

The Theory of Corrections in Dog Training



By: Ed Frawley



Leerburg Kennels

Foreword

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[Leerburg Kennel](#) and Video is owned by Ed Frawley.

Ed has owned German Shepherds (GSD) for over 45 years. Since 1978 he has bred over 350 litters of German working bloodline GSD's. His dogs work in law enforcement, as S&R dogs, as competition Schutzhund dogs, and as family companions and protectors.

Since 1980 Ed has produced over 120 dog training videos and DVD's. He was a police K9 handler for 10 years, competed in several dog sports, including AKC obedience and Schutzhund. In addition he has built one of the top dog training supply businesses in the world.

If you go to the web site **Leerburg.com** you will see that it has over 10,000 printed pages. The Leerburg Web Discussion board has over 10,000 registered members and over 120,000 posts in the archives. Learn to use our site search function.

The Theory of Corrections in Dog Training



By Ed Frawley

One of the most misunderstood areas of dog training, by beginners and so called professionals alike, is how and when to correct a dog. The lack of understanding of corrections is where many people get into trouble when they train their dogs.

Unfortunately in the past 20 or 25 years we have seen a movement in dog training that promotes strictly motivational methods to train dogs. These misguided methods don't encompass corrections. The people who promote these programs do a disservice to the art of dog training.

When new pet owners first learn to train, they think corrections are either: a verbal reprimand, a jerk on the leash, or putting the dog in the bedroom for inappropriate behavior. For some dogs this is

enough, but for those trainers who need to take their dog to a higher level of performance this is not adequate.

The wrong kind of correction, or a poorly timed correction, or even the lack of correction is what gets people in trouble. This article will explore the world of corrections in dog training.

My hope is that by explaining the theory behind the various forms of corrections owners will become better educated and therefore better dog trainers. Through this article you will find that I am not a fan of forced training. But with this said, you will also learn that to ignore corrections during training or to use the wrong correction at the wrong time can actually set your training back and possibly destroy the bond between you and your dog.

To understand corrections we must first explore the goals that different trainers have for training their dogs.

Ed Frawley's Philosophy of Dog Training



Article

Some trainers follow the theory that “the end justifies the means.” These people use a lot of force when they train a dog. This is a common approach for many professional dog trainers. These people must accomplish a great deal within a short period of time or they can’t make enough money to justify the time spent in training a customer’s dog. I am not a fan of forced training which is why I am not a fan of sending dogs off to a professional trainer.

My goal in training is to teach my dog to first trust me and then when that’s done, to follow my voice command. In the “trust phase” of training the dog learns that I am fair but firm. My dog sees that I treat it with respect and expect respect in return. It learns that above all I am consistent and when I ask him to do something he must do it. You can get a better understanding of how I approach dog training if you read the article I wrote on my philosophy of dog training.

Some people confuse the bond with a dog and what I want to call trust. Many interpret a bond as being a relationship of love and that’s not what I look for in my dog. A dog can love you and not respect you. I can’t have a relationship with a dog without having respect from that dog.

Getting a dog’s respect is not something that happens over night. The trust phase can take months. The DVD I produced titled [Building Drive and Focus](#) teaches the foundation for this phase of training.

Corrections vs. Forced Training

There is a difference between giving a correction in normal training and forcing a dog to comply. This article will also explore both areas.

While I am not a fan of forced training I understand it. Unfortunately in my career I have used forced training and today I regret doing so. Maybe in some small way this article is written as an apology to my past dogs that deserved better than I gave them.

While this article will explain the various methods used to force a dog to comply, I only include this information so readers will recognize these methods if they see them in a local obedience class or if they hire a professional trainer to solve a problem and that trainer uses too much force.

I hope trainers are willing to walk away from these environments because they know there is a better way.

Formal Obedience Training vs. Pack Behavior

First let us examine the difference between corrections used in obedience training and corrections used for inappropriate pack behavior.

If you have my [Basic Dog Obedience DVD](#) you will have heard me say that “you never correct a dog in formal obedience training unless you are 100% sure the dog knows the meaning of the command he is refusing to follow.” There are not a lot of rules in dog training but this is one of them for obedience training.

Basic Dog Obedience

\$40.00 +s&h



4 Hours Long

With this said, a dog should receive some form of a correction for inappropriate pack behavior even if you have never trained the correct behavior. Dogs instinctively understand pack behavior. I will explain this later in the article.

Pups and Corrections - the Beginning of Pack Behavior

A pup learns to respect his mother from the early days of its life. This is the beginning of the pup understanding the concept of a pack leader and rank within the pack.

When pups are 3 ½ to 5 weeks old many mothers will begin to growl when pups come near her food. When she growls or even nips a pup she is teaching them respect. Litter mates also bite one another during their play. This play biting establishes rank within the pack. The stronger members bite and fight harder than lower ranking members.

When pups move into our human environment they expect their lives will continue just as they did within

the litter. That's why pups bite hands, socks, ankles and kids. They are playing just like they did with littermates. This play is also used to test their rank within their new human pack. They are doing it in the only way they know how – with their body postures, with their voices (through barking and growling) and with their mouths by grabbing and biting.

When human owners correct this biting behavior the pup accepts them as their new pack leader. Just as the pup accepted their mother's position of authority when she growled or nipped them for coming too close to her food bowl.

