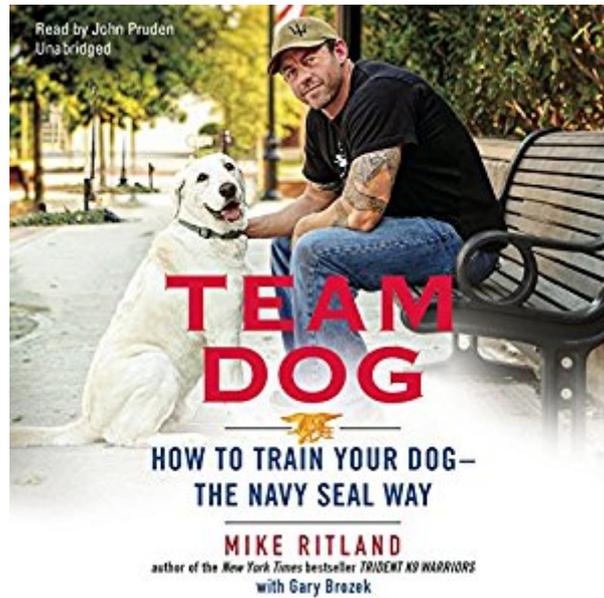


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# Team Dog: How To Train Your Dog - The Navy SEAL Way



## Synopsis

New York Times best selling author and former Navy SEAL Mike Ritland teaches you how to give your dog the exceptional training and loyalty of a combat dog. In Team Dog, Mike taps into fifteen years' worth of experience and shares, in accessible and direct language, the science behind the importance of gaining a dog's trust. He also offers invaluable steps for achieving any level of obedience. His unique approach incorporates entertaining examples and anecdotes from his work with dogs on and off the battlefield and tips from the Navy SEAL guidebook to teach dog owners how to choose the perfect dog for their household, establish themselves as the "team leader," master "command and control," employ "situational awareness," and solidify their dog's position as the family's ultimate best friend. Team Dog introduces pet owners everywhere to the new and distinctive authority on how to train your dog ... the Navy SEAL way.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours and 54 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: January 29, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00SLXPN1Y

Best Sellers Rank: #10 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Lifestyle & Home > Animal Care & Pets #70 in Books > History > Military > Intelligence & Espionage #88 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Dogs > Training

## Customer Reviews

Warning: I'm just a dog owner with a great interest in dog training. I'm not a book reviewer, I don't know Mike Ritland and I don't adhere to any dog training method or camp as though it were the gospel. I've read and been less than impressed with a lot of dog training books so my "meh" review/opinion isn't anything against the author or his methods, I just wasn't blown away by the book. I've only had one cup of coffee so forgive the typos and other grammar issues. TL;DR Version: Mike uses a balance of training methods to include free shaping, corrections, spatial pressure and lots of positive reinforcement. The book doesn't include a lot of specific training exercises, which leaves the reader wanting more in that regard. There is a fair bit of

