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Title: Should old dog trainers learn new tricks? The efficiency of the Do as I do method and shaping/clicker training method to train dogs

Author: Claudia Fugazza Ádám Miklósi



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1 Should old dog trainers learn new tricks? The efficiency of the Do as I do method and shaping
2 / clicker training method to train dogs

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4 Claudia Fugazza* & Ádám Miklósi#,*

5 *Department of Ethology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest*

6 *Author for correspondence (claudia.happydog@gmail.com)

7 #MTA-ELTE Comparative Ethology Research Group

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9 ABSTRACT

10 Despite evidence that dogs are skilful in acquiring information socially from humans and are
11 able to copy the actions of a human demonstrator, formal dog-training methods have
12 traditionally relied only on individual learning (operant and classical conditioning). We
13 compared the efficiency of the ‘Do as I do’ method (Topál et al. 2006), which relies on social
14 learning, with that of a training method that relies on individual learning (shaping/clicker
15 training - Skinner 1951) to teach dogs three different kinds of object-related actions. In order
16 to control for the comparability of the previous training experiences of our subjects, we tested
17 experienced dog-owner dyads that had previously achieved a certificate for either type of
18 training (Do as I do and shaping/clicker training). They were tested upon training three
19 different novel actions: simple, complex and sequences of two actions, in three separate
20 sessions, using the training method they were certified for. In each case the owners had 15
21 minutes for accomplishing the task of training the dogs to perform the predetermined action.
22 We used the latency of first occurrence and the number of dyads that were successful within
23 15 minutes as measures of training success. While we did not find a significant difference
24 between the two training methods with regard to simple actions, we found that subjects using
25 the Do as I do method outperformed those using shaping/clicker training in the case of
26 complex actions and sequences of two actions. This study is the first to formalize a method
27 based on the Do as I do protocol for training dogs and to assess its efficiency by comparing it
28 with shaping/clicker training. We acknowledge that many factors can influence the success of
29 different training paradigms, however, these results provide new insights for the applied dog
30 training techniques by suggesting the usefulness of social learning in addition to the widely
31 used methods that rely on individual associative learning.

32

33 KEYWORDS

34 Dog, Social learning, Training method, Training efficiency, Do as I do

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