It's not difficult to correct a pup for play biting behavior. It is difficult for novice pet owners to correct a puppy at a level that does not permanently damage its temperament. These owners don't understand how easy it is to cause permanent damage to a pup by over correcting. One hard correction can have a life long effect on a soft puppy.

15 years ago when I was breeding some very hard puppies I wrote an article titled "Teaching Your Puppy the Meaning of the Word NO". In it I recommended grabbing the pup (when it was biting you or a family member) by the nape of the neck and shaking until it squealed like a pig. Well that advice was wrong. It worked for my pups because they were hard pups and recovered quickly from a correction (and handler mistakes). Soft puppies could have some serious problems with this treatment.

Today I recommend that we can get the point across with most (not all) pups by simply grabbing a pup firmly by the scruff of both cheeks and firmly holding

them as we stare into their eyes and firmly warn them to “KNOCK IT OFF”. You could even growl at them until they submit (just as their mother did).

Shaking them until they squeal like a pig only scares them and does nothing to build the relationship.



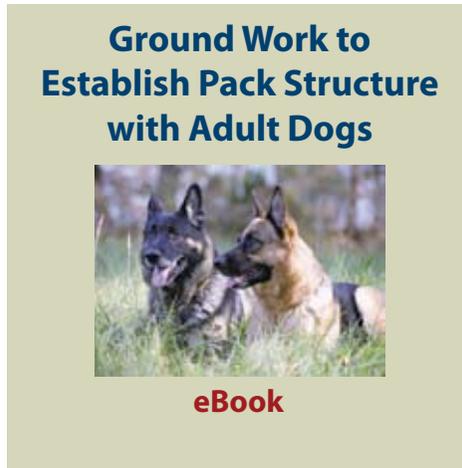
Pack Behavior

So with all this said what are pack behaviors?

- 1** - When a dog jumps up and/or humps your leg, that's a pack behavior.
- 2** - When a dog charges past you to get out the door, that's a pack behavior. Pack leader go through doors and gates first.
- 3** - When a dog barks like crazy at another dog that's a pack behavior.
- 4** - When a dog drags his owner down the street on a walk – that's pack behavior. Pack leaders always go first.

- 5** - When a dog tries to fight with another dog, that's a pack behavior. Pack leaders say when and who to fight.
- 6** - When a dog growls for moving it aside when you get in your bed or on your furniture. That's pack behavior and needs to be dealt with.
- 7** - When a dog growls at you for disturbing it as you walk by as it sleeps that's a problem with rank behavior in the pack.

This is the short list of just a few of the most common forms of pack behavior. It provides an example of pack behavior issues that deserve corrections even though the owner has never trained them. I deal with pack behavior corrections in a section near the end of this article.



So while you would not correct a dog for not coming when called until after you have taught the meaning of the word COME, you can justifiably correct a dog either verbally or with a training collar for

inappropriate pack behavior (i.e. getting on the bed or growling at you).

So let there be no misunderstanding. Formal obedience means teaching the dog the meaning of sit, come, stay, lie down or go to your place and lie down. Don't correct a dog for not following these commands until you are 100% sure in your mind that your dog understands the meaning of what you are asking him to do.

Training Collars

To understand corrections we need to first understand the tools used to give a correction. Corrections are either given with a voice correction or a collar correction.

By definition a collar cannot be called a training collar unless it is able to administer a correction to a dog.

In my opinion there is a huge misunderstanding of training collars used on dogs today. As far as I am concerned there are only 4 kinds of training collars.

- 1** - A flat leather or nylon buckle collar
- 2** - A prong collar
- 3** - A dominant dog collar
- 4** - A remote trainer (electric collar)

Some soft dogs only need correction from a flat collar (refer to my article on hard and soft dogs). In fact, many soft dogs only need a voice correction to make them hit the ground and crawl on their bellies.

When owners of soft dogs recognize the temperaments in their dog they find that these dogs become easy dogs to train. Unfortunately, most novice trainers can't read temperament which results in over correcting. This only results in nervous insecure dogs that submissively urinate or worse show fear aggression.



Prong Collars vs. Choke Collars

Determining what collar to use on a dog involves some early experimenting. I tell people that they should always start training with a flat collar.

If a voice correction followed by a level 5 leash correction doesn't produce the results you want then it's time to train with a prong collar. (I talk about correction levels later in this article).

I have written an extensive article on "[How to Fit a Prong Collar.](#)"

The important thing for new trainers to keep in mind is they don't have to correct at the same level with a

prong that they did with a flat collar. I tell people that prong collars are like power steering on dogs. If you had been correcting at level 5 or 6 with a flat collar you may only have to correct at level 2 or 3 with a prong. That's one of the benefits to using a prong; you don't have to use as much force to accomplish the same task.

The only exception to a prong collar being a better training collar than a choke collar is with the work with dominant and aggressive dogs.

It's my experience that a prong collar often over stimulates a dominant or aggressive dog and gets them too excited. This can cause the dog to redirect aggression towards the handler.

The dominant dog collar (which is a modified nylon choke collar) works much better on these kinds of dogs because it takes drive out of the dog without over stimulating them.

Metal choke chain collars are never recommended for normal obedience training. The mechanics of how these collars are used in obedience training (constantly popping the leash and collar) does long term muscle damage to neck muscles of the dogs.

