



# UNDERSTANDING "YOU GET WHAT YOU REWARD"

One of the most powerful truths in dog training is **"you get what you reward, not what you want."** It's easy to unintentionally reward behaviors we don't like, simply because we're not aware of how our reactions are perceived by our dogs. Let's break down this concept and explore how we can become more mindful of what we're rewarding.



## Verbal Scolding: Is it Really a Reward?

Many pet parents think that scolding or saying "No!" will stop unwanted behaviors. But for some dogs, **attention is attention**—even if it's not the kind you meant to give. Especially those who are more independent or thrive on interaction, scolding can feel like attention and may actually reward the very behavior you're trying to stop.

For example, if your dog jumps on you to get your attention and you respond by yelling or talking to them, you've just rewarded the jumping. The better approach is to withhold attention for the jumping and reward four feet on the floor instead.



## 👉 Unintended Signals: Are Your Hands a Target?

Another common scenario is **raising your hands to discourage your dog from jumping**. While it might seem like you're creating a barrier, dogs often see raised hands as an invitation or target to make contact. In fact, moving hands can encourage your dog to jump even more! Your hands become the very thing they're aiming for.

Instead, keep your hands low and only give them attention once all four paws are on the ground.

## 🔍 Self-Awareness is Key

Often, it's our lack of self-awareness that causes unintended rewards. Whether it's **eye contact, verbal cues, or even body language**, dogs are constantly reading us and making decisions based on what they perceive. If we aren't mindful of how we're interacting, we might be encouraging the behaviors we're trying to avoid!

## Think from Your Dog's Perspective

The key to successful training is to **see situations from your dog's point of view**.

Your dog isn't trying to frustrate you —they are simply reacting to the world based on the rewards they've received for certain behaviors. By becoming more aware of what you're rewarding, you can make adjustments that guide your dog toward the behaviors you truly want. When something unwanted happened ask yourself what just happened in the environment and what did I just do? This will help you be a truth detective and find clues to what may be accidentally triggering unwanted behavior.

## We Are the Trainers, They Are the Learners

At the end of the day, **we are the trainers and our dogs are the learners**. If something isn't going as planned, it's up to us to change our approach or adjust the environment to set our dogs up for success. Remember, they don't know what we want until we show them—so let's be mindful of what we're rewarding and help our dogs learn the right behaviors in a way that makes sense to them. 