



The 10 Laws of Shaping

1. **Be prepared before you start.**
2. **Ensure success at each step.** Break behavior down into small enough pieces that the learner always has a realistic chance to earn a reinforcer.
3. **Train one criterion at a time.** Shaping for two criteria or aspects of a behavior simultaneously can be very confusing.
4. **Relax criteria when something changes.** When introducing a new criterion or aspect of the skill, temporarily relax the old criteria for previously mastered skills.
5. **If one door closes, find another.** If a particular shaping procedure is not progressing, try another way.
6. **Keep training sessions continuous.** The animal should be continuously engaged in the learning process throughout the session.. This also means keeping a high rate of reinforcement.
7. **Go back to kindergarten, if necessary.** If a behavior deteriorates, quickly revisit the last successful approximation.
8. **Keep your attention on your learner.** Don't interrupt a training session gratuitously, that constitutes a punisher.
9. **Stay ahead of your learner.**
10. **Quit while you're ahead.**

