

Let's Learn About

Effective Time-Outs



Time-outs are very important tools to advise your dog when he has done something you would prefer he not do. A time-out consists of removing your attention from the dog, which is often the most important thing in the world to them.

There are 2 types of time-outs. You can either withdraw your attention from the dog by turning your back on him or going into a closed room and leaving the dog alone; or you can bring the dog into an isolated area such as a crate or a bathroom and then leave him there alone. They are both effective depending on the situation. Time-outs should last for no more than 2 minutes maximum but always start with 30 seconds. If the dog is ignored for too lengthy a period of time, he will simply forget what behavior caused this consequence and you will have taught him nothing.

Your timing is VERY important when doing a time-out. The time-out has to occur **IMMEDIATELY** following the offending behavior. You want your dog to associate THAT behavior with all attention being withdrawn. That is critical. Behaviors happen quickly, so if your timing is off, you could wind up punishing your dog for a good behavior like sitting. When doing time-outs, use a marker word, like "Too Bad" or "Oops". And it should be said in a sing song voice, not in an angry tone. There must not be any bad emotion in your acknowledgment of the behavior. Bad attention is still attention and a dog will continue to exhibit the behavior for any attention, good or bad.

For time-outs to be effective, they must be consistent. For example, if your dog is barking in your face demanding your attention, you must implement the time-out every time he barks at you. If you do it one time and the next time, you let it go you are sending a confusing signal to your dog. Typically, repeating the time out many times in even one day will make an impression on your dog as to what will happen if the unwanted behavior continues. It does get tiresome to keep doing it, but the more consistent you are in doing it, the faster your dog will understand.

Here are a few behaviors where time-outs would be indicated but this is by no means all inclusive: dog barks demandingly for attention; dog play bites incessantly; dog jumps on people repeatedly; dog licks people excessively; dog constantly paws people for attention; dog behaves inappropriately with other dogs (for this, take the dog to a spot well away from the other dogs and remove his ability to play for the recommended time. This applies to resident dogs as well as visiting playmates); dog is being excessively active and exhibiting attention-seeking behavior.

A note on the barking issue; the only time you can waver on the timing rule is if your dog is still barking at the end of the time frame. If he is still barking when the time is completed, wait patiently for the moment that he stops and let him out **IMMEDIATELY**. So you want to be close by and if it seems that the barking won't ever stop, poke your head around so that he can see you. He will probably stop briefly, say "YES!" and rush to let him out. If he starts back up, don't say anything and go back to where you can't be seen and only poke your head out when he quiets. It shouldn't take long after that.

Always reward heavily for appropriate behavior. The key to phasing out the need for excessive time-outs is to always communicate to your dog what you want them to do as opposed to the inappropriate behavior that they are practicing. Give them options and reward for the appropriate choice!



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