



Puppy basic manners and leadership

It is important to teach your puppy to be respectful and accept you are the one to make the decisions from a young age. This does not require that you 'dominate' your puppy by using punishments, being physically assertive or overly controlling of resources. It instead requires that you communicate consistent boundaries for behaviour, tell your puppy what you would like him to do, reward him when he obeys and withhold rewards when he disobeys you.

Saying please

One of the simplest yet most effective ways to control your puppy and to increase your puppy's perception of you as the decision maker is to teach him puppy 'please'. This technique does not harm or distress your puppy in any way. However it will teach him to respect your authority and leadership, in the same way as teaching a child to say please does.



How do I make my puppy 'say please?'

The principle of puppy please is simply that your puppy learns that he must obey a command for everything he wants in life. The command used can be whatever is most suited to your circumstances or puppy. For example many people find that a sit

command is easy and effective, but you could also use a 'lay' command or give paw if you find your puppy responds to this better.

Start by teaching your puppy the command. Once you are sure he has mastered it you can then start to ask him to obey it for everything he wants in life. For example: -

- Your puppy sits for his dinner and all treats
- Your puppy sits to have his lead on.
- Your puppy sits when he wants to have a door opened
- Your puppy sits for the privilege of being allowed on a bed or sofa.
- Your puppy sits to be greeted
- Your puppy sits before he is played with (whether started by you or your puppy)
- Your puppy sits for all fuss or attention initiated by him

Once the programme is started it is important to be consistent. If your puppy thinks he can get away with demanding rather than asking some of the time he will try to all of the time, and may then also try to take liberties in other ways. However, once he realises there are no exceptions it will become a life long habit for both of you and will subtly but permanently make clear that he must respect your decisions.

Other steps for leadership

There are lots of other ways you can also gently teach your puppy to be respectful. These include: -

- When you feed your puppy only dish up 75% of his ration. Then, as he is eating, approach him calmly and add the rest of the ration to his bowl by hand. Once he knows the 'wait' command ask him to wait as you add the extra food. Don't take your puppy's bowl away when he is eating
- Use a signal to tell your puppy when it is time to play e.g. pat your thighs, say 'play time' and start playing. If your puppy initiates the play time ask him to sit first then give the play signal.
- Use a signal to say when play time is over e.g. clasp your hands behind your back and say 'all over' then stop playing. Puppy will learn this means the game is over

- When playing 'tug' games ensure you use a toy that is only available for playing tug with humans. Keep the toy out of general reach. When its time to play get the toy out, ask puppy to 'sit' (say please), give the play time signal and then play freely. It doesn't matter who wins during the game, but at the end make sure you have the toy, give the 'game over' signal and put the toy away. Give your puppy a treat or some fuss for giving it up without objection
- Teach puppy 'leave' and 'give' commands. Use them to remove items he shouldn't have. Also use them occasionally during games. Always reward him highly for obeying.
- If your puppy won't give up an item try a tug game with someone else or another very noisy and exciting mock game to distract him. Avoid chasing or forcibly removing items if at all possible.
- Teach your puppy to 'say please' before he plays freely with other dogs. This will reduce the chance he will run over to other dogs without being given a signal he is allowed to when he is older.
- Teach your puppy a 'settle' command
- Make sure puppy has a place to get away from children if he has had enough. Teach your own or any visiting children that it is a golden rule to leave puppy in peace in his bed or escape place. Make sure the children treat your puppy gently, understand he has his own needs and feelings, and are respectful to your puppy. Also get the children involved with helping to teach puppy manners as above from the outset

How do I correct unwanted behaviour?

If your puppy does something you don't want him to do tell him what you would like him to do instead e.g. to sit, go to his bed or play a different game. If he won't obey the command walk away and ignore him (if possible). If he is doing something that can't be ignored give him a brief 'time out'. When doing so try to avoid touching, talking or looking at him. You may need to leave a house line (a short trailing lead with the loop cut off) attached to him to achieve this. Never leave him unattended for more than a minute with the house line attached. Alternatively you can give a 'time out' by you

leaving the room and shutting the door. The Time Out need only be for 30 seconds. You can then let puppy back in as if nothing is happening.

Avoid using any punishments that cause pain or fear in your puppy. These include: -

- Smacking or other physical punishments, including jabbing with two fingers or using your foot on your puppy's abdomen
- Shouting, standing over or behaving in an intimidating way to your puppy
- Equipment intended to deliver loud noises, hissing air or startling e.g. chains in bags, tins of stones or a Pet Corrector
- Check chains, half check chains or prong collars
- Collars intended to deliver spray or electric shocks
- Techniques intended to assert your 'dominance' e.g. staring, standing over threateningly or forcing the dog into a submissive posture e.g. alpha roll.