

# Glossary

**Back chaining:** A training method where you start training the last behavior in a chain first, then the next-to-last behavior, and so forth.

**Barrier Frustration:** Frustration felt by dogs when a barrier (such as a crate, fence, or leash) prevents them from interacting with stimuli in their environment.

**Capturing:** A training method where you **mark** and reward a spontaneous, naturally occurring behavior the moment it happens. For example, clicking the clicker and rewarding a dog when he gets tired and lies down.

**Continuous schedule:** A continuous schedule is when you reward the dog every single time he performs a correct behavior. It is mostly used in the beginning stages of learning. Once the dog performs the behavior reliably, a **variable schedule** should be used instead.

**Counterconditioning:** A behavior modification term that describes the process during which a dog's emotional response to a **trigger** is changed. Often used along with **desensitization**, counterconditioning involves pairing the trigger with the dog's favorite rewards.

**Cue:** Any signal that causes a dog to perform a certain behavior is known as a cue; for example, saying "sit" to get a dog to sit. Words and hand signals are the most common cues. If you use a word or phrase as your signal (e.g., "sit" or "down"), it is referred to as a "verbal cue."

The word "cue" and "command" are often used interchangeably, but the word "command" has negative connotations (it sounds more forceful).

**Desensitization/Desensitized/Desensitizing:**

Desensitization is the process during which a dog is systematically exposed to a trigger at a level of intensity that he can tolerate comfortably. The level of intensity can gradually be increased in small steps as the dog shows signs of being less reactive to the trigger.

**Differential reinforcement:** A type of behavior modification process that involves rewarding a desired behavior so that it may replace an unwanted behavior. This should result in the desired behavior occurring more often while the unwanted behavior eventually stops occurring.

**Extinct/Extinction:** The process through which a behavior reduces and eventually stops existing after removing **reinforcement**. For example, if you feed your dog a tasty piece of food when he paws at you while you're eating, he will continue to paw at you whenever he gets the chance. However, if you stop feeding him pieces of your meal completely, after the pawing behavior temporarily increases (see **extinction burst** below), it should reduce and stop occurring.

**Extinction burst:** The phenomenon where a behavior becomes more prominent before stopping. If your dog has been pawing at you for food for months and you have rewarded the behavior by giving him a piece of food every time he paws, the day you stop feeding him the food, he is likely to increase the pawing behavior or try something else. It's almost as if your dog is saying "Hello, I am here, don't you see me? What's up with you? You usually feed me when I do this!" An extinction burst is a good sign, meaning that the behavior is on its way to stopping. If you keep ignoring your dog when he performs the unwanted behavior, it should eventually stop occurring.

Alternatively, the extinction burst can be put to good use, like when you want to teach your dog to play multiple notes on the piano.

**Fade/Fading:** Fading refers to the process of gradually decreasing a dog's reliance on certain aids. To learn more about the process of fading, see Module 3 of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.

**Fade the lure:** The process of gradually decreasing a dog's reliance on lures so he can perform the behavior without them. Once the lure is faded, the dog can be taught to perform the behavior by responding to a hand signal or verbal **cue**.

**Fade the hand movements:** The process of gradually decreasing a dog's reliance on hand movements so he can perform the behavior with a subtler gesture or verbal **cue**.

**Generalizing:** The process through which a dog learns to apply what he has learned in various contexts. For instance, when a dog has learned to lie down when you perform an L-shaped hand signal, then understands and lies down when you perform an I-shaped point toward the ground, it can be said that he has generalized the hand signal. Another common example is when a dog has learned to sit in the home and then reliably sits in the yard and on walks. The term can also refer to fears, where a dog may start acting fearful toward fireworks and then generalizes his fear to thunder too.

**Heel position:** Heel position is when the dog is right next to you beside your leg. To teach your dog how to “heel” (get into heel position), see “Heeling & Attention Heeling” in Module 2 of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.

**Increase criteria:** Increasing the criteria is when you raise the bar for success. For example, if you initially rewarded your dog for touching any part of a target stick and then started to reward him for touching only the rounded tip, you have “increased the criteria.” Usually, criteria should be raised when a dog performs a behavior reliably and achieves success around 80% of the time.

