

TIME-OUT

What is a time-out?

A technique used to teach a dog to stop doing something we don't like, just like you would do with a child. The idea of the time-out, in essence, is the removal of fun. We do this by removing the dog from the situation or by restricting his access to an object, person, or dog.

What can a time-out look like?

Putting your dog in his crate (if he is crate trained) or behind a baby gate or closed door.

Putting your dog on a leash.

Walking your dog away from an object, person, or dog he wants to get to.

Leaving the room yourself or stopping the game.

Examples of what to use time-outs for.

Inappropriate dog-dog play (nipping, rough wrestling, or incessant barking) or greetings.

Jumping on people to greet them.

Demand barking.

If your dog gets mouthy or jumpy during playtime with you.

How to use a time-out.

Pick a behavior. Decide the specific behavior that triggers a time-out. Say, inappropriate dog-dog play like nipping.

Find the trigger. Observe your dog to figure out which behavior tends to come just before the behavior you are targeting. For example, a wild chase game that always leads to nipping. This will be your signal to give your dog his warning cue.

Step 1. Give your warning cue. Anytime you see the signal behavior, give your warning cue. For example, "Easy!" If your dog responds to the cue and dials down the behavior, praise him and allow play to continue.

Step 2. Signal the time-out. If your dog disregards the warning cue and engages in the target behavior—in this case nipping—give him the time-out signal (like "Oops!" or "Too bad").

Step 3. Give the time-out. Time your dog out by putting him on a leash and removing him from the room or the play area at the park. Consistency is key. For time-outs to work they must be given every time your dog engages in the target behavior—at the very second he begins.

Step 4. Back to play. Release your dog after 1-2 minutes to try again.

TIME-OUT (CONTINUED)

Training Tip: Don't be discouraged if your dog avoids you in the beginning when you give the time-out signal. This means your training is going according to plan and if you keep at it, your dog will learn that dodging you doesn't work. This is when you will see results. He may even begin to come to you for time-outs of his own accord.

Troubleshooting: If your dog is still engaging in the target behavior after, say, half a dozen time-outs, or he does something particularly rude, a final time-out may help to get your point across. Follow steps 1-4, but don't give your dog another opportunity to misbehave that day. Leave the park or head home if you are out on a walk.