

OPEN BAR, CLOSED BAR

What is it?

A simple, effective training technique to change a dog's association with an object, animal, or person from negative (a bad feeling) to positive (a good feeling).

In this technique, we use carefully timed food treats to teach a dog that the thing she fears is nothing to be afraid of, and is in fact quite fabulous.

How does it work?

1. Choose your dog's favorite treat. You might even go all out and pick something she has never had before that you think she will love. The meatier, softer, juicier the treat, the more impact the training has.
2. Cut the treats into bite-size pieces no larger than an M&M. Put them in an easy-to-get-to container like a bait bag, an old fanny pack, or an apron pocket.
3. Begin treating your dog as soon as the object she fears or dislikes comes into her sight.
4. Continue treating your dog at a rate of about one treat per second for as long as the object is in view.
5. The moment the object disappears, abruptly stop the stream of treats.
6. Repeat the process every time the object appears.

Open Bar rules of thumb.

- Don't treat your dog with the special treat when the scary object is not in sight.
- Make sure the scary object doesn't stay in sight for too long.
- If your dog seems fearful, isn't taking treats, or doesn't become more relaxed after several Open Bar repetitions, increase the distance between her and the scary object. These exercises only work if your dog is comfortable and relaxed enough to learn.
- Treat *every time* your dog sees the scary object.

Examples of when to use Open Bar.

With dogs that growl, bark, or lunge at other dogs.

With dogs that growl, bark, or lunge at people.

With dogs that are afraid of cars, bicycles, skateboards, etc.

With dogs that are afraid of garage doors, revving engines, etc.