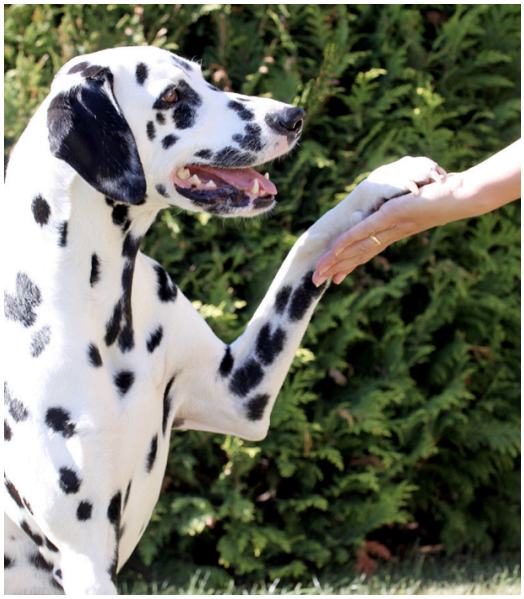
The Three Ds Of Dog Training:

Distance, Duration, Distractions



Every task we teach our dogs, will have several different levels of complexity.--from very simple, to very difficult.

One of the most common mistakes made by dog owners, is to try and climb those levels too quickly.

It's tempting to take huge leaps from the very simple to the most difficult scenarios in which the dog is expected to obey in a short period of time

Don't Complicate Your Dog Training

You know how hard it can be to take in instructions when your teacher is rushing ahead and not giving you time to absorb the information or practice what you know.

Well, dogs suffer the same fate at our hands.

To make matters worse, and to make things even more difficult for the dog, we often increase the level of difficulty in several different ways at once.

Here's an example of how this can happen:

Let's say you are working on 'the ***stay***' . You ask your dog to sit for thirty seconds, when he has only sat for ten seconds successfully before. It's a bit of a leap, but Buster's a smart lad and he's trying very hard. He can probably pull this off.

But at the same time, suppose you ask him to ***sit*** for those thirty seconds whilst your Auntie is visiting.

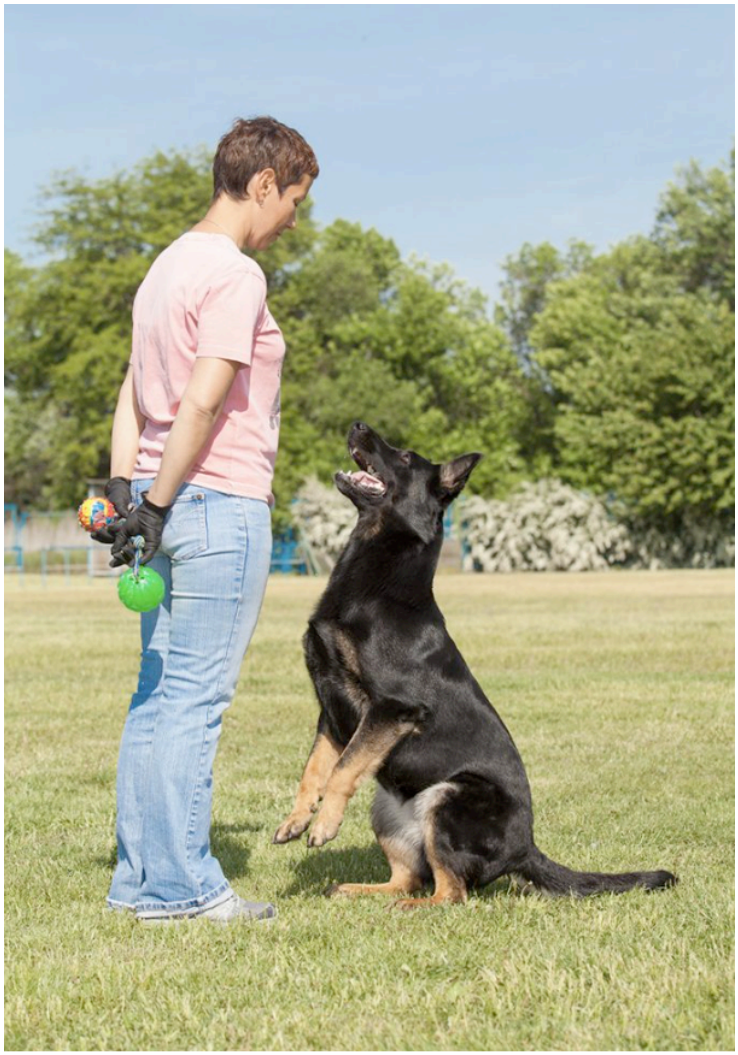
And to add insult to injury, imagine that you are also asking him to sit on a long stay for those thirty seconds when you add distractions. Your Auntie in the room watching TV and you go to the kitchen to get a jug of milk from the fridge. If you were to do this, you would have just added increasing complexity in not one, but all three of the three D's of Dog Training.

