

The Power Of The Premack Principle, How To Use Grandmas Law To Boost Your Dog Training Efforts

Do you remember as a kid when your Grandmother would tell you that you had to finish your vegetables before you could have any ice cream?

If your Grandmother or anyone else has ever said that to you, then they were using the Premack Principle, also known as Grandma's Law.

Basically, the Premack Principle is this: "If high probability behaviors (more desirable behaviors) are made contingent upon lower probability behaviors (less desirable behaviors), then the lower probability behaviors are more likely to occur."

Or to put it simply: "You can't watch TV until you finish your homework."

So how does this apply to dog training?

The Premack Principle works great when you are trying to teach your dog to come when called. You see, when your dog is outside there are more desirable things to do than to come back to you.

If your dog is outside and sees a squirrel, the chances of coming back to you decrease dramatically. Chasing the squirrel is much more desirable than responding to your command "Come."

But...

Since we now understand the Premack Principle, we can set up training situations where your dog learns to respond to the command "Come" before taking chase.

Here is an exercise that I teach:

With your dog on a 10 to 15 foot leash, throw a treat about 20 feet away. Let your dog see you throw the treat.

Now let your dog go to the treat but stop her about two feet from the treat. Your dog will be interested in the treat and probably ignore your command "Come." Give your dog just a slight tug on the leash and back up a few feet.

Once your dog comes to you, hold your dog's collar, praise your dog, and then let your dog run back and get the treat. You have just used the Premack Principle with your dog.

Your dog wants the treat (very desirable to your dog) but can't get the treat until she responds to the command "Come" (less desirable behavior), you are now teaching your dog to respond to your commands in distracting situations.

At first you need to use the leash to get the less desirable behavior to occur, but over time you'll find that your dog will start to respond to your voice command and you'll need to use the leash less and less.

Start using the Premack Principle and you'll be amazed at how much better your dog responds to your commands

About the Author

Eric Letendre, author of The Amazing Dog Training Man, invites you to visit <http://www.amazingdogtrainingman.com> for free dog training video clips, tips, articles, and advice. Free Newsletter.

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