information about things that aren't training-related and those pages could have been better served in other ways. Not a bad book, but not going to blow your mind. First I'd like to thank Mike Ritland for his service to our country and for contributing to the public awareness of our Military Working Dogs (MWD). I would also like to commend him for writing a dog training book that isn't overly political, campy or one-sided just to please a specific audience of dog owners and trainers who only believe effective dog training is achieved by using Method-X. I often say there is no group of hobbyists and professionals that share a common interest yet hate one another more than those involved in dog training and sadly it has generated a lot of debate (to put it lightly) and not a lot of dialogue. I have no doubt Mike will receive ridicule and even death threats for some of the methods mentioned in this book because they aren't 100% hugs and kisses. The reason I'm only giving this book 3 stars is the subtitle of this book is "How to Train Your Dog the Navy SEAL Way" yet roughly 3/4 of the book isn't specifically training related. This is an extremely common theme in dog training books; there is a lot of theory, "what" and "why" but not a lot of "how". A brief example is many times throughout the book being "team leader" and building relationship with your dog is mentioned, yet very few specific examples on how a dog owner might improve that relationship are given. That is who is likely reading this book: people who want help in training their dog, not those who have perfect, well-adjusted, fully trained dogs. I have no doubt Mike knows what he needs to do specifically to achieve these goals, sadly a lot of that didn't make it in to the book. Those pages would have been better utilized by doing so. While Mike is balanced in his training approach yet focuses greatly on the positive reinforcement quadrant of Skinner's model, there are a few instances in the book where he doesn't explain the proper use of tools well and it comes across in a manner that could confuse the uninformed reader about the application of certain tools. One example is he mentions using humans to figure out an unknown exercise. First they use a remote collar (e-collar, electronic collar) to correct the person for getting it wrong and that leads to a shut down person who just doesn't attempt the exercise any more. Then they use positive reinforcement for "you're getting closer" shaping of the exercise and the person figures it out. No one has ever figured it out with the remote collar in his exercise. This is a common ammunition for the anti-remote crowd; "it leads to shut down dogs", and indeed it can when used improperly. The issue with this example is anyone that is trying to teach a NEW behavior that a dog has no understanding of with a remote collar is using the tool incorrectly and no quality remote collar user is training dogs that way. This anecdote only contributes to the misunderstanding of training tools and their uses, which goes back to the debate vs dialogue from earlier. Mike is strong on using the least invasive methods for teaching behaviors and details free shaping behaviors rather well. Motivating the dog to do wanted behaviors

in a neutral yet leaning positive way is a great way to teach new behaviors. He also freely expresses the role of corrections in dog training whether it be a verbal "ah ah" or a leash correction if required. He also touches on the importance of not leaning on training tools (be it a prong collar, a head halter or a no-pull harness) to "fix" behaviors like pulling on walks. You're not fixing the behavior, you're leaning on a tool to stop the symptom. If your dog always pulls except with Device A, your dog still pulls. Several pages are spent on diet, physical inspections of the dogs and "if you want to be like a SEAL" statements. Those pages would have been better used on addressing specific behavior issues or how to shape certain behaviors. After all, it is a dog training book. Worth adding to the book shelf if you like MWD books or dog training books, but it isn't the holy grail a lot of dog owners and trainers have been looking for. I hope to see more books from Mike in the future, specifically focusing on training and training exercises in a more step-by-step manner.

While Mike Ritland has presented a good generalized, but over-simplified, discussion of dogs, he is simply too late to the party. Everything discussed is a rehash of existing literature. As a primer for a novice dog handler, it gives a nice overview; but the title implies a greater level and depth of information that is simply absent for anyone who has already read one or more recent similar books on the subject. The book reminds me of the phrase "jack of all trades, but master of none." It touches on a wide range of topics related to care, handling, and training of K9s, but then fails to sufficiently delve into each specific subject matter. It also gives me pause because "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," and here, he only gives the reader a little knowledge on each subject touched upon, giving the reader a false belief that they can easily duplicate his success; when, actually, there is much more involved than what he presented. The author acknowledged that he primarily uses operant conditioning and positive reinforcement; as discussed, respectively, by B.F. Skinner and Karen Pryor. I don't see how this author's rehashing of the well known principles and use of clicker training improves upon any of the numerous books written by Karen Pryor herself on the subject; and which, in fact, go into greater detail (both in theory and practical application); e.g. "Don't Shoot the Dog!: The New Art of Teaching and Training" or "Reaching the Animal Mind: Clicker Training and What It Teaches Us About All Animals." Books addressing K9 behaviors, such as "The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs" by Patricia B. McConnell, have been around for years. Discussion of sensory capabilities has been discussed in much greater detail in any one of the many books on K9 tracking and scent work. Similarly, discussions of nutrition, health, and wellness are far better addressed in "Pukka's Promise: The Quest for Longer-Lived Dogs" by Ted Kerasote. The book is fairly short, the margins wide, the pagination

