Pup Profile



Behavioral Foster Guide

Pup Profile



Hello and Welcome!

Thank you for fostering.

Pup Profile deeply appreciates your willingness to open your home and heart to a dog with behavioral challenges.

This is a generalized guide to offer tips to help navigate your new foster's temperament and needs. Pup Profile always recommends deferring to your rescue organization's protocols and alerting them of any behavior changes.

Behavioral Foster Guide Content:

- **Body Language: Basic Cues**
- **Behavior Modification Techniques**
- **Basic Steps for Solving a Problem Behavior**
- **Final Notes**

Body Language: Basic Cues

Animals, especially domestic dogs, often communicate non-verbally with their body language. Dogs use their body, tail, eyes, ears and facial expressions to communicate physical and emotional needs or states.

The graphic below breaks down some of the different ways a dog can alter their body language to communicate.



Behavior Modification Techniques

Fosters can provide behavioral support to their pup through utilizing assigned behavior modification techniques and should have a basic understanding of how dogs communicate and learn.

- **Positive Reinforcement** – means to add (that's the positive) something desired to the environment to increase (or reinforce) the frequency or likelihood of the behavior occurring.
    - Example: Giving the dog something they desire (like a treat, verbal praise or a toy) when they sit will lead to the dog being more likely to sit more often.

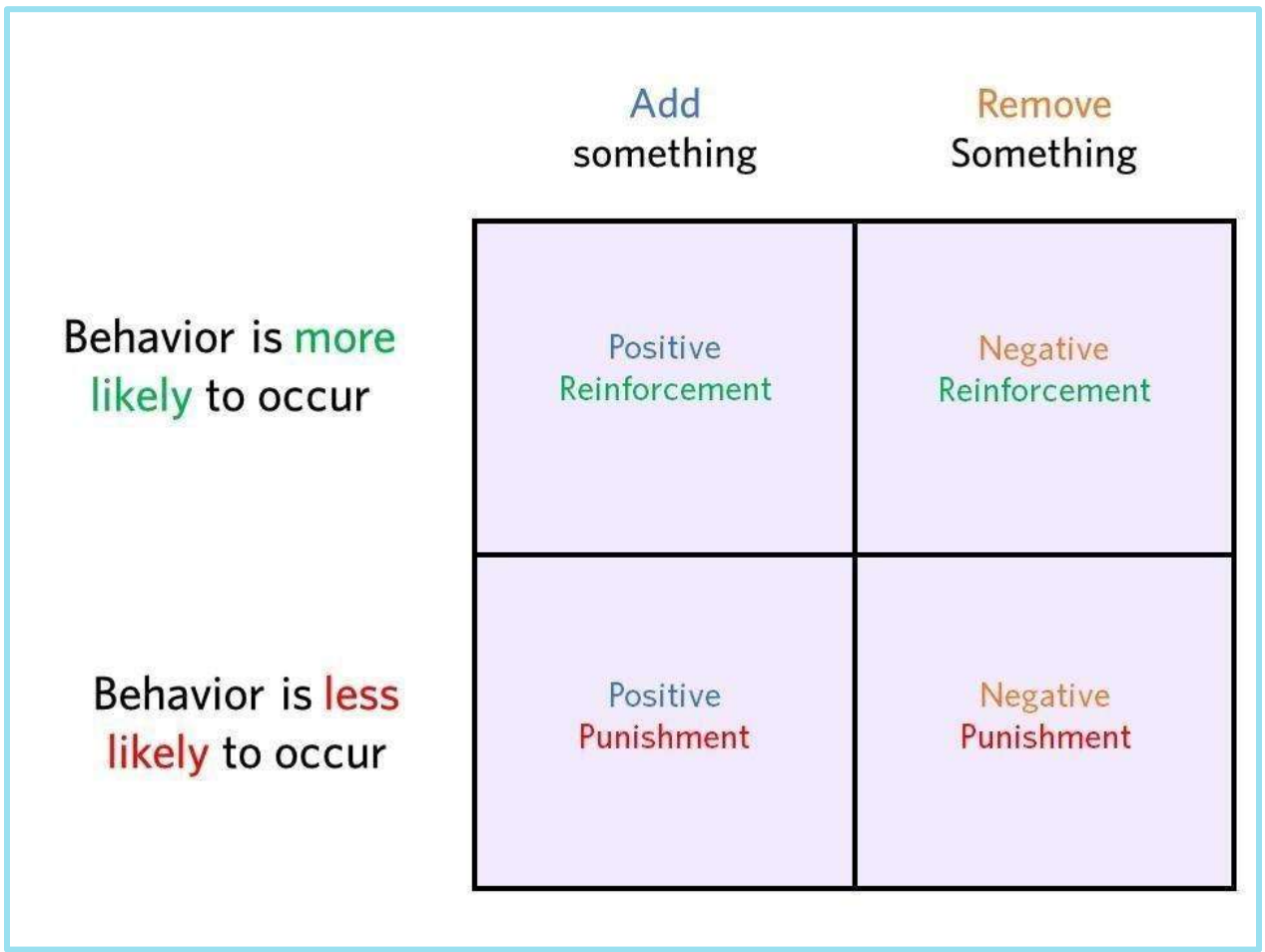
- **Positive Punishment** – means to add (that's the positive) something undesired, or aversive, to the environment to decrease (or punish) the frequency or likelihood of the behavior occurring. This technique causes suppression of behavior.
    - Example: Sterning saying ("Hey!" or "No!") to the dog, or pulling up on the leash to tighten the collar (also known as a leash correction) to stop them from pulling forward on the leash.

