

WHO'S NEWS

June 2022

Our First Ever Newsletter!



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

I have been writing articles for The Guardian, Golden Rescue's quarterly newsletters for a few years and it occurred to me: Why not share these articles with our students? The articles cover many topics and provide insight into why dog training is simple, but it isn't easy.

We are going to release a Who's News newsletter every two to three months. Rather than emailing it out to everyone (as you already get enough email), we'll simply post it to our website and you can access it whenever you like. You'll also be able to access previous issues (once we've released more).

Our newsletter will include training insights, what kind of training we use and why it works, a deep dive into the programs we offer as well as new things we are working on. We are always creating and developing new programs so that you have lots to choose from. Feel free to share it with your friends.

Lynda Kitson, Director

What's New?

We have a NEW OUTDOOR location! AND with our new location we are once again able to offer Agility Classes!

We are also offering 3 brand new courses – Stress Free Walks, Off Leash Freedom and Game On! These classes are based on games developed by Absolute Dogs and work on concepts such as impulse control, disengagement, proximity, focus, etc.

Information on these new courses is under the CLASSES tab.

Training Insights



ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

As humans, we seem to have a difficult time realizing that for our dogs, English is a second language.

Let's put things into perspective. The average adult human understands 20,000 to 35,000 words. The average adult dog can understand about 165 words. Think about that for a moment. Twenty thousand words for us, compared to 165 for them. That's less than 1% of our vocabulary range! Additionally, it's known that English is one of the hardest languages to learn.

So why is this difficult for dogs? It's because they don't communicate verbally. And when they do, for instance when they bark, we tell them to be quiet. Instead, they communicate through body language.

Dogs don't understand things like verbs, adverbs and pronouns. They don't understand sentences and they have difficulty distinguishing between words that sound similar. You may think they know what we're saying - especially when we come home from a hard day at work and they look steadily into our eyes while we recount to them the trials and tribulations of our day. But what they're really doing is sensing our emotions and reacting to that.

Humans talk all the time and it becomes white noise to our dogs. Think about when you have the radio or television on as background noise. You tune it out. That's what it's like for our dogs.

They also don't understand words that have more than one meaning. Often people will teach their dog the word down when they want them to lie down. Then they use the same word down when they want them to get off the couch. If you use the word down when they're lying on the couch, they're already doing what you asked them to do. They don't understand that what you now mean is get off the couch.

Because our dogs understand only a limited number of words, it's important to select those words carefully - and most importantly, to use the same words consistently! Every member of your family needs to use the same word so your dog doesn't become confused. If you have a rescue you may need even more patience as they may have been taught words in a different language or a different accent.

Let's think about human kids for a second. They aren't born with an understanding of language; we have to teach it to them. What's the first word they learn to say, after Mommy and Daddy? Often, it's the word "No". Why? Because when they're little and just learning, it's a word they hear over and over.

The point here is that while I'm not suggesting that dogs are the same as children, some of the teaching principles and theories are similar.

Let's say mom uses the word "Sit" to teach Sparky to sit. However, when dad tells Sparky to "sit down", he looks at dad as if he has 3 heads. Here's the problem: if Sparky has previously been taught that "sit" means "sit" and "down" means "lie down", he won't know whether he's supposed to sit or down. Even if

he hasn't been taught the word "down", what he really hears from dad is "Siddown". Try it – say the word "Sit". Now say the words "Sit down". Notice how the "t" in sit disappears when we say the two words together. That little nuance is not something dogs pick up on. In fact, Sparky is hearing a brand new word – "Siddown". If dad then tries to teach Sparky that "siddown" actually means "sit", he becomes confused as to why two different words mean the same thing. So, it's extremely important that everyone in the household agrees on the words that will be used when training.

The other thing that dogs don't do well is to generalize. That's something they learn. What we mean by this is that if you have taught your dog to Sit in the kitchen (because that's probably where the treats are), and then one day you tell him to Sit while you're in the living room, or out on the deck, or on a walk, he may look at you as if he's never heard the word before in his life. He's not ignoring you or not listening. He just hasn't learned that Sit, regardless of where you say it, still means Sit. A dog actually needs to hear the word about 1,000 times before they truly understand it. So teaching the word in many different places (including bathrooms and closets) will help them learn it.

To get the best results from your training, remember these keys to success: patience, consistency, and lots of practice in multiple locations.

Lynda Kitson

But wait,
there's
more...



UPCOMING NEWS!

- Our Beaches location will re-open in September and we will be adding Rally Obedience to our Saturday schedule.
- Scent Detection classes will return to both our Beaches and Ajax locations in September. Our trainers for these programs are taking a well deserved summer break.
- Feel free to email us at info@whoswalkingwho.ca if you have any questions.



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