



Pawsitive Experience
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People Empowerment Program by Trish King and Meredith Gage

Leadership and management, go hand in hand with training to help you create a good dog who listens well. Below are tools to help you manage your dog's behavior.

Get his attention. Getting your dog's attention is the most important tool. It's difficult to train a dog that's paying attention to something else. One way to develop good attention is by seeking eye contact before you give him something, like food or a treat. In addition, examine how often you pay attention to your dog, and make sure that he doesn't constantly demand attention from you by pushing, nudging, barking or whining. If he does, practice ignoring the behavior if you can. If you can't ignore it, manage it. Be slightly aloof, and he'll want to please you more.

Exercise. Make sure your dog gets enough exercise!! Most adult dogs need a couple of romps a day. Puppies need shorter play periods more often. A tired dog is a good dog. A tired dog gets into a lot less trouble than an under-stimulated one. Give them mental exercise with "interactive toys" found at most pet stores.

Reinforce good behavior: Play lots of ball and any retrieving game he likes. Make obedience training fun. Praise behaviors you like by using your voice in a happy tone, giving him treats, petting him or giving him access to his toys. Try not to lose your temper with your dog. Getting angry -- especially physical punishment -- accomplishes little if anything, and teaches your dog not to trust you.

Groom him regularly. Your dog should allow you to groom him at your will. Often, dogs that seem to enjoy attention actually only like it when they want it. Make grooming pleasant, but do brush him, check his teeth, trim his nails and manipulate him to your satisfaction. If you cannot do this, see a trainer.

Control his feeding schedule. Your dog needs to know who is controlling his most important resource -- his food. Make sure he sees you put his food in your bowl, and do not free feed. Perhaps even hand feed him some of the food, which develops dependency-and attention.

Control his territory. Defending an entire territory is a huge responsibility that belongs to you, not your dog. He can be on the lookout, but that should be it. If he routinely barks at strangers by the fence, either confine him to the house, to a portion of your yard

where he doesn't see strangers (human or canine), or call him as soon as he barks. Teach him to come even when he is barking. Your neighbors will probably be grateful.

Use an indoor leash. Attach a leash between 6 and 10 feet long to a flat buckle collar (not a choke chain, prong, or front no-pull harness), and have him drag it around the house. This gives you an invaluable tool when your dog misbehaves. Without having to grab his collar, you can pick it up or step on the leash quickly, and redirect the behavior. This is a handy tool for the cat chaser. The length of the leash is based on the dog's problem, size, and speed.

Try a tie-down. Just as a child needs a playpen, dogs sometimes need to be confined to one area, especially when they are young. A tie-down is a leash attached to furniture (make sure they don't like the taste of your furniture), or attached to the wall. The length should be 3 to 4 feet long. Bicycle chains, or special plastic coated cables purchased at Pawsitive Experience work best for the chewers, as they will chew through a leash. Again, like the indoor leash, only attach to a regular collar. Place in a well-used area such as a kitchen or family room, and put a comfortable blanket or pillow on the floor for the dog to lie on. This is where he gets to munch on a chewy. He can't interact with you, but you can with him. Start with short periods on the tie-down and gradually increase the duration to a half hour. Dogs should never be unsupervised on a tie-down.

Walk him away from the neighborhood. Dogs will often extend their territory beyond your yard. With these dogs, it is good to drive them elsewhere to walk, and preferably to a variety of places, so he doesn't think he has to defend certain spots.

Toys. If your dog likes toys, and if you tend to leave toys lying about, pick them up and put them into a toy box or drawer out of his reach. Give him one, two or three toys at a time, and when he's finished with them, put them away.

Play lots of ball. Any retrieving game will do.

Games. Be careful with tug a war. Though it can be a fun and useful game, it must be played where you are in control and your dog doesn't get over aroused and go "over the top." Make sure you can get the toy away with a cue "drop it" or "leave it". Take frequent obedience breaks to calm him down. Never allow him to play "keep away." This is a game where your dog is in control, not you. Pawsitive Experience provides a handout on appropriate games and how to play with your dog.

Hold at least two training sessions a day. Each session should be approximately 10 minutes, should be fun, and should end on a successful note, even if you have to backtrack to help a dog complete an exercise well. Always be teaching your dog something new -- old dogs can learn new tricks.

Take your dog to a training class. This not only helps him know what's expected of him, it often helps you learn to communicate to him clearly. Refresher courses help to

grow your relationship, forces you to work with your dog, and is a fun way to spend time with your dog.

Try not to lose your temper. You need to be in control (or at least appear to be).

Dogs have different personalities. Some dogs are far more strong-willed than others, and some will need management longer than others. With your attention and care, you can help your dog become a better companion and canine citizen.

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