



Golden Rule Dog Training

Come. Learn. Play

Using “Time Out” for Undesired Behavior

Dogs do what works! So, if a behavior is being rewarded it will be repeated and if it's not being rewarded, it will diminish. Sounds simple, but a reward such as human attention can be both positive and negative, and for some dogs attention is attention. So, if you are saying or yelling, “NO” and the behavior continues, the dog sees this as attention; there is no change in the behavior because he is getting what he wants! Since yelling “NO” rarely works, you need a better solution.

Note: If your dog seems upset or frightened by the time-out (shaking, hugging the ground, etc.), then DO NOT use the time-out; it is too harsh for fearful, anxious dogs!

Key to successful time-outs

- **Do Not** express anger when handling your dog, **DO remain calm! Do use a calm voice and be gentle.** Otherwise the dog may become afraid of you and will exhibit other behaviors you don't want.
- **Dogs need to be corrected immediately**, as they are doing something inappropriate. If you delay a time-out (after a couple of minutes, rather than immediately), the dog will not associate the activity with the correction. You must catch them in the act, otherwise you have to wait until you do!
- **Do not put your dog in a kennel/crate when he is in an excited state.** It's too hard for the dog to calm himself. The dog should be calm before he goes into the kennel/crate. The kennel or crate needs to remain a quiet and safe place for your dog. If it is used as punishment, he has lost this safe place.

Instead: If the dog is barking at the dog/squirrel and you redirect his attention and give him time to calm down and then reward him for being calm, it will be more productive and easier for both of you! Once he is calm, put him in the crate for some quiet time; your dog will be okay and be calm during a short break.

Note: One way to redirect your dog is to use a really good treat, let him smell it and then turn him away from the trigger (squirrel, dog, etc.).

- Also use treats when he is in the kennel/crate to reinforce his calm behavior and that the kennel is not linked to punishment. It is a safe place, used to calm down and relax.

When should I use a time-out?

Your objective in using a time-out is to help your dog understand what he was doing is not appropriate, such as: excessive barking, digging, excessive jumping up on people, humping, using aggressive play with another dog, etc.

Typically a time-out is used for unwanted behaviors. The key is to be consistent or the process will not work. Do not use this for all unwanted behaviors, pick one and work on it until it fades. Too many time-outs can cause a dog to run from you if every time you approach him, it's to give a time-out, so use it wisely!

You can also use this when your dog is running around fetching a ball and you think he needs a break. You can teach him to take a break so he learns to calm himself. Some dogs become aroused very easily and become really wound up! A time-out can be a down-stay for a few minutes while he gets treats and attention for being calm. Then you can release him to “go play” again.

Where to give the time-out?

Time-out can be done using a crate or a kennel only after he is calm (see directions above)*, or a down-stay outside or inside the house. You could also tether your dog to an area where he can't get into trouble. A bathroom or laundry room will work too. You can use a kiddy gate or exercise pen to block off an area in the house for time-outs too. It has to be a boring area for the dog, a place where he can't get into trouble and think this time-out is fun!

Tips to an effective time-out:

1. **ALWAYS STAY CALM!** Do not walk towards your dog when angry or frustrated, the dog can sense it!
2. **Catch the behavior within 3 seconds** and give the time-out. If not caught in the act, do not give a punishment or time out!
3. **Don't look your dog directly in the eye** when walking towards him (the dog can view this as dominant). Instead, calmly walk over and hold the dog's collar and walk him gently, but firmly to his time-out place. Do not say anything!
4. **You must be consistent!** Your family members need to follow the time-out rules! Every time this behavior happens there has to be the same consequence!
5. **Time-outs should only last between 30 seconds and 2 minutes (but no longer than 2 minutes).** This is a long time to your dog and you want to make that connection with the unwanted behavior.
6. After the 30 seconds to 2 minutes have passed, go and check on your dog: If he is calm, release him, but if he is not calm, walk away for another few seconds before releasing.
7. **No words! No Attention!** (Do NOT say, “Bad dog”, “NO” or give a mean glare, no heavy sighs either!)
8. Use a time-out area where he can't get into more trouble.
9. When releasing your dog from the time-out, use your release word or say, “Go play!”
10. If he goes right back to the unwanted behavior, start your time-out over again.
11. It could take 8 to 10 repetitions before the dog understands the time-out process.

Sources:

Jess Rollins, PetExpertise.com; Using a Time Out to Discourage Your Dog's Misbehavior

Using Time-outs for Dog Training; Cynthia Edgerly, BS, CDBC <http://www.bingodogtraining.com>

Lindsay Stordahl www.thatmutt.com

Jolanta Benal, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA; <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com>