**Jackpot/Jackpot of treats:** An unusually large amount of rewards or a particularly valuable reward.

**Luring:** A training method where the trainer uses a lure to guide the dog into a desired position. Once the dog is in the desired position, the lure is then given to the dog to reward him. For more on this method, see “Using the Lure” in Module 2 of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.

**Mark:** When you let a dog know he’s done something desirable; for example, you could click the clicker when your dog sits to let him know “yes, that is what I want.” In dog training, clickers and **verbal markers** are often used to mark behaviors.

**On cue:** Putting a behavior “on cue” is when you use a cue to get your dog to perform a certain behavior (e.g., saying “sit” to get a dog to sit). Once a dog reliably responds to the cue, the behavior is said to be on cue.

**Operant mode:** To be in an “operating” state of mind, whereby the dog is willing to perform certain actions because of their reinforcing (or rewarding) results.

**Over threshold:** A dog is said to be “over threshold” when he is exposed to a **trigger** and his behavior breaks down. For example, if he sees the mail carrier and starts chasing him and barking, then he is over threshold. On the other hand, if he sees the mail carrier and remains calm, he is said to be **under threshold**. Usually the intensity of a trigger and how close your dog is to a trigger will have a big impact on whether he is able to remain calm (under threshold) or whether he panics (over threshold).

**Prompt/Prompted:** A prompt is any extra aid that can be used to help a dog perform a behavior. For example, if you point at a ball and tell a dog to pick it up, you have “prompted” him to pick up the ball.

**Proof/Proofing:** Taking training to a higher level by testing the dog's response rate to a **cue** in a variety of contexts. For example, asking a dog to sit around distractions or training a dog to sit at a distance from you. The more you ask for the behavior in different contexts, the more reliable it becomes.

**Prop:** A prop is any item that you use to help your dog perform a behavior. For example, you might use a chair as a prop to get your dog to lie down.

**Raise the criteria:** See **increase criteria**.

**Reinforce/Reinforced/Reinforcement/Reinforcing:** The process of strengthening and establishing a behavior by using some form of reward. The "reward" does not always have to be food, but can be anything perceived as positive by the dog (i.e., attention).

**Release cue:** A **cue** that releases a dog from a behavior. For example, the word "done!" can release a dog from a stay. The word "done" in this case tells the dog that he can now move freely. You can use another word, but care must be taken to avoid using words commonly used in conversation. Countless owners choose the word "OK," and later regret it as they accidentally say it in a conversation and release their dog from a stay!

**Secondary reinforcer:** Also known as a “conditioned reinforcer,” a secondary reinforcer is something that the dog wasn’t born needing, but which has become powerful through associative learning. The click of a clicker is something that is meaningless to an untrained dog, but by pairing it with a primary reinforcer such as a food reward, the click becomes meaningful enough to elicit a powerful response.

**Shaping:** The process of splitting a complex behavior into smaller, more attainable steps that are then trained in gradual progression.

**Target/Targeting:** When a dog touches a particular object (often with his paws or nose). For example, if a dog is touching a cone with his nose, it could also be said that he is “targeting” the cone. To teach your dog to target, see “Targeting” in Module 4:1 (Preschool) of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.

**Trigger:** A thing or situation that causes the dog to react, usually in a negative manner. For example, a reactive dog’s triggers may be the proximity of other dogs or people wearing hats, etc. An anxious dog’s triggers may be vet visits or thunderstorms.

**Under threshold:** A dog is said to be under threshold when he's exposed to a **trigger** and his behavior doesn't begin to break down. If a dog barks and lunges at a trigger he is **over threshold**, but if he remains calm around the trigger, he is said to be "under threshold."

**Variable schedule:** Rewarding a dog after he completes a random number of desired actions instead of rewarding him every single time (for example, rewarding a dog after every few successful sits). A variable schedule helps to keep a dog on his toes. For more on this, see "Fading Continuous Rewards" in Module 3 of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.

**Verbal marker:** A word that tells the dog he has done something right and a reward is coming. A verbal marker can be used to replace the click of a clicker. The word "yes" is commonly used as a verbal marker. To learn more about this, see "What You Will Need" in Module 1 of the *Brain Training for Dogs* course.