

Dolphin Training Book



Objective

Students will practice putting events in chronological order while learning about animal training at SeaWorld.

Materials

- copies of *I Train the Dolphin* (per student)
- scissors
- stapler
- crayons or markers

Background

SeaWorld has trained marine mammals for more than 40 years. In a zoological environment such as SeaWorld, training animals aids in the care of animals; adds educational value for visitors; allows research that may not be possible in the wild; and provides animals with physical and mental stimulation. SeaWorld training is based on three building blocks — building a positive relationship, positive reinforcement, and target recognition.

The first step in animal training is to build a positive relationship with an animal. Trainers spend time with an animal to become more comfortable around it and observe its behavior.

When an animal performs a behavior that produces a positive result, the animal is likely to repeat that behavior. The positive result is called a positive reinforcer. Humans learn by the same principles. If student behavior is reinforced by attention and praise, students are likely to repeat the behavior. Training at SeaWorld is based on a variety of positive reinforcers including food, rub-downs, ice cubes, toys, and one-on-one time with a trainer. When an animal performs an unwanted behavior, the trainer uses a LRS — least reinforcing scenario. The trainer does not reinforce the animal for the unwanted behavior and after a brief period of calmness, the trainer provides the animal with another opportunity for reward.

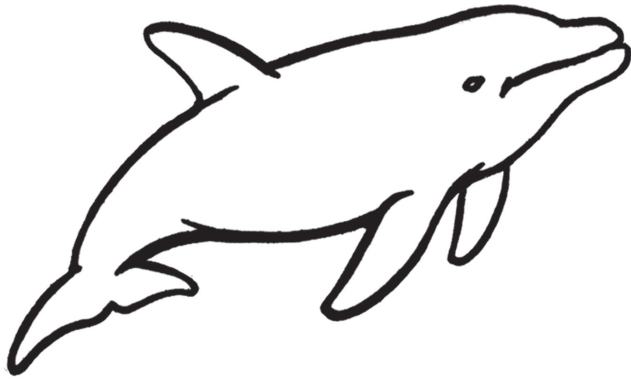
Complex behaviors are shaped through small steps. For example, when children learn how to ride a bicycle, most begin on a tricycle, then a bicycle with training wheels, and then a larger bicycle. To help shape behaviors, trainers teach animals to target. Trainers use their hands as a target: animals are trained to come to the trainer's hand, touch it, and await the next signal. When a behavior takes place away from the trainer, a target pole is used to direct the animal. Each time the animal touches the target, they are reinforced.

Animals are trained to associate a signal with each behavior they learn. When behaviors are done correctly, they must be immediately reinforced. To communicate to the animal they have performed a correct behavior and they will be reinforced, a trainer uses a bridge signal — to bridge the gap between behavior and reward. The bridge signal may be a whistle (for whales and dolphins) or the word “okay” for sea lions and otters.

Action

1. Give each student a set of book pages. Use the information above to talk about what is happening on each page
2. Instruct students to color the pictures. On the final page they will draw himself or herself with a dolphin.
3. Have students cut apart the pages and assemble them into a book by stapling them.
4. Students can use the book to tell the story to their friends and family.

I Train the Dolphin



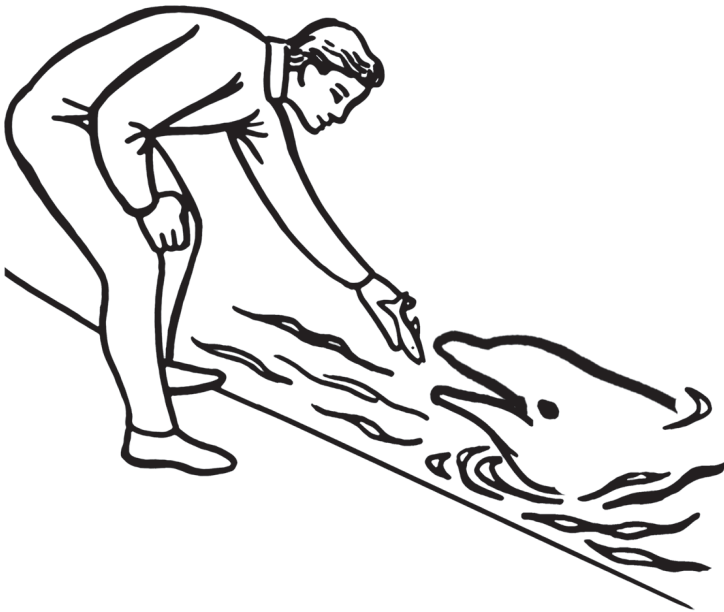
I make friends with the dolphin.

