaviors dog's do naturally