What are the three Ds of dog training?

The Three Ds of dog training are **Distance, Duration, and Distraction.**

These are all factors which increase the challenge or complexity of a task, and which when increased individually may reduce the dog's ability to perform a known skill.

When the three are increased in combination, they make it highly likely that your dog will fail.



The Keys To Success: Distance, Duration, Distraction.

A recipe for failure

So, if your dog can *sit* next to you for ten seconds, and you then ask him to remain sitting for ten seconds whilst you are on the other side of the room, you have increased the *distance* between you and the dog.

If you add increased duration to the sit, you are adding two factors at once: distance and duration together.

If you then also add a visitor into the equation, you have added a distraction to the task too.

Distance, duration, and **distraction**, all increased at once, is a recipe for disaster.

If you do this on a regular basis, the chances are you are struggling with your training.

Distance

Distance is our first D.

Generally speaking, your influence over your dog diminishes as the distance between the two of you increases.

Dogs don't automatically assume that a cue given when you are next to them, also applies when you are on the other side of a field. This is something we need to teach.

In the past this was though to be simply a case of disobedience. Or the dog 'choosing' to be naughty.

We now know this is not true, as dogs can easily be taught to perform at increasing distances from their handler, provided that these distances are increased in sufficiently small steps.

Duration

Some behaviors have no duration.

> A jump, or a turn are actions that run from start to finish. We cannot extend the amount of time a dog remains in mid-air whilst jumping over a fence, we cannot take the 'turn' and extend a part of it, nor can we easily make the turn take any longer. The dog is fully focused on the whole behavior and on completing it. There are smooth flowing *actions* rather than static *positions*.

Some behaviors do have duration. These are usually positions that the dog takes up and does not have to focus all his attention on, once he has achieved that position. So *sit, down, stand* and *heel*, are all positions.

Once your dog has 'sat' his mind is then free to think of other things. With training, and sometimes with increasing muscle strength and co-ordination, he should be able to hold that position through all kinds of interruptions and distractions. Once you have built up duration, it is time to add some *distractions*.

Distraction

There are many things that might catch your your dog's attention. These are distractions. It might be an interesting smell, people passing by, dogs running around, loud noises, vehicles, children playing ball games, birds landing nearby, etc.

Most dogs will break a stay or be unable to respond to your cues, when first exposed to distractions. The reason is that most people introduce distractions at far too high a level of difficulty. that

So how do we make distractions, well, less distracting? The answer is often to move the distraction further away, or to move the dog further away from the distraction. Dog simply find it easier to perform a task when a potential distraction is far away, than they do when the distraction is close by.

> So your dog might be able to sit or lie down on cue when he is fifty yards away from another dog, but fail at this task when another dog is two feet away.

Understand The Principle of Generalization

Dogs are poor at generalizing experience.

> Being able to sit nicely in your living room on cue is quite a different experience from sitting on command outside on your lanai, with is just a few feet away from where he performed perfectly! Outside, there are different sights, sounds, smells and a host of other sensory experiences your dog may find irresistible.

Once your dog is able to comply with your requests most of the time, practice that skill in many different locations. These varied experiences help your dog to understand that he/she is to respond every time you ask, regardless of where it is.

The three Ds of dog training

Many people wonder how super-effective dog trainers get the amazing results they do. The truth is, they follow a set of rules that you can follow just as easily. And one of them is the golden rule of 3 Ds.

> The golden rule of three Ds is to only **increase only <u>ONE</u> of the three Ds—distance, distractions and duration--** at any one time.

Remember, too, that dogs need a lot of help to understand that a cue such as *come* or *sit*, given in one situation, has the same meaning in another. As soon as you change the factors influencing the task, factors we call the 3 Ds, you diminish the dog's chances of success.

Set Your Dog Up To Win

Do your dog a favor: **<u>set him up to WIN</u>**.

You can give your dog the help he needs by adding different criteria to your training exercises in simple stages. Make a commitment to only raise one set of criteria at a time. If you increase duration, don't increase distance, in fact, your best bet is to reduce the other two Ds whenever you are working hard on the third.

> So if you are increasing the duration of your dog's sit, reduce the distance between you for a while. It seems like such a small detail, but you'll find it helps you to be a better trainer and turns your dog into a winner.

Adapted from https://thehappypuppysite.com/three-ds-of-dog-training/