

THE CHAIN BREAK

Hack

WHEN to use it

Whenever you're working to change unwanted behavior in your dog, you have to remember to break the chain - the behavior chain, that is!

Just like links in a chain or steps in a dance, behaviors can quickly link together into sequences. We often accidentally reward behaviors we do NOT want to encourage by asking for/rewarding the GOOD behaviors that directly follow them - linking the behaviors together into a chain. This common mistake can be easily avoided by simply remembering to take a break - a chain break!

HOW it works

Nature is all about efficiency, so the learning (L) process is designed to save energy (S) by building connections between behaviors that link together in a sequence in order to automate the connection. Since evolutionary principles ensure that all organisms are designed (G) to do what "works" and stop doing what "doesn't work" (L), we simply have to provide clear and delineated feedback in the environment (E) in direct response to their different behaviors (L). While there are certainly times we want to build those efficient connections between links in a behavioral chain, we have to be on the lookout for those pesky behavior chains that link the not so good stuff to the good stuff we want to reward. And all we have to do is to take that chain break BEFORE we reinforce!

HOW to use it



Watch out for those troublesome common links that can build your dog's pesky behavior chains, and then just remember to take a chain break AFTER the behavior you DON'T want (at LEAST a minute in most cases) BEFORE rewarding the behavior you DO want to reinforce!



Take a chain break AFTER your dog steals your shoe BEFORE you replace it with a new bone to chew to avoid "the steal from Peter-to pay Paul chain"



Take a chain break AFTER your dog jumps up on you BEFORE you reward him for sitting instead to avoid "the jump-sit chain"



Take a chain break AFTER your dog barks at the neighbor walking their dog by your house BEFORE you call him and reward him for being quiet to avoid "the bark-hush chain"

The whole idea of "catching them being good" is fantastic, so it's absolutely a great idea to notice and reward all of your dog's great choices throughout the day. Just make sure that those good behaviors don't accidentally encourage any not so good behaviors that precede them before you reinforce them - **TAKE A CHAIN BREAK!**

*** HINT -** if you're having a hard time GETTING a break because your dog is continuing to try the behavior you would rather discourage, you can use the [Game Show Hack](#) in conjunction with the [Chain Break Hack](#) so you can get that chain break you need when your dog loses his turn in the game for a "wrong answer".

