Free Shaping

Free shaping is when the dog offers behaviors and is rewarded for successive approximation to a desired behavior the trainer has decided on whether it be a position, a state of mind or interaction with an object. Many say that free shaping is more effective because the dog feels as if they're doing it all on their free will, versus the training being forced onto them.

Ways we can use free shaping in our training
• To teach a dog to relax over something that causes distress or eustress (always start with eustress first like a ball or food). Start by rewarding something other than obsessive staring at the object and keep rewarding calmer and calmer behavior.
• To teach a dog to enjoy an object. Dogs can quickly not like the squirt bottle so we often free shape around it. Dog looks at the bottle we TB&R. Eventually the dog must make a movement to produce a TB&R and work up to touching the object.
• In N&E, once our dogs are ok with small triggers like nail cutters, vacuums etc. we can free shape around these objects to get them to enjoy their presence.
• Around the crate. We want to teach our dogs to enjoy the crate. Free shaping helps our dogs switch from distress about the crate to eustress. They should feel excited when they see the crate because it often means touching, going into it, looking at it- produces a reward.

Remember
• In free shaping it's the dogs idea
• Always give a dog as much helps as he needs but never more
• Perfection is not a goal but direction is
• Too much help holds a dog back
• Downside is the same upside- animally really likes the behavior
• Stimulus control stops dogs from throwing behaviors
• At first always pay for interactions then only on cue
• Goal: to get sticky to a place or behavior
• You can use 2 objects so they're not overwhelmed by 1 problem. They can get burnt on one thing then focus on the other.