



# THE DOGGY DIGEST

## TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

**The Shocking Truth About E-Collars**  
**By Trelle Dandridge - Mutts with Manners**

There are few topics in dog training that spark as much debate as shock collars (also called e-collars, “stimulation” collars, or “training” collars). Some people swear by them. Some trainers still market them as a “quick fix.” And many owners turn to them out of frustration or desperation, not because they want to hurt their dog, but because they’ve been told it’s the only way to get results.

But here’s the truth: shock collars do not train behavior—they suppress it, and suppression is not the same as learning.

Let’s break down the myths, the misconceptions, the fallout, and the science-backed alternative that truly works.

### ***The Instant Gratification Problem***

We live in a world of one-click shipping, instant answers, AI everything, and dopamine on demand. Waiting feels outdated. Dog training isn’t immune to that cultural shift.

- We want instant obedience.
- We want unwanted behavior to vanish.
- We want change yesterday.

That mindset makes people vulnerable to the “quick fix” promise of e-collars, especially when paired with old, outdated beliefs:

- “Your dog is being dominant.” (Not true.)
- “He knows better, he’s just being stubborn.” (Nope.)
- “He needs a correction to respect you.” (Completely debunked.)

These myths stick around because they feel simple. But dog behavior is more complex... and more humane than those outdated ideas ever gave it credit for.

### ***What E-Collars Really Do***

Pro-shock trainers often use soft language like “stim,” “tap,” or “attention cue.” But regardless of the marketing, these collars work through pain, discomfort, fear, and avoidance.

When you push a button and your dog yelps, startles, jerks their head, or suddenly freezes, that isn’t “attention.” That is the nervous system responding to pain.



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***Here's the real cost:***

**1. They punish communication.**

A dog who growls isn't being "bad"—they're saying, "I'm uncomfortable." Shock that dog for growling and you remove the growl... not the discomfort.

The next time? They may skip straight to a bite.

**2. They create fear associations.**

Dogs don't think, "Ah, yes, I was shocked because lunging is wrong." They think, "When that child/dog/man appears... pain happens."

Now you have a fearful dog. Fear can lead to reactivity. Reactivity can lead to aggression.

**3. They take away agency.**

Dogs learn best when they can make choices and be rewarded for good ones. Shock collars remove choice: "Do this or hurt."

That destroys trust.

**4. They create lasting emotional fallout.**

Shock collar use is strongly associated with:

- Anxiety
- Shutdown behavior ("learned helplessness")
- Increased aggression
- Hypervigilance
- Stress responses
- Avoidance of people or other dogs
- Loss of trust in the handler

These are the cases that show up in rescue, in behavior consults, and in bite histories.

***The Myth of "Correcting" Behavior***

A huge misunderstanding in dog training is the belief that stopping a behavior means "fixing" it. But behavior suppression is NOT behavior change.

Behavior change =

Teaching a dog what to do instead and helping them feel safe enough to do it.

Behavior suppression =

Stopping the behavior in the moment without changing the underlying emotion.

Example: A dog barks at strangers because he is scared. Shock him for barking, and he may stop barking—but now he's a scared dog with no voice.

Fear stays. Stress increases. Risks escalate.



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## ***Anthropomorphic Reality Check***

Let's be human about this.  
Imagine you're in a room with someone who makes you deeply anxious.

You try to cope—you fidget, whisper, tap your foot, or say something under your breath.  
Now imagine that every time you show even mild discomfort...  
you get shocked.

Would your anxiety go down?  
Would you suddenly trust the person holding the remote?  
Would this help you "learn" anything other than fear?

That's exactly what we do to dogs when we use shock collars.

## ***Debunking the Biggest E-Collar Myths***

Myth 1: "It doesn't hurt. It's just a tap."  
If it didn't hurt, it wouldn't stop behavior. The entire mechanism depends on discomfort.

Myth 2: "Working dogs use e-collars and they're fine."  
Working dogs are often extremely biddable, handler-focused breeds... and many still develop stress behaviors.  
Also: "fine" is not science.

Myth 3: "It's the only thing that works."  
Studies say otherwise.  
The AVSAB and every major veterinary behavior organization reject shock collars.

Myth 4: "My dog doesn't react when shocked, so he's OK."  
Shutdown looks like obedience.  
It's actually stress.

Myth 5: "I only use the lowest level."  
Pain tolerance varies by dog, environment, distraction, and adrenaline.  
The brain doesn't categorize pain by number.



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### ***Why Positive Reinforcement Works Better***

Positive reinforcement training focuses on teaching, not punishing. It builds confidence, choice, and emotional safety, three things shock collars undermine.

#### ***Benefits of Positive Reinforcement:***

- Builds trust between dog and handler
- Creates understanding, not fear
- Encourages repeatable behaviors through rewards, not intimidation
- Reduces reactivity by transforming emotions
- Produces lasting, reliable behavior
- Strengthens the human-dog bond
- Is recommended by the entire scientific and veterinary community

When dogs learn why a behavior works and how to earn reinforcement, their training becomes clearer, stronger, and more resilient than anything created through fear.

### ***The Real "Quick Fix"***

Shock collars promise speed, but the fallout is slow, painful, and often permanent. Positive reinforcement requires patience, but the results are strong, safe, and lasting.

If you want:

- A dog who trusts you
- A dog who feels safe with you
- A dog who chooses you even under distraction
- A dog who learns rather than hides
- A dog who behaves because they understand, not because they fear

Then the answer is simple:

Choose kindness. Choose science. Choose positive reinforcement.

And always...

Keep it pawsitive!