



WHAT EVERY DOG WANTS YOU TO KNOW

Dogs do what works for them. If you're getting behavior you don't want from your dog, you need to figure out what the reward is.

Are you rewarding the behavior without realizing it? Do you ignore your dog except when he's mischievous or destructive? Then you'll get a lot of mischievous and destructive behavior. Your attention is the greatest reward. Is someone else rewarding the behavior? If you're trying to teach the dog not to beg at the table while your child is dropping goodies to him, he's not going to stop begging.

Is the situation itself rewarding the behavior? If he gets into the garbage can and gets tasty food scraps, getting fussed at by you may not really matter.

Rewarded behavior increases in frequency. Treats used properly make for good dogs. Ignored behavior decreases in frequency. If you don't see-hear-touch a begging dog, he'll soon stop begging.

Behavior that can't be ignored should be handled with a time-out in the dog's kennel. 5 or 10 minutes is enough since dogs can't tell time. When you put your dog in the kennel for a time-out, it's important that you not say anything, look directly at him, or touch him more than absolutely necessary to get him in the kennel. It is crucial that you be firm but gentle in your handling of him as you kennel him. Roughness on your part will spoil the learning.

A lot of behavior problems can be solved with a full week of hand-feeding. That means that, for one full week, every bite of food your dog eats comes from your fingers. Yes, you must do it for the full week; it won't work if you do three days then someone else does four days. If there are others in the household, they can do a week each of handfeeding also. This shows your dog, in a way he can understand, that you are the pack leader.

No dog wants to be the pack leader; in the wild pack leaders have short and harried lives. However, if there doesn't seem to be a pack leader, the dog will do it. Dogs feel very strongly that someone must be in charge. Dogs want a chain of command, but that doesn't mean the pack leader has to be rough, tough, and growly. In fact, many dogs consider that kind of behavior in a human to be indicative of a lack of confidence. Just remember that you're supposed to be smarter than the dog.

Any action you want from your dog needs a short command, like Sit or No Bark. Also, each command works for one action only. If Down means Lie on the floor, it can't mean Get off the couch or Take your paws off my chest. The dog doesn't care what word you use; he doesn't speak English. Just pick one - for each action - and stick to it.

Say a command once. Don't repeat - dogs can learn to count very quickly. Don't yell - his hearing is a zillion times better than yours. Use your normal speaking voice.



He is a dog; you aren't. It isn't a contest between you and him; it's cooperation. You're supposed to be in charge; he wants to trust you to do that. He wants to love you; he wants you to love him. Training him is teaching him, not forcing him, to do things. If there's a problem, give him the benefit of the doubt; get help from me or another behavioral consultant if you need it. Never assume he's deliberately misbehaving or being spiteful; you might not have been clear in asking him to do what you want. If your words say one thing, but your tone and body language say another, he won't listen to the words. He doesn't just listen with his ears; he listens with his heart.

He wasn't born understanding English; you can learn to speak a little Dog.