

Use of Precision Teaching and a Choke Chain and Verbal Prompt to Teach a Yellow Labrador Puppy to Heel: A Brief Report

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This report considers the use of a choke chain and verbal prompt to teach a nine-month yellow Labrador puppy to heel. An AB experimental design provided evaluation data on the amount of time that the animal heeled during her 10-minute walk. The results showed an increase in the amount of time the dog heeled and a reduction in the number of minutes that the puppy would not heel during 10 minute walks, during the choke chain and verbal prompt condition. The procedures were practical. Informal observation by the owners and first author indicated that heeling generalized to other times of the day and activities.

Training pets to engage in appropriate behaviors has been suggested by several authors ranging from Breland and Breland (1951), Skinner (1951) to Pryor (1984). Heeling is one of the first behaviors that trainers teach to animals (Pryor, 1984).

The purpose of this study was to increase the number of minutes, Bailey, a 9 month old Labrador puppy, would heel during 10 minute walks, using data collection of Precision Teaching. In addition, the use of a choke chain (Pryor, 1984) to teach the skill was evaluated. The use of a choke chain was viewed as humane and reasonable by Bailey's owners. In addition, others such as Karen Pryor and Helen Woodhouse have advocated its use. Woodhouse has also indicated that it is far kinder to use a choke chain than to continue to tug and haul the animal's neck with an immediate and meaningless level of force (Pryor, 1984).

Method

Participant and Setting

The participant was a nine month old female Labrador puppy, named Bailey. The pet of a university faculty member. The first author enjoyed taking Bailey for walks, but at times Bailey would simply drag her along. Data were collected along the street near where Bailey lived.

Response Definition

We measured the number of seconds that Bailey would heel on 10-minute walks. Heeling was defined as walking next to the first author without her tugging on the leash. When Bailey was heeling, the stop watch was kept running. When she did not heel, the stop watch was stopped. In this way, the number of seconds heeling could be determined from each walk. Walks were also timed by the first author.

Experimental Design and Experimental Conditions

An AB single subject design (Kazdin, 1982) was used to examine the duration of heeling and not heeling during the presence and absence of the choke chain and verbal prompt.

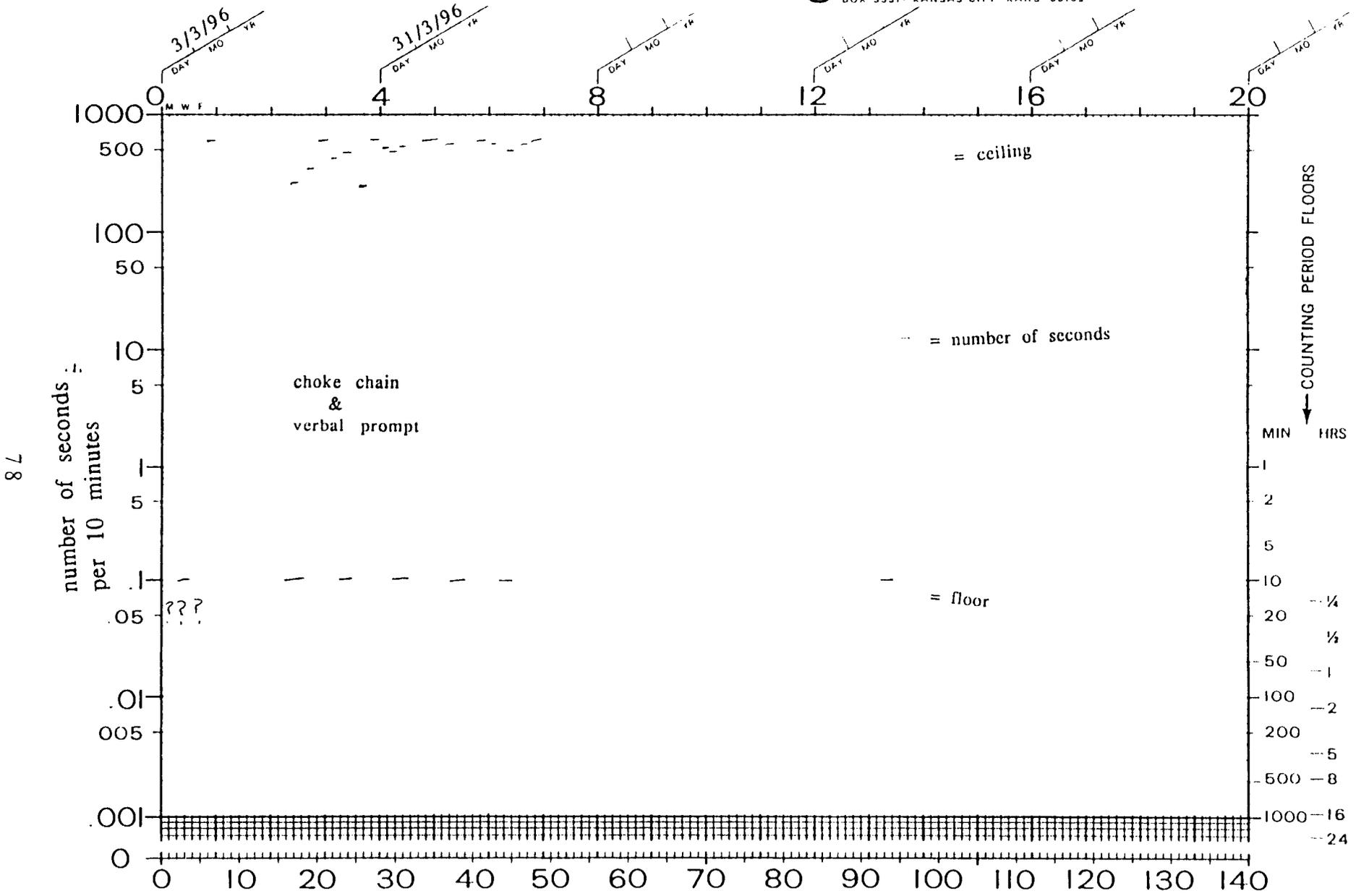
Baseline. Baseline consisted of a series of walks without a choke chain. This phase lasted for three walks and three data days (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday).

