



## CANINE COMPANION

It is much easier to prevent behavior problems than to solve them. How you interact with your dog in your day-to-day life can and will determine your dog's future behavior. Some very common behavior issues can easily be prevented:

### **Reinforcing Negative Behavior**

This is probably one of the most common mistakes made by dog owners. Any time that you touch your dog, you are rewarding behavior. This means that if the dog is barking at another dog, and you pet him on the head and tell him to be quiet, you are rewarding him for barking. If your dog is afraid of the thunderstorm, and you give him a hug to calm him, you are rewarding him for being afraid. The next time that dog walks by, or he hears thunder, his behavior will intensify, thinking that he will get rewarded again.

If your dog is barking at the window, wait until he is quiet for just a few seconds, then pet him and tell him "good dog", you are now rewarding him for just being quiet. If he is afraid of something, try and use food or toys as a distraction, but don't pet, hug or hold him. That is only rewarding his fear. Next time you reach out to touch you dog, notice his behavior, is it something you want him to repeat? Then go ahead and touch him. If you don't like what he is doing, don't touch him.

### **Separation Anxiety**

Dogs with separation anxiety become extremely anxious when left alone. This anxiety can then manifest into disparaging behavior. It may be as mild as nervous panting and pacing while the owner is away or as severe as destroying a complete living room set. In order to help prevent your dog from becoming anxious, it is best to minimize the excitement of you coming and going. When you are going to be leaving the house, whether for a quick trip to the store, or off to work for the day, begin to ignore your dog 15-20 minutes before your departure. Don't have a goodbye scene, promising treats and walks when you get home. This will only get the dog all worked up with no outlet for his energy once you leave. Same type of activity when you get home, ignore the dog for the first 10-15 minutes. You can still take him outside if needed, just do it with very little enthusiasm. After you have been home for a bit, then give him a big hug, or a quick game of fetch. If you make your coming and going no big deal, then the time that you are gone should not be stressful for your dog.



**Your dog will repeat behaviors that get attention, so be sure to pay attention to the good behaviors!!**

Which of the following behaviors from your dog would be most likely to get your attention?

Your dog runs by you with a sock in his mouth.

OR

Your dog is playing quietly with one of his toys.

Before you answer remember, your dog is going to repeat what gets his attention. If we only pay attention to our dogs when they are doing something wrong, they are going to continue to do these things. When your dog is playing with his own toys that is the time to initiate some activity with him. Join him in playing with the toy, give him a belly rub, and tell him he is a good dog. If playing with his toys gets your attention, he will continue to play with his toys. If your dog is already in the habit of getting your attention by stealing socks, Kleenex, paper...whatever. Then we need to break that cycle. The way to do that is to stop chasing him down to get the object back. Teach him to give things back to you by teaching a “drop” command.

**Drop It**

Teaching a dog to relinquish an object is a very valuable behavior. “Drop it” will teach your dog to bring objects to you instead of destroying them and to relinquish objects instead of guarding them. When your dog has an object in his mouth, show him a very valuable treat or toy. He will drop the object in anticipation of the food or toy reward. The moment he drops the object give him the food or treat. Eventually, as he begins to drop the object, you may add the cue “drop it” right before the behavior occurs.

Once he has associated the words “drop it” with spitting an object out of his mouth, you should keep the reward hidden until he drops the object. Begin with objects that he doesn’t value highly and work up to his most valued toys. Your goal is to teach him to bring you objects instead of running away to destroy them.

**Leave It**

“Leave it, “ means, don’t put your mouth on it. Start out with a food treat in your right hand. Show the treat to your dog. When he tries to steal the treat, close your hand and wait. Your dog will attempt to get the treat out of your hand. Ignore him. After a few attempts he will back off to think about the situation, at that very moment reward him with the surprise food treat in your left hand. After practicing this exercise a few times, your dog will not attempt to get the treat out of your right hand, but instead wait for you

to reward with the left hand. You can add the “leave it” cue when you see your dog attempt to ignore the food reward. He has learned that his behavior of trying to grab the food treat causes the treat to disappear, while “leaving it” gets him rewarded. Your next step will be to place the treat on the ground and cover it with your foot if your dog tries to snatch it. When he backs off, reward him. Continue in this manner using different objects until your dog learns that “leaving” an object means that he is likely to be rewarded with something much better!

## **CRATE TRAINING**

Crate training means to teach your puppy that he has a safe and secure area of his own. A crate is a valuable tool for housebreaking, preventing destructive behaviors and keeping your puppy safe when you cannot watch him.

