

# RED AND GREEN LIGHT TRAINING



Consider the following trainer methods and skill sets that separate the best from the rest, including the red light qualities to avoid and the green light qualities to seek out in your efforts to find an emotionally protective, humane dog trainer.



## Red Light Training Methods

Avoid the following harsh methods that motivate the animal to behave using aversive stimuli:

- Leash/collar jerks, pops, or over-tightening
- Physically forcing the animal into place
- Scary noises
- Spraying the dog
- Physical punishment, including slapping, hitting, pinching, shaking, biting, or throwing items at the dog
- Using intimidation or confrontation to gain compliance or dominance/"alpha" status, such as yelling, staring the animal down, or doing alpha rolls or alpha downs (physically pinning the dog down on their back or side)
- Advocating methods that are too dangerous or high risk for guardians to safely use on their own
- Using "mixed" or "balanced" training methods that blend punishment and rewards. This can increase confusion/uncertainty and escalate conflict and anxiety.

**Note:** Just stating that the training uses rewards isn't enough information. Ensure that all training tactics used with the dog are free of fear and force-based methods, rather than a blend or mix of methods.





## Green Light Training Methods

Emotionally protective methods employed by humane trainers may include use of the following:

- Teaching and rewarding desired behavior using positive reinforcement and rewards the animal wants to work for, including treats, food, toys, play, attention, petting, praise, or access to a desired activity or space (*such as going out for a walk or an opportunity to "say hi" to a friend*)
- Managing the situation to make unwanted behavior less likely to occur, using non-invasive and non-confrontational strategies, including management tools like leashes, baby gates, and avoidance of the problem situation
- Advocating rewarding the behaviors you like and want to see more of while ignoring and/or not rewarding unwanted behavior that occurs
- Proactively replacing or redirecting unwanted behavior by guiding the animal to a different reward-worthy behavior or enjoyable activity
- Basing their approach upon a strong, science-based understanding of animal behavior and learning theory
- Setting the animal up for success by adjusting the training scenario/environment as needed for the animal to remain successful
- Implementing training at a pace the animal is comfortable with by building better behavior one success at a time
- Teaching clients to safeguard canine emotional wellbeing and training success by continually attending to and responding appropriately towards dog body language cues. In doing so, clients learn to adjust their approach and the dog's environment to keep their canine calm and content and avoid needlessly exposing their dog to emotionally upsetting or high-stress situations
- Effectively partnering with veterinary professionals to help pets suffering from behavioral issues, such as implementing aspects of a behavior modification plan that's guided by the pet's veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist
- Helping clients meet their dog's individual and species-specific needs in ways that allow the dog freedom to still "be a dog", while doing so in a way that fits realistically into life the dog shares with their human family





## Red Light Explanations of Animal Behavior and Learning

- Relies upon concepts like pack theory and dominance to explain behavior and motivation in dogs
- Uses explanations like “dominance,” “pack leadership,” and having to be the “alpha” or “boss” when explaining relational dynamics and behavior of dogs



## Green Light Explanations of Animal Behavior and Learning

- Teaches owners to better understand their animals through a scientifically based understanding of animal behavior and learning theory
- Encourages healthy practices that protect the physical wellbeing of animals, including enrichment, ongoing veterinary care, and advising veterinary oversight/intervention at the earliest signs of a concern or change in health or behavior
- Teaches the importance of teaching and rewarding right behaviors



## Red Light Body Language and Trainer Response to Fear, Anxiety & Stress:

- Animal learners show excessive signs of avoidance, fear, anxiety, or stress.
- The trainer overlooks/fails to address signs of distress or mistakingly categorizes such high-stress body language (such as cowering, freezing, ears back, mouth closed tightly, shutting down) as a "positive sign".



Resource: Find a free dog body language guide video at [fearfreehappyhomes.com](https://fearfreehappyhomes.com).



## Green Light Body Language and Trainer Response to Fear, Anxiety & Stress:

- Dogs display happy, relaxed or alert, and interested body language cues.
- The trainer keeps stress levels low for human and animal participants to ensure both are in a relaxed enough state to learn and for training to remain successful.
- If animals display signs of fear, anxiety, and stress, the trainer notices and adjusts their approach, the interaction, or the training environment in a way that helps the animal to remain comfortable and calm.
- Accurately identifies body language signals and teaches clients ways to better read and respond to their animal's body language cues.



## Red Light People Skills

- Relates well only with dogs, not the people at the other end of the leash
- Communicates in an unkind, belittling, judgmental, or intimidating manner
- Yells or uses abusive language
- Impatient or reluctant to answer questions or provide extra guidance when a client needs extra help or when an aspect of training is unclear
- Hard to understand or difficult to relate to



## Green Light People Skills:

- Relates and communicates well with both dogs and people
- Uses positive reinforcement, patience, and creativity in their work with both dogs and people
- Encourages and positively reinforces dog guardians (not just their dogs)
- Keeps stress levels low so that both dog and human students remain relaxed enough to learn
- Communicates clearly in a manner that is easy to understand and implement
- Adapts their teaching style to fit the unique needs of their canine and human learners using humane, Fear Free-compatible methods
- Provides clear tools and guidelines for successfully integrating training into the home and everyday life of the dog

FEAR FREE  
HAPPY  
HOMES

Helping pets live happy, healthy, full lives

