

ACADEMY OF CANINE BEHAVIOR

The Colors of Dog Training ©

Whether we know it or not, we use color extensively in our society to elicit and communicate feeling. The language of color can also be applied to the dog training environment. By visualizing a “color” to represent different emotions of the dog and handler, you can accurately determine what state of mind the dog is in - and what body language you need to use at that moment - to maximize learning. The “color” you want your dog in when you are in a training situation depends on what you are trying to do with the dog. To increase productivity of training sessions, set *your* color first! If you want to change the color of your dog, move yourself into the proper color first, so that it will mix with your dog’s color and produce the results that you want.

BLUE: **Relaxed energy. Quiet, calm, and a little too relaxed to “want” to learn anything new.**

DOG: Totally relaxed. If on a “DOWN-STAY”, the head is probably down.

HANDLER: Still, like a statue. The hands are NEVER used to touch the dog. If talking to the dog, the voice stays very quiet, and only monotype vocabulary is used.

GREEN: **Focused energy. Composed and reflective. The mind is in a “GO” state for learning.**

DOG: Calmly watching and listening. On a “DOWN-STAY”, the head is up.

HANDLER: Moves are calm and authoritative with positive body posture. Hands go on the dog only for praise and always with the handler in control. Both verbal and physical praise are given with quiet, controlled presentation.

YELLOW: **Happy energy. Sunny, tuned-in to handler. The mind needs quick and clear information.**

DOG: Performance exercises, i.e., retrieving, recalls, agility, etc. No stationary positions like the “DOWN-STAY” or “SIT-STAY”.

HANDLER: Encouraging praise, presented with happy energy.

ORANGE: **Wild energy. Distracted, frustrated and unfocused. Dog no longer tuned-in to handler.**

DOG: Uncontrollable with stimulus or distractions, as when someone comes to the door, or another dog approaches.

HANDLER: Scattered energy. Quick, unfocused movements and voice.

RED: **Negative energy. Aggression. Extreme fear. Panic.**

DOG: In a reactive state, usually fight or flight. The mind cannot receive any new information.

HANDLER: Yelling and screaming. Trying to restrain or contain the dog. Feels totally out of control of the situation.

This concept, created by Colleen McDaniel, owner of The Academy Of Canine Behavior, won First Place in the 1997 OFF-LEAD National Writing Competition, and appeared in the September 1997 issue of OFF-LEAD. The concept has since been incorporated into several nationally recognized canine behavior programs and is now a regular technique used in classes and evaluations at The Academy.