Choke chain and verbal prompt. The intervention consisted of the first author taking Bailey for her 10-minute walk. The verbal prompt "Bailey Heel" or "Heel" was paired with an upward thrust of her arm on the leash which was attached to the a choke chain (Pryor, 1985). This was done each time Bailey would leave the side of the first author during the walk. Data were gathered for seven weeks, three times each week.



DAILY BEHAVIOR CHART (DCM 9LN)
 8 CYCLE -- 140 DAYS (20 WKS)
 BEHAVIOR RESEARCH CO
 BOX 3351 KANSAS CITY KANS 66103

CALENDAR WEEKS



87

T.F. McLaughlin Megan
 SUPERVISOR ADVISER MANAGER
 Gonzaga University

SUCCESSIVE CALENDAR DAYS
 Magen Magen

Bailey 9 mos. puppy
 BEHAVIOR AGE LABEL COUNTED
 Magen Gallagher
 Duration of Heeling

Results and Discussion

The number of seconds during the 10-minute walk with heeling can be seen in Chart 1. Bailey did not heel during baseline. With the implementation of the choke chain and verbal prompt, there was an immediate increase in Bailey's heeling. The number of seconds of heeling increased to 491 seconds out of 600 seconds per walk.

The results of this brief report indicate that the use of a choke chain and a verbal prompt was correlated with improved heeling behavior of a nine month old Labrador puppy and the procedure appeared highly effective.

As can be seen in Chart 1, there were some days Bailey heeled better than others. On those sessions, the first author and Bailey would encounter a large number of other dogs. However, for the last seven sessions, Bailey would heel on the average of 9 minutes, 19 seconds.

Since the project, the first author occasionally continues to walk Bailey which is now a much more pleasant experience. Bailey can walk at a brisk but slow pace. The use of the Standard Celeration Chart made it easy to monitor celeration in Bailey's heeling.

This study demonstrated that a choke chain can be effective in increasing heeling. No data were taken on the effects of generalization, but from informal observations, Bailey's behaviors generalized to other areas which she frequented with her owners. Another possible reason for the effectiveness of the outcomes was that the owners continued to implement the same procedures during their walks with Bailey. If the owners would continue to follow the procedure, Bailey should become very consistent in heeling.

References

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