

Behavior Adjustment Training (BAT)

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<http://FunctionalRewards.com>

BAT reduces reactivity by giving dogs socially acceptable ways to communicate their needs.

BAT Takes a Functional Approach

When the dog does a problem behavior, it is usually because an event in their environment, an **environmental cue**, triggers the dog to want or need something.

Fulfillment of the need or want that is triggered by the environmental cue is called the **functional reward**. Here's the sequence:

Environmental Cue → Behavior → Functional Reward

So the functional reward for behaviors done after seeing a steak are the eating of the steak. The functional reward of behaviors done after spotting the squirrel is getting closer to / chasing the squirrel.

To discover the functional reward of a problem behavior, look at the consequence of the dog's behavior – what are they earning from the people, dogs, and world around them by doing the behavior?

For example, when dogs bark, lunge, growl, etc., one big consequence is usually an increase in distance from the trigger (they scare it away or are allowed to leave themselves). So we use increased distance—walking away from the trigger—as a functional reward.

Geek note: Technically, consequences only reinforce *behavior*, i.e., make behaviors more likely to occur the next time, but in everyday English, we often say that we reinforce or reward *the dog*. It's just simpler. ☺

Published Resources

- Intro to BAT (1.5 hour DVD)
- Organic Socialization (3 hour DVD + bonus disk)
- BATting 1000: Two Day Seminar (10 hour DVD)
- Give Your Puppy a Choice (2 hour DVD)
- Behavior Adjustment Training: BAT for Aggression, Frustration, and Fear in Dogs (Book)
- The Official Ahimsa Dog Training Manual: A Practical, Force-Free Guide to Problem Solving & Manners (book)
- See <http://functionalrewards.com/bat-videos-books>

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Basic Steps for Problem Behaviors with BAT

1. **Analyze** to discover the functional reward of the problem behavior.
2. **Expose** to a subtle version of the trigger. Don't go so close or make it so challenging that the dog does the problem behavior, including panic or aggression. *Make it obvious what the dog should do, but not so easy that he's not making a choice at all.* Breathing should be fairly calm.
3. **Wait** for good choices (ex. look at trigger, then look away or stop pulling on leash or...). If distress increases, abort the trial rather than letting the dog flounder.
4. **Mark** with a word or clicker.
5. Give access to a **Functional Reward** – fulfill the need that triggered the behavior you are trying to change.
6. Optional **Bonus Reward**, like food or a toy, esp. on walks - distracts from trigger.

When to Take a Functional Approach

1. You can figure out what the functional reward is for the problem behavior.
2. You can control access to the functional reward.
3. There is an alternate behavior that will reasonably earn the same functional reward in the dog's everyday life.



Drawing by Lili Chin
<http://doggiedrawings.net>
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BAT for Reactivity: Aggression, Frustration, and Fear

Steps below assume that the functional reward is an increased distance to the trigger, but you can use a 1-2 foot approach instead for frustrated greeters.

Walks: Stage 1. If waiting for good behavior won't work yet in the real world – the trigger is too close and the dog would be too stressed if you wait there, here's an even **easier version**. Start off just by clicking the dog for noticing the trigger. This is basically using classical conditioning with a BAT flavor:

1. Dog notices trigger
2. Click
3. Walk/jog away
4. Treat with food or a toy

Walks: Stage 2. When you can't control the trigger intensity (people or other dogs get too close, etc.), bring treats, so you can do the Bonus Reward version of BAT. The order of events is:

1. Dog notices trigger
2. Wait for alternate behavior (if possible), like looking away from the trigger, calm bravery, ground sniffing, shake-off, etc. Keep leash loose, and breathe!
** If the dog starts breathing faster or looks like they're going to bark, say her name and walk her further away, so she can calm down.
3. Click
4. Walk/jog away
5. Treat with food or a toy

Note that you **walk away before treating**, so the dog notices the functional reward. As time goes on, shift into letting the dog engage more with their environment. Begin to do the **set-up version of BAT out in the real world whenever possible**, using only functional rewards, not treats.

Set-ups and Stage 3 Walks. Set-ups are ideal. Do them right away. Start with an easy version of the trigger and gradually turn up the heat. That usually means starting really far away from the trigger. Take breaks whenever the dog, you, or the helpers need one.

1. Walk toward trigger (or trigger approaches) only until dog just barely begins to pay attention to the trigger. Breathing should be fairly calm.
2. Wait for alternate behavior, often 'disengagement' like looking away.
3. Say "Yes" right as the dog makes a good choice.
4. Walk/jog away

BASIC BAT SET-UP

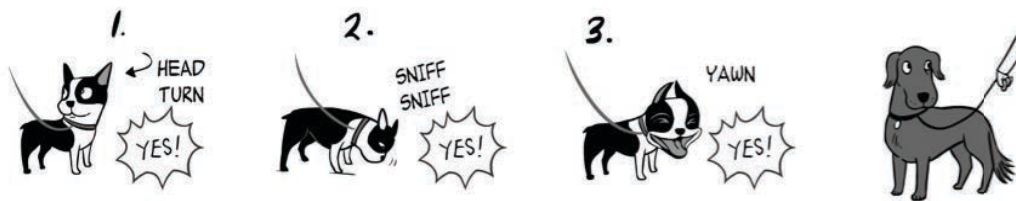
STEP 1: CHOICE POINT. Dog notices the trigger from a safe distance.

*Pick a distance where the dog is below threshold and not likely to overreact.



STEP 2: WAIT FOR A GOOD CHOICE. Prompt if you have to.

*Look for an ENGAGE- DISENGAGE pattern or a CUT-OFF SIGNAL



STEP 3: MARK the good choice at the precise moment.

* For example, use a verbal marker like "YES!"

You may use a clicker only if you are using FOOD or TOYS as a Bonus Reward (STEP 5)



STEP 4: FUNCTIONAL REWARD = distance from the trigger.

*Walk or jog the dog away from the trigger on loose leash



STEP 5: (OPTIONAL) BONUS REWARD = Food or Toys

*The optional treat/toy comes AFTER the Functional Reward.



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Appears in Behavior Adjustment
Training book
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RINSE, REPEAT...

If Your Dog Goes Over Threshold

If the trigger is too close, suddenly moves, and if your dog gets **STUCK** at a choice point or goes **OVER THRESHOLD**...

- * accelerated breathing
- * up on toes
- * intense stiffness
- * pulling tight on leash
- * unresponsive to handler, magnetized by trigger
- * or any change for the worse...



ABORT this trial by calling his name, making a sound, or shaking the leash to get his attention. **Don't yell at him.**

Move dog a few feet away with the trigger still in view or turn and walk away in the opposite or diagonal direction.

EXAMPLES:



RETURN TO STEP 1

Look at the trigger from a safer distance

- * loose leash
- * under threshold

