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Ways to be The Leader

Bad manners and setting boundaries
By Laura Pakis

Don't you just hate it when your best friend's Labrador jumps on you and gets you muddy or scratches your legs? It's annoying when your friend's dog begs for your food at the dinner table—or worse, takes food from your plate? It's rude, isn't it? Don't allow your dog to be "that dog." Teach him to have good manners and raise your expectations of your dog. Set boundaries for your dog and then enforce them!

Bad manners can be easily corrected with clear direction from you. Remember you are the leader and need to define the rules. "Bad manners" consist of the following behaviors:

JUMPING

Do not allow the dog to decide how, when, and to whom he will greet. Be aware of the friendly saboteurs. Everyone has that special someone in their life who says "I don't mind." Think about this: Is it ok for him to jump on you when you are wearing shorts or a business suit? Is it ok if he jumps on Grandma?

Is it ok for him to jump on your two year old? Be consistent, it is never ok. If your dog is small do not pick him up. He has two more legs than you do and is perfectly fine on the floor. If he growls or barks at people, picking him up only emboldens and encourages this behavior. In his eyes, he is now at human eye level and able to take on the world.

BARKING/WHINING FOR ATTENTION

If you are reading the paper and your dog barks at you because he thinks "Hey, you're not doing anything else. You may as well get my ball and throw it for me," then the dog has decided when it's play time and how you should be spending your time. Play should be initiated on your terms.

FUSSING IN THE CRATE

If your dog hears you come in the door and starts going ballistic in the crate: barking, whining, digging, etc., ignore him and do not allow him out until he has calmed down. Never release him from the crate when he is in an agitated/excitable state. It only confirms his belief that the crazier I get the quicker I get out. Desensitize him to the crate by putting him in it for short amounts of time while you are still in the house. The crate should be in the most common room in the house.

PULLING ON THE LEASH

You define the pace and direction--not your dog. You may not always want to go for a run or you may not have three hours to smell every flower. It is ok to allow your dog to spend time reading pee-mail but he should move on when you're ready.

CLAIMING THE BED/COUCH

If your dog growls or nips when you tell him to get off of the bed or couch then

he is not allowed on the furniture. That's it. It's that simple. This is a privilege, not an entitlement. If you want to snuggle with him then you get on the floor with him for a few minutes. Some dogs may be re-introduced to furniture privileges when you have a better relationship and the boundaries are clearly defined but some may not ever be allowed to sleep in bed with you again. It depends on each individual dog.

BARKING EXCESSIVELY OUT THE WINDOW

There is nothing wrong with allowing your dog to inform you that there is something out there in front of the yard. When the dog doesn't stop when asked or if he gets overly-agitated, it's time to set boundaries.

IT'S TREAT TIME!

There is nothing wrong with giving your dog a treat when you decide to but if your dog decides when he deserves one then you have a clear relationship problem.

BEGGING

Do not feed the dog from the table, from your plate, and do not drop food on the floor while you are cooking dinner. Do not allow him to stand underneath the table like land sharks waiting for chum or scour the floor like a Hoover vacuum.

COUNTER SURFING

Do not allow your dog to stand up and take a peek at the goodies on your counter top. If your dog is eye level with the counter top do not allow him to rest his chin on the counter or engage in a full meal!

STEALING SOCKS, TISSUES, ETC.

Dogs like these sorts of things because



they smell like you! Most often, this is your dog's way of trying to engage you into a game of chase. If it's not an emergency or something he can hurt himself with-- don't engage.

The sky is the limit. A well-mannered dog is a happy dog. Consider formal obedience training to expand your dog's knowledge. Obedience helps you learn how to communicate effectively with your dog and keep him active. It is important to exercise your dog physically and it is just as important to exercise your dog mentally. It is also exciting to work as a team and see the results in every aspect of your life. The rewards are endless and your relationship will continue to thrive!

Readers may contact Laura Pakis at Acme Canine, 1385 Franklin Street, Lewis Center, OH 43035, www.acmecanine.com, 740.548.1717. Laura is a regionally acclaimed certified trainer, author, and lecturer. She has more than 30 years of experience working with dogs, including support work, hunting, scentwork, puppy development and behavior modification. She currently has a full-time veterinary referral-based practice in Lewis Center, Ohio.

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