- **Negative Reinforcement** – means to remove (that's the negative) something undesired or aversive to increase (or reinforce) the frequency or likelihood of the behavior occurring. This technique may lead to an animal performing a desired behavior to avoid punishment from occurring; in other words, it causes the dog to practice avoidance.
    - Example: Pushing the dog's butt down to get them to sit, and then stop pushing down when their butt hits the ground. We remove unpleasant pressure (that's the

negative) to increase (or reinforce) the likelihood of the dog staying seated.

- **Negative Punishment** – means to remove (that's the negative) something desired to decrease (or punish) the frequency or likelihood of the behavior occurring.
    - Example: Turning your body away or otherwise ignoring the dog when they jump up on you. We remove attention (that's the negative), which the dog thoroughly wants, to decrease the likelihood of the dog jumping up on you.

These concepts are illustrated in the graphic below.



Important Note: Pup profile does not encourage or permit yelling, striking, excessive collar jerking or use of other forms of intimidation to punish behavior. These forms of punishment damage the relationship between people and animals and are often ineffective ways to communicate.

Pup Profile supports and encourages the use of treats, play and “real-life” rewards, such as interactive time with people and the chance to participate in exercise sessions. Training tools that support reward-based training techniques are clickers, food, toys, leashes, Gentle Leaders and body harnesses, all of which are considered humane. The goal with training should be least invasive, minimally aversive.

It is important to remember that animals are always learning from us and the environment around them.

Basic Steps for Solving a Problem Behavior

1. **Identify:** Identify details about the specific behavior – what does it look like and when does it occur? What is happening in the overall situation?
2. **Manage:** Prevent the dog from practicing the problem behavior. You might need to adjust how you interact with the dog or make changes to the environment to set everyone up for success.
3. **Alternate Behavior:** Practice a new, ideally incompatible behavior. Incompatible behaviors are those that cannot be performed simultaneously. Then, reward them for practicing the alternate behavior.
4. **Generalize:** Help the animal generalize learning through repetition, repetition and more repetition! Practice management and reinforcing alternate behaviors in new places, with new handlers and in different situations. Animals don't generalize well, so we must help them learn in a variety of new environments before we can expect them to "get it."

Final Notes

Your behavioral foster dog may present some challenging behaviors and require you to think outside the box. You may not be able to do things the way you can with your own dogs, or even in a way you have done with other foster dogs before, and that's ok.

Keep in mind that modifying behavior often requires a lot of *time, consistency and repetition*. Dogs respond individually to behavior modification and training – some make quick progress while others take weeks to months before showing any behavioral changes.

Always use low-stress and hands-off techniques, as often as possible, to manage your foster dog. Avoid confrontation, forced interactions and stressful situations to prevent fear or discomfort. Use tools like ex-pens, crates, treats and toys to interact with your foster dog and get them to move where you need them to be (e.g. inside of their crate for transport). Plan ahead and have all tools needed on hand, so you don't find yourself needing to react in a manner that may be detrimental to your foster dog's behavior.

Finally, be patient, and always follow the guidance of your rescue organization. They are there to support you during this foster journey.

Have Fun and Enjoy!

Fostering is a truly rewarding experience. You are saving a life! Rescue dogs are such a joy and are so grateful to have a safe, comfortable home. We hope these tips help you to have an amazing experience, and that you'll continue to foster in the future.



Thank you for stepping up for the dogs who need it most.

– The Pup Profile Team