

Generalization

Generalization is a very important term in the world of dog training. You see because of the way a dog's brain works they don't always generalize things to all environments.

Dogs learn by association. Whether that be associating the environment, your tone, the food you are offering at the time or if you use a clicker. It all matters. Especially under the age of 3 for most breeds.

To generalize your dog's behaviour you must train your dog to do the things you want them to do in all places.

Do you ever wonder why your dog can walk nicely around the backyard or always down for you in your room but when you ask them to do these things in other environments, they look at you like you have 3 heads? It is not because they have forgotten what to do, they are not out to get you and they aren't being stubborn. Something in the new environment is causing the block. Most often it is because you haven't trained the command there as much as you have other places.

For example I ran into this problem this morning with my 9 month old black lab. I asked him to go through my legs so that I could reward him with his flying squirrel. He couldn't do it. We have only practiced in the kitchen and living room so there were way too many non associative things going on with my command. a) we have never practiced through outside b) when we have practiced through it has been for food not the flying squirrel c) there was another dog standing beside me outside, she is always in a down position in the house when I train him. So as you can see- the through was never going to happen because all of the associations were not there that he needed.

To start the process of generalizing commands everywhere you need to start from the beginning in each new place and watch your dog light up when they realize they know what you want. It may go a lot quicker in new places than it did in the first place.