spaced out, and it seems as though a much shorter (less detailed) book has been pulled out to 230 pages (yes, the book claims 256, but that would include the introduction, dedication, etc). I found repetitive dialogue, and dialogue that was, at times, contradictory. For instance, he suggests that in evaluating a shelter dog, one must not overwhelm the dog so as to give a false picture of his sociability; but then suggests that you present yourself to the dog in an authoritative manner and to take command. Well, if you are trying to get a true picture of the dog, the dog needs to get a true picture of you, since he will adjust his attitude to how you act towards him. Picture a dog with a sign above his head: "My temperament is based on who I am; my attitude is based on who you are." Presenting a dog candidate with a false impression of who you are gets an attitude based on it. Without going into detail, I also find fault with his methodology of selecting pups from breeders in that he generalizes too much. There are many well recognized puppy aptitude tests, which he fails to discuss; moreover, he failed to even mention the age of a puppy relative to testing and the developmental stages from puppy to adult. An example of another missed opportunity is where the author first says that: "...a healthy coat makes a dog more comfortable and less prone to skin complaints and problems with parasites." But then states: "I'm not going to spend time on how to care for a dog's coat." Basically, a dog's coat is really important (which is true), but I'm not going to address how to care for it. It's like most of the book: a little reference to something important and then a failure to follow through on the details; which also surprised me since he stated several times that the details are important to the "Navy Seal Way." Another lack of detail is when the author says that there are no BMI (body mass index) calculators for pets; but such calculators have been around for several years, such as the one at PetSci, which could have been found by the author in a quick search. It also troubles me that the author has taken modern dog training theories, which have been published in many other books for quite some time, slapped a US Navy Seal label on it, and offered it as a fresh approach. While the title of the book infers that some new, never discussed, method of dog training is now being made available to the ordinary dog owner (the "Navy Seal Way"), the truth is that all of the information offered has been presented before, in more detail, in other books. The best way I can characterize the book is that it resembles a Reader's Digest version of topics that has been written about elsewhere in greater detail. If you want all the information, you go to the main source, not the condensed version. It's not that I completely disliked the book, it's just that I failed to learn anything that I had not already read in other books; and, as a primer on dogs, it's a little pricey for such a short and quick read. So, do I recommend it? Well, if you have never read any of the more recent books on dog care, training & handling; and if you don't mind overpaying a bit, and you realize that after reading it you are not imbued with all the tools needed to care for or train a

working K9 or pet dog, then it's a fair starter book - but then again, so are many others. There is nothing unique about this book. If you have already read books on clicker training, dog care, and behaviors, then you will be disappointed. By "recent" theories I mean books in the past 5-10 years, because training theories have changed, drastically, from the now outdated "dominance" theories to one of trust and positive reinforcement; that is, forcing a dog's behavior is a far, far inferior training methodology than getting a dog to produce certain behaviors because it's a rewarding experience for that dog.

I started this book on the day of its release, finished it in two days. It's a very easy read to those that have no dog training experience. My dog has made awesome improvements just in the 2 days since I've finished the book. I highly recommend it to anyone that has never trained a dog in their life.

In a fascinating cross-over book, Ritland brings a whole different tone to the dog training world. Ritland is no stranger to books; he authored a New York Times best seller Trident K9 Warriors. This book does much of what traditional training books do: it gives owners the tools to get their dog trained right. But the best part is Ritland's perspective as a trainer of working and military service dogs. Ritland brings his experience as a dog trainer for the SEAL teams, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, TSA, & US Customs. Simply put, the book trains both the trainer and the dog to set the clear boundaries necessary to establish the owner's role as the alpha while delving deep into the science of gaining a dog's trust, and teaches owners how to break tasks down into small steps for their dogs, so they can achieve great things. Throughout the book, the reader gets Ritland's unique approach to training, with examples from Ritland's work with dogs in the military. This training guide even has direct tips straight out of the Navy SEAL guidebook that can be applied to pets. Dealing with dog choice, establishing the owner as team leader, and awareness of what their dogs need to be productive and compliant, the book is a great tool for any dog owner. Ritland's book is a great addition for any trainer and owner.

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