This damage occurs right at the spot where the chain slips through the ring on the collar. The entire force of the correction is applied to this one spot whereas with a prong collar the force of the correction is applied around the entire circumference of the dog's neck. This has been proven through autopsies done in Germany on dogs that were trained their entire life with choke collars vs. dogs trained with prong collar.

Dominant Dog Collar



Every Dominant Dog needs this collar for training

Head Halters

In the past 10 to 15 years head halters have come over from the UK. I personally don't like them. Diverting the gaze of a dog with a head halter is not a correction. I guess I am old school enough to need more. For those who wish to use them, I would have to put them in the category of flat collars.

Types of Corrections

I will first list the various types of corrections used in training and then come back to each type and explain each in more detail.

- 1 - [Voice correction](#)
- 2 - [Delayed corrections](#)
- 3 - [Automatic corrections](#)
- 4 - [Escape training](#)
- 5 - [Corrections that take drive out of the dog](#)

6 - [Corrections that add drive to the dog](#)

7 - [Escalating corrections](#)

8 - [Avoidance corrections](#)

9 - Escape Corrections

10 - [Pack behavior corrections](#)

Voice Corrections

In my opinion the verbal correction is one of the most powerful tools any trainer can develop in his training program. It's also one of the most poorly administered and misunderstood corrections used in dog training today.

Using the word "NO" as a means of communicating with a dog can become a tool to shape behavior in the learning phase of training. In addition it can become a powerful correction that dogs respect and listen to.

The beginning of developing this tool is to first establish it as verbal correction. Once that is done the handler can modify the tone of how the handler says NO so that it becomes a valuable means by which to tell your dog that you want it to do something a little differently in the learning phase of obedience training.

Let me first explain what I believe a voice correction should be. Without sounding mad simply say the word "NO" in a firm (not loud or mad) voice. Controlling the inflection in your voice is very important. Saying "NO" the exact same way every

time means you are doing a good job.

People who raise their voice, or sound mad, or repeat “NO” and raise the intensity in their voice by repeating “NO” are making a mistake. These people are teaching their dog to wait until you really sound pissed before they comply. These people turn the word “NO” into a warning and not a correction.

My goal in training is for my dog to follow my voice command. With this said I also want to be able to use my voice as a correction. To accomplish this I must ALWAYS give a voice correction before a leash correction and before a correction with a remote trainer.

The sequence of events goes like this.

- 1** - I give an obedience command which is refused or the dog displays inappropriate pack behavior and a correction is warranted
- 2** - I give a voice command of “NO”
- 3** - This is followed by a pop of the leash (or remote trainer) 1 ½ seconds later. The correction level is appropriate for the temperament and the distraction level of the dog I am training.

The goal is to convince my dog that this sequence will ALWAYS be followed.

That’s why consistency in training is so important. When my dog believes that there will ALWAYS be a correction after the “NO” correction he will do his

best to beat the pop of the leash or the correction with the remote trainer.

Timing of Corrections

For a correction to be effective the dog must associate the correction with the infraction (the same goes for praise.) If a correction comes too long after an infraction the dog becomes confused and the training goes down hill.

There is a rule of thumb that a correction must come within 1 ½ seconds of an infraction.

I have found that when a dog begins to understand the voice correction it also begins to realize that it's being trained. To a beginning dog trainer this may not seem very important but in fact it is important. Because this is when we see most dogs try to figure out what you are asking it to do. This is the point where we see dogs anticipate commands.

Another benefit to the voice correction is that it can extend the 1 ½ second time period for the handler to give a leash correction. When the dog is ready to drag a line for the beginning of off leash work it must also understand the voice correction (meaning he knows he screwed up when you use it).

At that point when a dog does not respond correctly to a voice correction and it needs a leash correction the handler can repeat NO a number of times in a calm steady firm (not mad) rhythm while calmly walking to the end of a long line and administering a leash correction. When this is done correctly the dog most definitely knows and understands why he is getting a leash correction and the leash correction

can come a lot longer than 1 ½ seconds after the dog refused a command.

Using NO to mold the dog's behavior in a positive manner

One of the most gratifying moments in your dog training career is going to be when you simply tell your dog "NO" (in a normal tone of voice) and he stops doing something and looks at you and says "OK what do you want me to do?"

When that happens you have not only reached a new plateau in dog training you have reached a point where you can literally communicate with our dog during the learning phase of training by molding his behavior.

That's the point where "NO" takes on a new meaning or a dual function. It can be used as a correction (usually distinguished by the tone and inflection of the voice in saying NO) but also as a method to guide your dog into doing something you want him to do. The tone of how you say NO in the second case is not harsh or firm – it's more of a firm but encouraging inflection.

I kind of compare this concept to training a dog to stop barking with a voice command. To do it effectively many people will first teach a dog to bark on command. Then when it understands the meaning of BARK and the meaning of NO the two can be combined into NO BARK and the dog understands.

Delayed Correction

I have discussed the concept of a delayed correction above. It's the 1 ½ second rule. This is where a correction must come within 1 ½ second of a refusal.

I am a firm believer in giving a dog the chance to think and consciously refuse to do what I have asked him before I correct him.

