

**Pamela Dennison (c) 2015**

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### **Premack Principle**

So what do you want from your dog? Think about this—really think. It's not easy, is it? Write it down if you have to. Come up with some concrete things you want from your dog. Otherwise, you don't know what you want from your dog! And if you don't know what you want, how are you supposed to train it? And how the heck is the dog supposed to know what you want? Dogs are very smart and may seem to be “almost human,” but as of yet, I don't believe that dogs (or spouses or children) can actually read your mind.

Do you want your dog to sit quietly at the door when the leash is being put on? How about calm behaviors when walking down the street? Perhaps bringing the ball and dropping it at your feet rather than 20 feet away? Wouldn't you like to be able to peacefully sit and watch TV or prepare his food dish and put it on the floor without being pestered? Maybe you'd like him to stop straining at the leash to get to his doggie pal so that he can play. You can get all of these changes, and more, by finding out what your dog wants and harnessing that desire.

After you've thought it over, write down your goals of exactly what you want from your dog. Now that you've written down, it's time to figure out and write down what your dog wants.

How will you know what your dog wants? Watch him carefully and write down what he enjoys most. Don't think you'll remember it all without writing it down, because you won't. Humor me and write it down anyway. It'll come in handy later.

Your dog might like to sniff; roll in smelly things; sniff; chase toys; play tug; play with other dogs; sniff; go swimming; go for a car ride; go for a walk, jog, or run; play in an open field; sniff; chase ducks, deer, or geese; herd sheep; find small rodents; be petted or massaged; sniff; practice agility; cuddle with you; sniff; get belly rubs; retrieve objects; sniff; eat food; pee on bushes (hopefully yours and not the neighbor's); get attention from you; be groomed (my dogs like to be groomed); and last but not least, sniff.

Be sure to pick only those things that you would want to use as reinforcers later. Sock stealing, paper eating, garbage raiding, poop eating, furniture re-arranging or destructive chewing, and any type of behaviors you don't want,, shouldn't be on this list.

At this time you should have two lists—one with what you want and one with what your dog wants. Now let's put them together.

### *The Art*

*Be creative and watch your dog. He'll tell you what he wants. It may change from day to day, hour to hour, and even minute to minute. That's okay—it gives you more reinforcers to choose from, hence "variety!"*

If you "give in" to your dog for any of the behaviors he wants but you don't, then you're reinforcing the wrong behaviors. "Oh, but I drove all this way so that he could swim." Too bad, Bucko. If you're serious about wanting a change in certain behaviors, then don't give in to the unacceptable behaviors you don't want.

You can make use of any of the things on your "what the dog wants" list to get what you want. Say you want to allow your dog to go swimming. You don't want him to drag you to the lake or pool. Make swimming dependent upon walking to the lake on a loose leash. No loose-leash walking, no swimming. If he doesn't walk nicely on the leash, just put him back in the car, wait for five to ten minutes, and try again. If, after three to four tries, he still hasn't noticed that you're alive, take him back home.

### *The Art*

*In the beginning, you may have to lower your criterion to start. A client has a dog that went insane when she saw water. The owner wanted to do loose leash walking to the lake; the dog wanted to go at top speed and drag her owner. So we started about 300 yards from the lake, got about three steps of heeling, and then raced with the dog to the lake and let her swim for a few minutes. The owner then said, "We'll never get her out of the water." Oh ye of little faith! Piece of cake! I encouraged her to come out of the water, gave her a treat and then instantly released her back in the water. By going back and forth - coming out of the water, doing some heeling and then a release back to the lake, within 30 minutes the dog was responding brilliantly and calmly - heeled when we asked, swam when we asked, and came out of the water when we asked.*

*Another client had 2 Beagles. Beagle have a natural tendency to have their noses on the ground 24/7. Why? Because we humans bred in that behavior. So instead of fighting their "Beagle-ness," we worked with it and exploited it. The first week, we asked (okay, we lured ... and then asked) for about one minute of attention and then let them go be Beagles for about 10 minutes. Then we repeated the process and asked for two minutes of attention, and then allowed 10 minutes of being a dog. By lesson number three, they were both glued to their owners for 15 to 20 minutes at a clip, and we did this outside in a 100 acre field!*

The moral? Work with your dog, not against him, and you will have the dog of your dreams.