

Things you should know when you live with a dog

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Your dog sees the world differently than you or I. We can avoid some kinds of trouble if we learn to “think dog”, and communicate with our dogs more easily. It’s a good idea to know the signs of stress in a dog too – read my [Canine Stress](#) article.

- Dogs do what works, to get them what they want. See my [Jumping](#) article.
- Dogs are pack animals, packs need a leader. If you fall short of fulfilling your leader role, your dog will step in and fill that position. It is important that the human members retain a higher status than the canine members. A leader need not be mean, aggressive or physical. A leader must be consistent, kind and guiding. See articles [Leadership & Dominance](#)
- Dogs live in the present time. Forget about punishing your dog for what she has done earlier. She will not understand. She WILL understand that you are upset with her, but she won’t understand WHY. She will respond by acting submissively when you are angry but this is not guilt, it is an attempt to appease you with her body language.
- Direct eye contact can be threatening to a dog. If your dog is shy, averting your eyes can make her more comfortable. There is a big difference between a stare and pleasant eye contact. See [Canine Stress](#) article.
- Dogs do not have a sense of “right” and “wrong”. They do have a very well developed sense of “pleasant” and “unpleasant”. To a dog, there is no moral ground, there is only feels good, or feels bad.
- To your dog, a pat on the head can be a sign of dominance. Scratching a dog on the chest or at the base of the tail is often more enjoyable to the dog. Stroking motions or scratches are more pleasant than a “thump thump” pat. See [Dominance](#)
- Hugging is stressful to a lot of dogs. We can teach dogs to enjoy being hugged by pairing a short hug with a small treat and praise.
- Dogs are opportunists and natural scavengers. This was a survival trait. If it is edible and unattended – to the dog it is up for grabs. Read my article on [Management](#) and set your dog up for success. Also read [Counter Surfing](#).
- Dogs are naturally possessive – some more than others. In dog world, possession is 9/10 or the law. It is natural for a dog to be reluctant to give up a prized possession. Be proactive – give your dog something that is okay for him to have and “trade” it for a yummy treat. Then give the item back to the dog. Read my article on [Object Exchange](#). Get help if your dog is growling.