I would like to sound like an expert here and say that I really believe that a correction must always come within 1 ½ seconds of an infraction but I can't do that. I can say that in the beginning stages of dog training this truly is the case. But as dogs mature in their training I believe this time frame can be extended a little if you have to, especially when combined with a NO.

What I can say with the utmost confidence is that NO DOG can go longer than this. New dog trainers who come home to a nice big pile of poop in their living room or a sofa that's been chewed up are way too late to correct their dogs. This situation comes under the category of stupid owner, not belligerent dog. Well maybe both. The bottom line is this dog should have been in a dog crate.

So with this said. You will see in my obedience program I always recommend giving the dog a chance to comply before I correct him. How else are we going to see if the dog tries to "beat the correction" by increasing the speed at which he complies?

Automatic Corrections

What's an automatic correction? I will offer an example. Old school training, 25 years ago, said to teach your dog to heel you walked in a straight line and at some point you make a turn or reversed your direction of travel. At the exact moment of the turn you automatically corrected the dog with a leash correction. The theory being he would have been out of position when you turn because he is not paying close enough attention.

The thinking was that with enough of these automatic corrections the dog would quickly learn it was in his best interest to keep an eye on you so he could anticipate your movements and stick with you in the turn, thereby beating the correction.

Never mind the fact that you have not set up a method of communication between you and your dog so he could learn what your signal would be to warn him that a turn was about to happen.

This is a very effective way to train a dog. When I first started training I used it on more dogs than I care to think about. The fact is this is also very unfair form of training.

A much better method of training would be to motivate the dog with the possibility of a food reward, or a toy reward, or handler praise to want to stay with the handler during heeling.

The automatic correction is still commonly used today in protection training dogs. When dogs are sent to a standing still helper and expected to bark (not bite) at the helper, many trainers administer

an automatic correction as the dog approaches the helper. Just to remind the dog that his job is to bark, not bite.

In my opinion this is backward thinking.

It is a much better idea to allow mistakes to happen, give a “NO” correction followed by a leash/remote trainer correction and then take the dog back to the point where the exercise started and repeat the exercise. Let the dog figure out that you are giving him another chance to do it right or to do it wrong. If his choice is to again be disobedient then the level of correction the second time around needs to be increased significantly.

I always tell people that the role of the trainer is to make things very clear to our dogs. Mistakes must be allowed to happen. They are an important part of dog training. When mistakes do happen the handler must make it very clear to the dog that he screwed up. This is accomplished with a “NO” command followed (if necessary) by a second correction.

Automatic corrections can be clear but they are also unfair to the dog which goes against my philosophy of dog training.

Escape Training Corrections with a Remote Collar

When remote trainers were first developed in the 1970’s Tri-Tonics (a leading manufacturer of remote trainers) hired professional trainers to help develop and promote a method of training for electric collars. They came up with what is labeled “escape training

(ET).”This method of training is very effective and still used by many professional trainers today.

ET was initially used by the field trial trainers but over the years has migrated into police service dog training, Schutzhund training, and even into pet training. The training DVD that comes with Innotek collars uses ET methods.

I want to make it clear from the beginning that even though ET is effective I am not a fan of this method of training. With this said I do my best to explain it.

In the simplest form of ET the trainer gives a command and at the same moment in time he stimulates (stem) the dog with the remote trainer. The dog gets continuous stem from the collar until it begins to comply. At which point the handler stops the stem. In essence the dog learns how to turn off the stem by complying with the command. When the dog begins to understand trainers will tell you that it will perform an exercise faster because it tries to beat the stem.

The fact is ET is very close to automatic corrections with the difference being that in automatic corrections the correction comes at some point in the middle of an exercise where as in ET the correction comes at the exact same moment the command is given.

There is a misconception from the general public that a remote trainer shocks a dog and causes pain. When used properly this most definitely is not true.

I use the term “STEM” to describe the stimulation from the remote collar. Some people call it a “shock”

some call it a “STIM” (for stimulation).

Back in the early 1980's I learned to train the bark and hold in protection training by turning on the dogs defensive drive in front of the helper. We would give sharp prong collar corrections just as the dog got to the front of the helper. These corrections combined with restraining the dog with a line switches dogs from prey drive to defensive drive which results in them barking at the helper. We called this work - STEMING THE DOG. So the old school trainer in me kept the term STEM to describe the stimulation from the remote collar.

Every dog is different and each dog needs to go through a short testing phase to determine what level of stem to use in training. For simplicity's sake in this article I will categorize stem levels as low, medium and high (even though it's far more complicated than this) I like the flexibility of the new collars that have digital readouts that go from 0 to 125. These collars allow really fine tuning of stem levels in training.

The fact is a working level for most dogs in “[low level stimulation training](#)” used in my DVD cannot even be felt by many humans. It's described as more of a tingle.

The vast majority of dogs will have an appropriate reaction (i.e. something between a blink of the eye, sniffing the ground, itching an itch or a very slight twitch or jerk of the neck) when they reach their lowest working stem range. This is the level to start to train with. These levels will increase as the level of distraction increases.

We have also found that the stimulation from some brands of collars is more objectionable to the dogs than other brands. In addition, the level of stem for some dogs is in between the available settings offered on some models of collars. In other words, a level 5 correction on a collar may not be strong enough for a dog while a level 6 is too high for effective training on the same dog.



