

# The Ten Laws of Shaping

by: Karen Pryor

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1. Raise criteria in increments small enough so that the subject always has a realistic chance of reinforcement.
2. Train one aspect of any particular behavior at a time. Don't try to shape for two criteria simultaneously.
3. During shaping, put the current level of response on a variable ratio schedule of reinforcement before adding or raising the criteria.
4. When introducing a new criterion, or aspect of the behavioral skill, temporarily relax the old ones.
5. Stay ahead of your subject: Plan your shaping program completely so that if the subject makes sudden progress, you are aware of what to reinforce next.
6. Don't change trainers in midstream. You can have several trainers per trainee, but stick to one shaper per behavior.
7. If one shaping procedure is not eliciting progress, find another. There are as many ways to get behavior as there are trainers to think them up.
8. Don't interrupt a training session gratuitously; that constitutes a punishment.
9. If behavior deteriorates, "Go back to kindergarten." Quickly review the whole shaping process with a series of easily earned reinforcers.
10. End each session on a high note, if possible, but in any case quit while you're ahead.

*Taken from Chapter 2 of Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor*