

Sometimes we cannot get dogs to do what we've asked. Why is that? We want to immediately think that the dog is being "stubborn", but that's almost never the case. Before deciding the dog is being "hard-headed", consider the following possibilities:

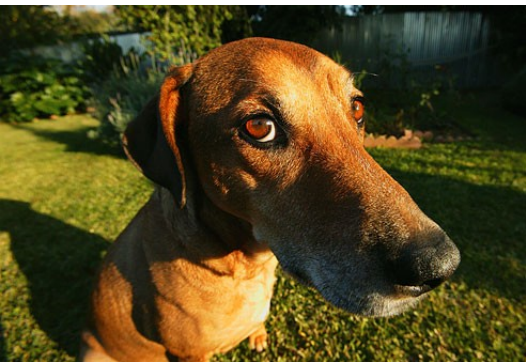
**The rate of reinforcement is too low.** This is an extremely common problem. If your dog is in the store smelling, looking around, eating things off the floor, jumping on people, or pulling towards other dogs, he or she is getting the "reward" of interesting stimuli and possible interactions. If you're giving him or her a treat once every 30-60 seconds, we can't expect them to pay attention. Your dog should be proficient at working around distractions and have a long history of paying attention to you before moving to giving the pet less treats. When in doubt, treat more often! In addition to making your dog more motivated to work, it forces you to look for good behaviors and will change your perception of your dog.



**The criterion is too high.** If your dog can't do what you're asking, for *whatever* reason, ask for something your dog can do. Once you have that point of success, break the target behavior into more attainable steps so your dog can succeed. Starting small and building this is an important concept.

**Previous history.** If your dog has learned that you're inconsistent and unpredictable, then your dog may just ignore you. You usually see this with some people that do not follow through with corrections or rewards, constantly repeat commands, do not have clear ideas of what they want the dog to do, and resort to yelling at the dog. While this may contribute to frustration on the dog's part, usually your dog has just learned that it does not pay off to listen to you.

**Pet Parent Frustration!** This is a big one. Many dogs turn off when their handlers are frustrated. Dogs usually are not responsive to an angry or frustrated Pet Parent. If you're frustrated, it's probably because *your* rate of reinforcement is too low. When you see your dog succeed it reinforces all the hard work both of you put in.



**Dog's Frustration.** A dog's frustration can manifest in a few different ways. Many dogs shut down, which could look like laziness, lying down and refusing to get up. Lots of dogs take up new interests. Usually this means that they're busy trying to play with another dog, sniff something, or interact with someone other than you. A few dogs choose to goof around. This can be even more frustrating for you because your dog usually gets very mouthy, barks, and jumps... all are sure signs of frustration.

**We'll never know.** There will be times when your dog doesn't do something and we don't know why. It is okay to sometimes let the dog "get away with" not doing what we ask. Why? Maybe he's hurt, scared, having a bad day, didn't hear you, over stimulated, over worked, at his breaking point, etc. We want you and your dog to enjoy training so stop while you're ahead. It's hard to do, but everyone will benefit from it. Don't underestimate the value of latent learning – the learning that continues to occur in the brain during down time.