In the entire 2 hour and 45 minute of training on [my remote collar DVD](#) I never got above the mid-medium stem setting on the collar I was using.

So with this said I am not against ET because it is painful to the dog. The fact is when used properly it is not. I am against ET because I don't agree with the concept of correcting a dog before I give it a chance to comply with a command. This goes back to what I said about goals in the beginning of this article.

I would rather add speed to an exercise by motivating a dog to want to perform faster because he gets something he likes (I.e. food, a toy, playing

tug or praise) and not because he is trying to beat the stimulation (a correction) from an e-collar.

ET trainers will tell you that their goal is to eliminate the need for the stem by eventually delaying the stem when they see the dog performing with speed. This does not change the fundamental difference in the concept of how this training is put together. In my opinion this method of training is not fair for the dog. There are many who will disagree with me about this and that is their right to do so.

In my opinion remote trainers can and should be used in the same manner as a leash and collar. The dog must go through a learning phase for an exercise (see my [DVD on Basic Dog Obedience](#)). In the distraction phase where the dog does not comply because the distraction is too high, it is given a "NO" correction followed by a stem from the collar. In the beginning this is always done on leash.

My goal with an e-collar is no different than my basic goal in training with a leash and collar. I want the dog to follow a voice command and I want him to know that should he refuse to comply after a voice correction I can reach out and touch him with a correction from a remote trainer. This is very clear to a dog.

ET trainers will also tell you that their training is also very clear to the dog and they are right. It is clear. But it does nothing to build the bond between the dog and owner. How can it? The dog is receiving a correction at the moment the command is given. This is why I call ET old school dog training.

Corrections that take Drive Out of the Dog

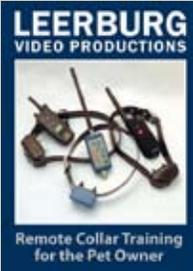
Once new dog owners begin to educate themselves on the art of dog training they will learn that some exercises (I.e. heeling) requires a dog to stay in drive. This means the dog acts excited and alert and stays by our side trying to anticipate a stop or a turn. Other exercises require a dog to come out of drive and remain calm (I.e. the stationary exercises - down, sit and stay).

Trainers need to learn that some corrections can motivate a dog to come into drive or go higher in drive while other corrections can take drive out of a dog.

When a dog breaks a stationary exercise it is often a result of having too much drive. This can happen as a result of being exposed to some form of distraction. To take drive out of a dog the handler must say "NO" and administer one hard leash correction. One hard correction is usually enough to cause the dog to settle down and comply. If the dog does not comply the correction was not hard enough.

Remote Collar Pet Training

\$40.00 +s&h



2 Hours 45 Minutes Long

The image shows a video cover for 'Remote Collar Training for the Pet Owner' by Leerburg Video Productions. The cover features a photograph of a remote collar system, including a collar with a receiver and a handheld transmitter. The text on the cover includes the company name 'LEERBURG VIDEO PRODUCTIONS' at the top, the title 'Remote Collar Training for the Pet Owner' at the bottom, and the price '\$40.00 +s&h' and duration '2 Hours 45 Minutes Long' on the main advertisement background.

Corrections that Add Drive to the Dog

It may seem like a contradiction to say that a correction can add drive to a dog but in fact that's exactly what can happen when done properly.

To add drive, multiple corrections must be given very quickly. When this is done during heeling it will bring a dog up in drive. In essence what happens is the dog's nerves are turned on. This means it becomes excited because the handler is saying NO! NO! NO! Pop! Pop! Pop! with the leash (or remote trainer). These low level corrections elevate the dog's level of excitement (or concern). These multiple corrections cause the dog to quickly move into compliance.

It is important that these corrections are not hard corrections. In fact if they are too hard we can lose drive. Remember the goal of multiple low to mid-level corrections is to turn on the nerves of the dog with the added benefit of the dog moving into compliance.

Escalating Corrections

The concept of escalating corrections can be done with a leash and training collar or a remote trainer.

To understand the concept of escalating corrections we must first understand how to determine what level of correction to use on a dog. Dogs have different personalities and temperaments-- no two are alike. This is the reason that each dog needs to be trained as an individual.

To determine what level of correction to use on a specific dog we can look at levels of corrections as being between level 1 and level 10. With a level 1 correction being a simple voice correction and a level 10 correction being the hardest correction one can give.

An example of a level 10 correction would be a leash correction hard enough to jerk the dog off its feet. Just to make it clear, a level 10 corrections is seldom used, just like high level stem in remote trainers is seldom used.

To determine what level of correction to use on a dog we must first examine his temperament. Is the dog a hard dog or a soft dog?

A hard dog recovers very quickly from a correction. Hard dogs require mid level corrections. When a hard dog is given a low level correction it either ignores the correction and continues on, or it looks at the handler as if to say – “is that the best you can give?”

A soft dog on the other hand, does not recover very quickly from a correction. When a soft dog is given a

hard correction it goes into avoidance by lying down, refusing to work or it may even try to flee. Soft dogs, therefore, need much lower levels of corrections.

There are a number of ways to gauge hardness and softness in a dog. Here are just a few:

- 1** - If a dog has food drive, will it take a food reward after a correction. If not then the correction was probably too high.
- 2** - If a dog has prey (play) drive will it play after a correction. If not then the correction was probably too high.
- 3** - Will the dog continue to work and follow commands after a correction? If not then the correction was probably too high.

