



Evaluating the Effectiveness of Prompting Ratio Procedures for Canine Skill Acquisition

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Introduction

- Prompts are commonly utilized to teach canines novel skills during canine obedience training with the goal of having control of the desired behavior transferred from the prompt to a vocal command.
- Over prompting or fading prompts too quickly may be detrimental to skill acquisition.
- To remedy the issue past research has used a prompt to probe method (Mattingly & Bott, 1990) to determine when control of the behavior has been transferred from the prompt to the vocal command.
- No previous research has examined the effectiveness of different prompting ratio procedures.
- The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of 3 different prompt to probe ratios, 1:1, 3:1, and 5:1, when teaching various skills to canines.

Method

Participants, Setting, & Materials

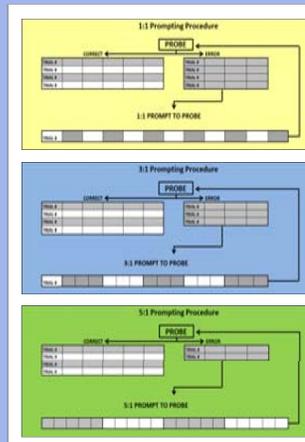
- 21 dogs of mixed breeds participated in the study, 9 females and 12 males with approximated ages ranging from 4 months to 9 years.
- All sessions were conducted at the Eau Claire County Humane Association.
- Small pieces of hot dog were used as reinforcers for all participants.

Baseline

- Each canine was evaluated to determine if the canine had the ability to sit and shake before being admitted into the research.

Training

- Each session consisted of approximately 20 trials.
- One of three prompt to probe ratios was randomly assigned for each behavior.
- Training was completed across both skills for each canine when possible.
- Each canine was trained by one trainer throughout the research.
- Skills were taught one at a time.
- The trainer used physical guidance to promote the target behaviors.
- Target behaviors occurring within 3 seconds of the verbal command were reinforced.
- Acquisition of the target response was defined as 10 consecutive correct responses.

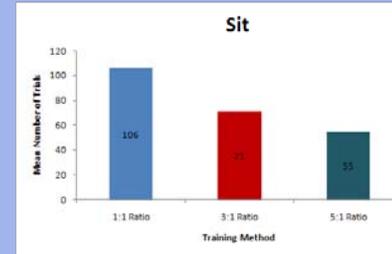


Procedural Integrity

- Procedural integrity was measured as percentage of trials implemented correctly.

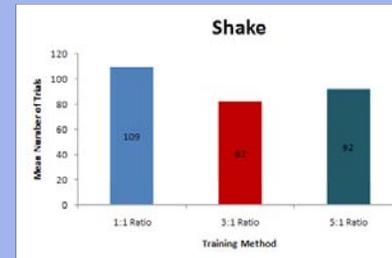
Results

Trials to Mastery



Procedural Integrity

Measured for 100% of trials
 1:1 = 98.8%
 3:1 = 99.1%
 5:1 = 99.2%



Interobserver Agreement

Measured for 31% of trials
 1:1 = 97.1%
 3:1 = 100%
 5:1 = 98.4%



Discussion

Implications

- Our results indicate that the 5:1 and 3:1 procedures may be equally effective in training basic obedience behaviors. Both the 5:1 and 3:1 procedures appear to be more effective than the 1:1 procedure.
- These data would suggest that using a ratio of prompting greater than 1 may lead to behavior acquisition in fewer trials.

Potential Confounding Variables

- Limited subject history, age, and breed information.
- Training setting presented uncontrollable distractions and between session events (e.g., other dogs and potential adopters).

Future Research

- Investigate additional prompt to probe ratio values.
- Investigate the effects of different prompt levels and prompt fading.

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