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REVISED EDITION

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A Better Way to Better Behavior

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The principles of the revolutionary "clicker training" method, which owes its phenomenal success to its immediacy of response--so there is no question what action you are rewarding

8 methods of ending undesirable habits--from furniture-clawing cats to sloppy roommates

The 10 laws of "shaping" behavior--for results without strain or pain through "affection training"

Tips for house-training the dog, improving your tennis game, or dealing with an impossible teen

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Philosophical and not a concise plan for dog training

By Andria S.

The phrase, "don't shoot the dog" turns out to be figure of speech pertaining to Pryor's teaching philosophy. Like most reviewers I bought this book thinking it had more to do with training dogs than it does. The book references dog training in places, to illustrate the application of many of the principles Pryor discusses. I believe her theory has been adopted by many dog behavior shapers and trainers, and I have found the principles effective with my rescued 8-month old dog. It takes a ton of patience to apply the principles of positive reinforcement and disregarding bad behavior, as a subtle form of punishment via withholding rewards. But, what I really need is a dog-training book that is specific, linear and concise, with both a step-

by-step agenda and specifics about measuring progress before proceeding to the next level in solidifying a desired behavior. A better book that is also a bit more verbose than I'd like, is Grisha Stewart's "Ahimsa Dog Training Manual," but it must be read cover-to-cover before beginning the program of training a dog. If a qualified dog trainer ever comes out with a really concise guide to employing this philosophy with dogs (not horses, not humans, not dolphins!) I will be first in line to own a copy because, just as with dogs and all other creatures, humans need to practice and review the lessons repeatedly to not only learn them, but to keep them fresh in the mind. What I want, I guess, in a simple outline that is easy to refer back to when I get stuck or confused. Last note: Pryor lost my faith in her when she mentions she euthanized a cat whose indoor behavior bewildered her. To me, that is not what animal lovers do - - cats, especially, can become outdoor pets though their chances will be reduced, but to simply slaughter an adopted pet is appalling to me.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Not How . . . But Why.

By Robert

I first heard the name of Karen Pryor from a good friend who had worked with her some years ago. John told me several memorable stories about her, then, novel approach to training marine mammals. Because you can't easily give a porpoise a pat and a good girl, when a new behavior is mastered, a whistle is used as a positive reinforcement from a distance. First you associate that sound with food, then later the sound itself becomes a reward. When I decided to take my own dogs' training to the next level, Pryor's book was the first resource that I sought out.

This book will not teach you how to clicker train your dog. That's not its intent. Don't Shoot the Dog is more accurately described as a philosophical treatise on the approach and world view underlying clicker training. Herein lies its greatest strength - the clear way it goes behind the technique to explain the underlying philosophy. She carefully ties the approach back to B. F. Skinner and the behaviorists, which provides a sense of scientific continuity. Her anecdotes are intriguing and well written

I recommend this book especially for those who have not yet begun to train their pets. The best time to decide on your philosophical approach is before the first successful sit-stay. Like good teachers everywhere, dog trainers (i.e., you) need to be comfortable with their own style. Furthermore, some teaching styles work better with some students (i.e., your pet) than with others (i.e., your neighbors pet). I agree with Jon Katz Kats on Dogs, find your style, your philosophy, and then begin to train.

Read it once, maybe twice; decide whether the approach is for you and for your dog. And, if you decide that it is, then, and only then, pursue clicker training technique. For me, the approach was quite different and very appealing. In fact, the week after I finished Pryor's book, I ordered a clicker and enrolled in an online clicker training class. The class is good, but like so many of them, it's very applied, like recipes in a cookbook. Don't Shoot the Dog provided me with an invaluable working knowledge of the theory behind clicker training.

Bob and Hannah, November 2005.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Good Foundation and Approach, but clicker gadget an unnecessary add-on

By C. Ponder

I've been a professional dog trainer and instructor for 30 years. Pryor does an excellent job setting forth the research and reasoning behind reinforcement training and behavior shaping; she's articulate and clear and fun to read.

My issue is with the clicker gadget itself. ***If a handler has developed the eye and timing that enables

him/her to implement these techniques successfully, an appropriately chosen verbal cue meets the need quite effectively.*** There is no need for the clicker gadget. It's just another bit of litter cluttering up the handler's hands. In my training hall experience, novice handlers too often conclude that clicker training is an 'easy gimmick' method for dog training. They screw around confusing the dog and losing his attention all together by using the clicker inappropriately, while failing to acquire the basic leash-handling and body language techniques that would have better served them.

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