First time handlers can have a difficult time in determining what level of correction to use on their dog. They have to experiment and remember what kind of reaction different levels of corrections have on their dogs. This all begins by determining the level of correction to use in a normal distraction free training environment (like your kitchen or back yard).

New handlers will quickly learn that the level of correction used in the kitchen means very little to a dog when it is taken to the park or when taken for a walk and faced with neighbor dogs barking from behind a fence.

The fact is, just as there are different levels of correction, there are also different levels of distraction.

The way to look at this is each level of correction is an individual training tool. In other words a level 3 correction can be used for certain infractions and a level 6 correction is a different tool used for a different infraction. That may seem obvious but many new trainers think a correction is a correction is a correction. No wonder their dogs act like they don't like their owner.

Determining what level of correction to use is a normal on-going part of dog training. Good handlers determine different levels of distraction for his or her dog. These levels can be rated just like a correction – level 1 to level 10. This is not to say that a level 10 distraction required a level 10 correction – that's not the case.

Levels of Distraction (examples)

- 1** - A level 1 distraction being work in the kitchen.
- 2** - A level 2 distraction is working in the backyard.
- 3** - A level 3 distraction is working in the backyard when the neighbor is cutting his grass.
- 4** - A Level 4 distraction is working in the backyard when your wife tosses a ball across the yard.
- 5** - A level 10 distraction is going to the park where 3 or 4 dogs are running off leash around you and your dog.

Most obedience instructors tell their students “if a dog refuses a command that it knows and understands that dog needs to be corrected” and “if after the correction the dog again refuses to comply the initial correction was not hard enough.”

Where most instructors fail is they don't explain how to escalate the level of corrections after the initial correction has failed. In most cases this is because instructors themselves don't have a clear understanding of how this should be done.

First let us examine the theory behind what we are doing. When a pack leader gives a lower ranking member of the pack an order the lower ranking member complies because it accepts its position in the pack and it is not ready to challenge the authority of the leader.

When a dog refuses a known command from his owner this is a clear indication that there is confusion in the relationship between the handler and his or her dog. This is often a sign that the dog does not respect his handler.

The way I approach escalating corrections is to be very clear in my training.

When a dog first refuses a command I simply give a voice correction (NO!) along with a delayed leash or collar correction that is appropriate for the dog's temperament.

If the dog still does not comply, I repeat the command and give the dog an opportunity to again comply. If it continues to ignore the second command the level of the second correction is much,

much higher. In other words, if the first correction was a level 4 the second correction is going to be a level 8 or 9 correction.

I make it very clear that the dog **MUST** comply.

I don't escalate from level 4 to level 5 and then level 6 to level 7 until I get to a level that the dog submits and complies. I jump right from level 4 to level 8 with the second correction.

The way I look at this is I know in my mind that the dog understands the command (it's a huge mistake to do this if the dog does not fully understand the meaning of the command). I am fair with the dog in giving him a normal first correction the first time. When he refuses that command a second time he is disrespecting me. In essence he is challenging my rank in the pack. So I must make it very, very clear that this will not be tolerated.

There is an old saying that goes like this "one good correction is worth 1,000 nagging corrections". Dog owners that under correct their dogs are nagging their dogs and doing nothing to build their relationship.

With this said, it is a mistake to over correct a dog where the initial correction is too high for his temperament because that is simply going to hurt your relationship with your dog. But if you make your work **VERY CLEAR** and you have done your work in determining the relationship between temperament, drive and distraction you will find that your dog learns at an accelerated pace and gains respect for you as a pack leader. Many people think that

if they administer hard corrections their dog will automatically respect them as a pack leader. These people are wrong. The dog will do what he is told to do, but he will not respect his owner. More than likely he will fear the owner and act like it hates working for him.

Escalating Corrections with Remote Trainers

The concept of escalating corrections can be applied to escape training (ET) with e-collars.

I will use the example of a recall and a Dogtra E-collar. When a dog refuses to come and moves away from the handler, the trainer can administer a continuous correction and gradually increase the intensity of the stem as the dog moves away.

The concept is the dog finds that the further he goes from the handler the higher the stimulation level gets.

When the dog turns and come towards the handler the dial is turned back down so the stimulation amount is reduced as the dog gets closer to the handler.

The thinking is to teach the dog that the safe place is by his handler.

I have made it clear that while ET works I am not a fan of this method of using e-collars. That includes this method of escalating corrections.

It's my opinion that the dogs go into a panic mode and stop thinking when the stem level is increased above their working level. In addition, these collars

have a 10 second time out. That means if the dog has not turned and started to come back in 10 seconds the collar shuts off for a period of time. I believe there is too much of a chance of the collar turning off at the wrong time, in which case the dog gets the wrong message.

ET instructors tell their students to take their finger off the button before 10 seconds and then re-stimulate the dog. This usually does not work because the students get wrapped up in what's going on and forget. It's hard enough for students to focus on the exercise much less remember to keep track of their time on the button.

Avoidance Corrections

What are avoidance corrections? I like to use the example of touching a red hot stove as an avoidance correction. This is a correction that is so extreme one only needs to get it once and that's good enough to remember for the rest of our lives.

