

Importance of Failure

P r o d u c t i v e n o t P e r f e c t i o n



Why Failure Matters in Dog Training

Training is not about creating a perfect dog that never makes mistakes. Learning happens through success, problem solving, and manageable failure. When dogs are allowed to work through challenges at the right level, they build confidence, resilience, and a better understanding of what earns reinforcement. The goal is not avoiding failure completely — it is using it productively.

1

Failure Teaches Problem Solving

- Small failures help dogs learn which choices work and which do not. When a dog struggles slightly but can still succeed with guidance, they become more engaged in the learning process. This creates stronger and more reliable skills than only practicing easy repetitions.

2

Too Much Failure Creates Frustration

- Repeated failure with no progress usually means the training challenge is too difficult. Too much failure can lead to frustration, stress, avoidance, or over-arousal. A good rule is the “Rule of 3” — if the dog fails three times in a row without improvement, make the exercise easier and rebuild success.

3

The Goldilocks Zone

- The best learning happens in the “Goldilocks Zone” — not too hard and not too easy. Training that is too easy does not challenge the dog, while training that is too difficult prevents learning. The goal is productive struggle: enough challenge to encourage thinking, but enough success to keep the dog confident and motivated.