1

2

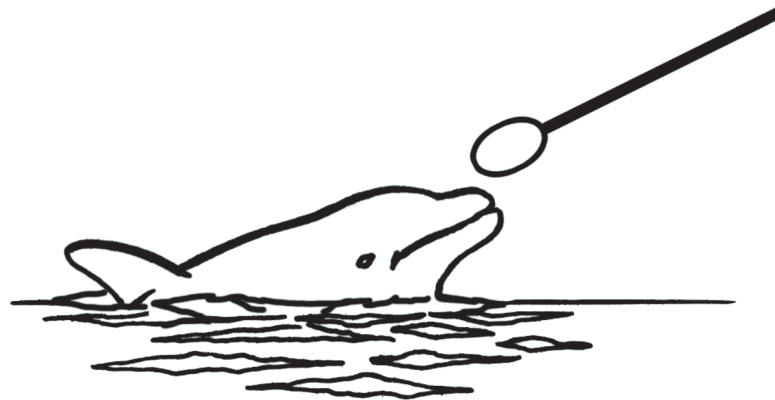
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I feed the dolphin.

3

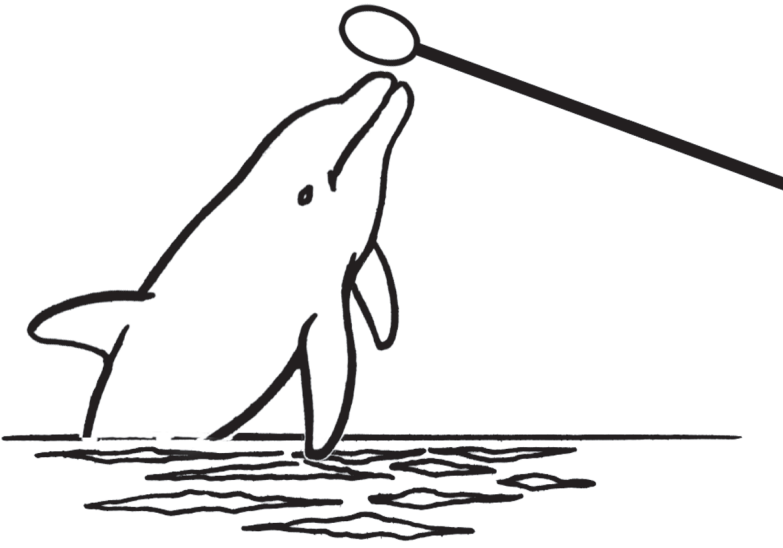


The dolphin touches the target.

4

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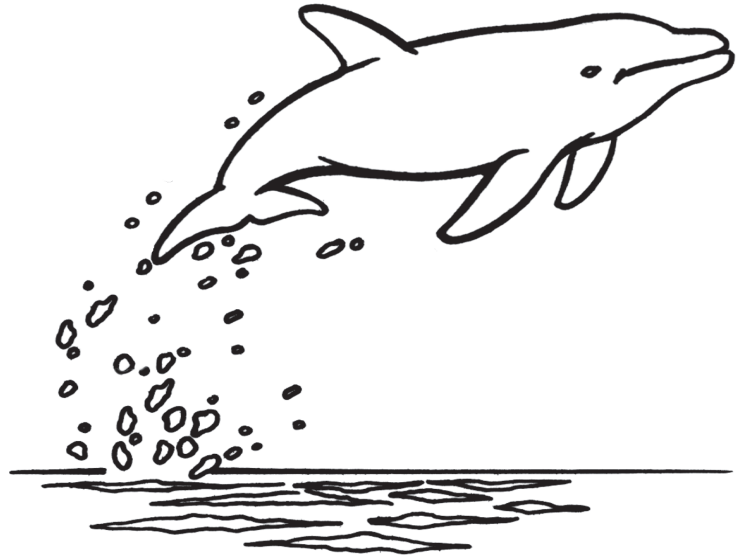
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The dolphin reaches higher.

5

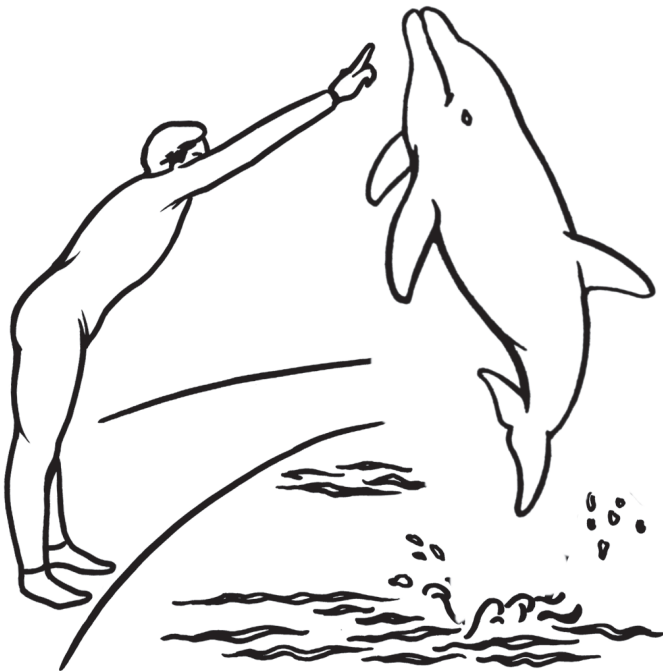
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The dolphin jumps up.

6

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I teach a signal to the dolphin.

7

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I train the dolphin!

8

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