- 1-** When a dog gets into the trash it needs an avoidance correction.
- 2-** When a dog digs a hole in the yard it can get an avoidance correction.
- 3-** When a dog gets on furniture it can get an avoidance correction.

An avoidance correction is best given with a remote trainer (electric collar). The handler can be present or he can be out of the picture. It does not matter.

An avoidance correction is used to extinguish a behavior. To accomplish this we don't try and

determine a working level of correction, we start high and stay high. This is a place where we would use the high level of stimulation that the remote collar has to offer.

Using the trash as an example, we would set the dog up by putting some very tasty treats on the top of the waste basket or garbage can. Let the dog into the area and observe him from a distance. The instant he even smelled the trash can he would get a high level correction from the remote trainer (soft dogs that normally work on low level stem may only require high level medium stems here) The handler says nothing. He does not issue a NO correction he simply pushes the button and stems the dog.

We want the dog to go into avoidance. We want him to think he just touched off a land mine next to the trash container.

When avoidance corrections are used it seldom takes more than 2 or 3 training sessions to convince a dog that he needs to stay away from whatever it is that you are training him to avoid. There may be an occasional maintenance sessions required one or twice a year. You simply set the dog up to test the training to make sure he remembers the behavior we want.

Pack Behavior Corrections

I have already explained that inappropriate pack behavior always requires a correction.

Every year hundreds of thousands of dogs go through obedience classes. The vast majority of dominant dogs (dogs with pack behavior problems)

come out of these classes just as dominant as when they went into class. The reason for this is because instructors fail to teach people to deal with issues of pack behavior.

Keeping dogs off furniture, out of your bed, controlling every aspect of the dog's life (read my article titled [The Ground Work to Becoming a Pack Leader](#)) goes a long way to solving the problem. But sometimes dogs growl, bite or fight. These dogs need corrections.

I am writing a book that deals with dominant/aggressive dogs. This article is not the place to go into the kind of detail that's needed to solve these problems. But with this said, I do need to comment on corrections as related to animal aggression.

Animal aggression is one of the most common pack behavior problems people face.

Dogs with these problems need to go through a pack structure training program. [I have an excellent DVD on this](#). If dogs go through this program and still remain aggressive there are two ways to correct a dog for pack and rank behavior problems. You can use a dominant dog collar or a remote trainer.

Corrections for Pack Behavior Problems

Dominant dog collars are similar to nylon show choke collars. The difference being that there is an additional ring on the dominant dog collar that the snap on one end of the collar clips to.

These collars are not meant to slip over the dog's

head. They are put on by wrapping them around the neck and clipping them snugly up under the jaw. There is not supposed to be a lot of slack in the collar. You can see [photos of how this works](#) on my web site.

The heads of some dogs are much bigger than their neck. If normal choke collars were used on these dogs, the collar would have to be much larger than we need because it has to slip over the dog's head. With a dominant dog collar we can wrap the collar around the dog's neck to clip it on. By being able to clip the collar around the neck we can deal with a much smaller collar that fits snugly up under the jaw.

When a collar fits snugly the leash only needs to be moved a little bit to tighten on the dog's neck. The less the hand movement, the quicker the correction.

When a dog shows handler aggression or animal aggression, the handler (in an assertive firm calm manner) simply says NO and lifts the dog's front feet off the ground. The important thing is to remain calm.

When that happens, the collar tightens and takes the air away from the dog. There is no pain involved with this correction. But it has a profound effect on the dog.

Handlers will quickly see that a dog has a great deal of respect for someone who has the ability to take his air away especially when it's done in a firm but calm manner without emotion. I have a saying "dogs know what you know and they know what you don't know." When you lift a dog's feet off the ground for growling or trying to bite, the dog instantly knows you are someone not to fool with.

Dogs that have developed into dominant dogs because of the way their owners lived with them (by ignoring inappropriate pack behavior) quickly become complaint pets that know their place in the family pack when they see that aggressive behavior results in a session where they get a correction with one of these collars. In fact, it shocks owners when they see how quickly the dogs stop their bad behavior.

When a dog is physically stronger than the handler a dominant dog collar cannot be used. The old saying of “pick your fights and don’t pick a fight that you will lose” comes to mind. When this happens a remote trainer needs to be used. With this said, when a remote trainer is used for handler aggression or pack behavior problems, the handler had better do his or her homework and learn how to train with one.

The Groundwork to Becoming Your Puppy’s Pack Leader



eBook

Remote Trainer Corrections for Pack Behavior Problems

In formal obedience training we temper the level of correction according to the temperament of the dog. Meaning hard and soft dogs get different levels of corrections depending on the infraction. This concept does not apply to animal aggression.

If a dog exhibits animal aggression when it sees another dog or animal while on leash, corrections levels start high and stay high for some period of time. In other words, if a remote trainer is used the dog is stimulated at the high level. This is a level that causes pain and sends the dog into avoidance.

Dogs are at an elevated level of adrenalin when they light up on another dog. If corrections are started too low, many dogs learn to fight through and ignore the correction and continue to be aggressive. When dogs learn to fight through a lower level correction some learn to fight through stronger and stronger high level corrections. I have seen dogs that have had bad training take the highest level of stimulation for a remote trainer and keep on acting inappropriately.

