

You've got to *know your dog*.

As a Novice trainer with my first dog I just wanted the "***The Recipe***". I wanted my obedience instructors to just tell me the steps. Please give me instructions for #1 thru #10, etc., so I could go home and train exactly that way. Way too often I was told, "*Well, it depends on your dog*", or, "*You have to know your dog*". Many years and four trained minis later, I totally understand that phrase, but I still don't like it – as I'm the kind of person who always follows recipes when cooking, for god's sake!

Breeders intrinsically understand this concept and that every puppy is an individual. They raise a litter with many personalities and see firsthand how each puppy develops and how differently they respond to stimuli.

Of course, there are basic training steps that we all start off with, but very quickly subtle differences in technique may need to be used. Jack Godsill, an old time trainer often said, "Dog training is 90% thought and 10% doing." He felt that the most productive dog training was done sitting in a chair *thinking* about it – then going out and training the dog! Golden Retrievers are famous for "having read the book" while in the puppy pen. These types of dogs love repetition and enjoy longer training sessions. Most Schnauzers can think of 100 things to do rather than retrieve a dumbbell 10 times in a row – and they'll show you too if you repeat an exercise too many times! Also, some dogs train great with food as a reward and others love that tug toy – "*you've got to know your dog*"!

Training a dog is a puzzle with thousands of pieces and what works for one dog could very well be totally wrong for another. Each of my minis have had completely different personalities and trying to apply the same training techniques to each has gotten me into much trouble over the years, but thank heaven's they've let me know in no uncertain terms!

I really do dislike this phrase and dislike it even more when I find myself using it when helping a student or friend; however, it is one of the truest statements in dog training.

Knowing your dog is the key to successful training.

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