### **Kinds of Crates**

Wire and plastic are the two most common crate types. The fold-up wire crates are very easy to transport but many puppies prefer the “closed in” den like area that a plastic crate offers. It is useful to cover a wire crate with a blanket to help give this effect. The crate should be large enough for your puppy to stand, stretch out and turn around. If your puppy will be a large dog, it would be a good idea to purchase a crate that will be the correct size to accommodate him as an adult. Your puppy may eliminate in a crate that is too large, therefore block off a portion with a cardboard box until he is fully housebroken.

### **When to Use the Crate**

Your puppy should be in the crate anytime that you are not watching him. If you are home, but busy with work, family or play and no one can watch the puppy, he should be in his crate. Otherwise the puppy will be grabbing food from under the table, stealing socks and basically learning things you do not want him to learn. Ask yourself- “What is my puppy learning?” If you don’t like the answer, put him in his crate until you have the time to devote to teaching him the behaviors you would like him to learn. Most puppies have a natural instinct to keep their “den” clean. Don’t leave the puppy in the crates so long that he must eliminate in there. A general rule of thumb is, take the puppies age, in months and add 2. That is how many hours a puppy should be able to “hold it”.

(Example: 2 month old puppy, = 4hours).

### **Training Your Puppy to Love his Crate**

Begin by placing the crate with the door open in an easily accessible area. Toss treats in the crate and reward your puppy for getting the treat. Allow him to eat his meals in his crate with the door open so that he can leave any time he wishes. Hide special toys in his crate such as a chew bones and stuffed Kong toys. Encourage your puppy to explore his crate to find these treasures. As your puppy becomes accustomed to his crate and enters it on his own; begin shutting the door for a second or two (without latching the door) while pushing a tasty treat through the cage door. Your puppy will begin to learn that shutting the cage door means that he will get yet another treat. As your puppy progresses, begin latching the door and opening it immediately as you toss your puppy his reward. The next

step is latching the door, leaving for brief moments and rewarding your puppy for staying quiet.

- Never open your puppy's crate when he is barking or crying or you will inadvertently teach him to vocalize in his crate.
- Keep a special toy on hand, such as a stuffed Kong toy that the puppy only gets when he is in his crate.
- Your puppy should spend some time in his crate when you are home. This will teach him that going to his crate does not always signal that you are leaving.

## **HOUSE TRAINING TIPS**

Training your puppy to eliminate outside is a team effort. Your job is to make your puppy understand that it is rewarding to eliminate outside. The key to accomplishing this is supervision, if you don't catch your puppy in the act, you cannot punish him. The length of time that it will take you to house train your puppy is directly related to how well you supervise him. Your puppy must be supervised any time he is out and about in the house. The following are some hints to assist you in the house training process.

### **Take Turns**

When your puppy is out with the family, put someone in charge of watching him. It is that person's responsibility to know where the puppy is and what he is doing at all times. It can be helpful if your puppy wears a bell on his collar so he can be easily located. If your puppy is allowed to have an accident in the house then it is the "puppy supervisor's" responsibility to clean up the accident.

### **Know the Routine**

Your puppy will need to eliminate after he eats, drinks, plays and wakes up. Feed the puppy at set meals and he should have to eliminate about 20 minutes after eating. A puppy that eats all day will poop all day.

### **Confinement**

There will be times when you cannot be watching your puppy. During these times he needs to be confined. It is recommended that you have a crate for your puppy. Your puppy's crate is his safe place to call his own. It is his natural instinct to keep his area clean and this can be utilized during the house-training period. Never force your puppy to eliminate in his crate by expecting him to hold it longer than he is physically able or he may lose the natural instinct to keep his "den" clean.

### **When Accidents Happen**

If, in spite of your diligence, your puppy eliminates in front of you, startle him by clapping your hands and take him outside to the appropriate area. If you find a mess on the floor, clean up the mess and repeat to yourself "I must supervise my puppy better." Taking the puppy back to scene of the crime and rubbing his nose in it does not work!

Make sure that you clean any areas where accidents have occurred with an odor eliminator to remove any smell that may draw your puppy back to that area.

### **When you catch your Puppy “Doing it right”**

When your puppy eliminates outside, make a big deal about it. Your puppy is learning that it is more rewarding to eliminate outside because you are making it rewarding for him. While your puppy is young, always go outside with him. You need to reward him the instant that he goes in the right place and you can only do that if you are right there with him. Reward your puppy immediately with tiny food treats and verbal praise. Let him know eliminating outside is a very good thing. 😊