However, when corrections are started at a high level, almost all dogs will eventually learn to respond and respect lower levels of corrections that are not painful. In other words, we don't always need to stay at the highest level of correction.

It's important to point out that I am talking about dogs on leash here. I am not talking about using a remote collar on a dog that starts to fight with another dog or even to use high level stimulation

when a dog runs up to your dog and they are sniffing, squaring off or staring at one another. A correction at this point will trigger a dog fight. In addition a correction during a fight will often make the dog fight harder. They think the other dog is the source of the correction.

The moral of the storey is to get trained if you're going to use a remote collar. [I have an excellent training DVD on this.](#)

Those who are critical of using painful corrections need to remember that the vast majority of dogs that are dog fighters or handler aggressive are destined to be euthanized. There are not many options for dogs like this. Through proper training by a trained handler, many of these dogs can get a new lease on life.

While this article is about corrections I do need to make the point that in formal obedience we often follow a correction with praise. With pack behavior corrections the dog is never praised after the correction.

When a dog demonstrates inappropriate pack behavior it is in effect showing his disrespect to you as a higher ranking member of the pack.

In the wild, if a lower ranking member of a pack disrespects and challenges the pack leader, there are going to be serious consequences - many times a fight. After the fight the leader does not turn around and fawn over the lower pack member. So don't correct a dog for growling, nipping or fighting and then turn around and praise the dog.

TIME-OUTS

I never heard of time-out until a few years ago. My initial impression was “time-outs” in crates were not corrections. In fact I poo-pooed them and made no bones about it. Well once again I was wrong.

Time-out can be an effective correction for certain issues and are completely inappropriate for others.

When raising puppies that get a little wild and obnoxious at times, putting it in the crate until it settles down and becomes quiet can be an effective training too.

Using time-outs when training soft dogs in drive exercises (like agility) can also be an effective training tool. If a dog is not focused on the task or the work putting him away in the crate will often be enough to convince the dog that playing with the owner is more fun than lying in a crate. Usually covering the crate with a blanket (assuming it's not hot out) enhances the effect.

Using crate time-outs for things like handler aggression, people aggression or dog aggression are not recommended, in fact they are ineffective. These kinds of issues require more serious methods of correction.

I get a lot of emails from misdirected pet owners who tell me about their dogs growling at them or growling at their kids. These people tell me how they simply put the dog in its crate and consider this punishment enough. They all go on to detail the escalating problems they have with these dogs.

Unfortunately these people are only setting themselves up for more serious problem. Dogs like this continue to embolden themselves by growling or nipping and then getting away with it. These dogs need serious corrections not a dog crate.

Inappropriate Corrections

While there are many forms of appropriate corrections there are a number that new pet owners should be aware of.

One of the most common myths is to rub your dog's nose in a mess he leaves on the floor. This is an old wives tale that has been around for more years than I know. Once a dog trainer understands dog training they learn that this is a crazy thing to do. The only thing it accomplishes is to destroy the relationship with the dog.

Hitting, Beating or Spanking

There is no place in dog training for hitting or spanking a dog with your hand, or a rolled up newspaper or fly swatter etc. Hitting a dog is going to make a dog hand shy. With some handler aggressive dogs hitting could trigger an attack.

A comment I need to make in this section is that there can be times when a dog is doing something inappropriate and not paying attention to the handler a tap on the back to redirect the dog back to the handler is appropriate. This tap is not used as a correction it's used to redirect attention - it's kind of like saying "Hey knock it off and look at me."

After writing this article I had a web board member

post the following in a thread on having multiple dogs in one home - "This is very simple for them, behave, or get beaten." Needless to say there is no reason to ever beat a dog. There are always more effective ways to deal with problems.

Inappropriate Information from Your Vet

It is sad to say but true when I say that vets don't know much about dog training. In my 45 plus years of studying the art of dog training, I have only met 3 or 4 vets who knew how to training a dog.

Unfortunately most new pet owners go to their vet when they acquire a new dog. They assume vets know dog training so they ask questions. Most of the time this mistake is because they get bad information.

Vets are health care providers, they are not DOG TRAINERS. I have started a web page that lists emails from people who have gotten bad advice from their vets.

The End

I wrote this article because I have never seen the theory of corrections discussed in any book or article.

I hope that the information will help new dog trainers become better trainers. Not because they can force their dogs to comply but because they will now understand how many different kinds of corrections there are that can be used in dog training. With luck, they will recognize inappropriate corrections when they see them.

In closing, if you ever see any portion of this article copied on another web site, please contact me. My work is copyrighted and registered. I aggressively go after those who choose to take my work without permission. In EVERY case we will file law suites against those who do this.

Where To Go From Here

Ed Frawley's Philosophy of Dog Training



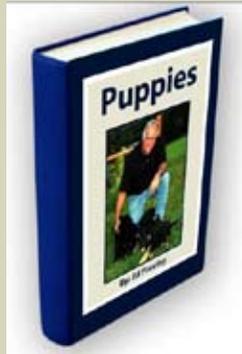
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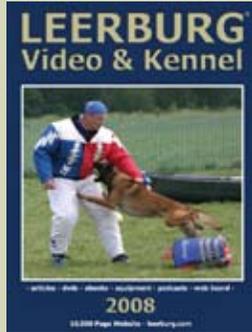


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