



## Teaching your dog good manners

For a dog to be a pleasure to live with he needs good manners. These are easily taught by training your dog to obey a series of command words, motivating him to obey them through use of rewards and using the commands to control your dog's behaviour and access to things of value. Those few dogs that refuse to obey commands can then usually be motivated to change their minds by withholding or withdrawing the things they want.

This philosophy starts by establishing a pattern of day to day good manners by asking your dog to obey a command (e.g. 'sit' or 'lay') for everything he wants in life. Think of it as saying please. Things he should 'say please' for include: -

- All food including his dinner and all treats
- Putting a lead on.
- Opening a door for your dog
- Being allowed on a bed or sofa.
- Being greeted
- Before being played with (whether started by you or your dog)
- All fuss or attention initiated by him



This programme can be started as soon as you are confident your dog knows the 'sit' command. If your dog wants something tell him to sit. If he sits then he gets what he wants. However, if he refuses to 'sit', withhold whatever it is he wants at that time. Sometimes what he wants is obvious. For example if he is jumping up for food simply do not place the food bowl on the floor until he is sitting. Every time he starts to stand up you lift the food bowl up again. Alternatively if it is your attention he wants and he

won't obey a sit totally ignore him. Turn your back and fold your arms. If he gets pushy leave the room and close the door behind you. Wait 30 seconds then try again. At other times what he wants may be less obvious. If you cannot work out how to withhold whatever it is your dog wants, your dog is persistent after withholding the reward or you see any sign to imply your dog is becoming anxious or frustrated at having the reward withheld you may need help from a qualified Behaviour Counsellor.

Once the programme is started it is important to be consistent. If your dog 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 lifelong habit for both of you and will subtly but permanently make clear that he must respect your decisions.

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

- When you feed your dog only dish up 75% of his ration. Then, as he is eating, approach him calmly and drop the rest of the ration into his bowl using a long handled spoon. Don't try to take your dog's bowl away when he is eating. Once your dog knows the 'wait' command you can also ask him to wait as you add the extra food. If your dog tenses or growls as you approach stop and give him the rest of his food once he has walked away. You should then seek the advice of a qualified Behaviour Counsellor. If you know your dog is possessive about food don't try this without first seeking advice from a qualified Behaviour Counsellor.
- 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 your dog to 'sit' (say please) and play freely. It doesn't matter who wins during the game, but at the end make sure you have the toy and put the toy away. Give your dog a treat or some fuss for giving it up without objection
- Teach your dog 'leave' and 'give' commands and use them to remove items he shouldn't have. Also use them occasionally during games. Always reward him highly for obeying.
- If your dog 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 dog to 'sit' before he plays freely with other dogs. This will reduce the chance he will run over to other dogs before being given a signal he is allowed to.
- Make sure your dog 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 your dog in peace in his bed or escape place. Make sure the children treat your dog gently, understand he has his own needs and feelings and are respectful to him. Get the children involved with helping to teach dog manners as above from the outset.

### **What if my dog won't obey the commands?**

If your dog still refuses to obey commands or shows aggression you will need to seek the services of a qualified Behaviour Counsellor. Please don't try and force him using dominance based techniques or punishments. Research has shown that these traditional theories are not only incorrect, and so often ineffective in the long term, but are also potentially dangerous or harmful to your dog. Techniques to be avoided include: -

- Dominance stares (standing over the dog in a threatening way with eye contact)
- Jabbing (pushing two fingers into the dog's ribs, neck or belly)
- Forcibly placing a foot on the dog's abdomen
- Alpha rolling (rolling the dog onto his side or back and holding him down)
- Shouting or intimidating the dog
- Physical punishments such as smacking with the hand or a rolled up newspaper.
- Spray or shock collars
- Check or half check chains, slip leads\* and prong collars
- Equipment that delivers loud noises such as Pet Correctors, chains in bags or tins of stones.
- Social exclusion e.g. refusing to acknowledge your dog if he tries to engage with you, when going out or coming home.

If anyone tries to use these techniques on your dog they should be asked to stop.

\* Other than as secondary to the dogs usual collar or harness for safety purposes and used without constriction other than in an emergency.