

HOW TO BE THE
ALPHA DOG
AND STOP YOUR
DOG'S BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS



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Introduction

There are few things in life as simple and as straightforward as the relationship between someone and their dog. The pure, raw emotion that exists between them is such that, when something is not quite right, both the dog and the owner will often feel the problems associated with the imbalance.

To many people, the immediate response to a behavioural problem in a dog is to blame someone or something else. It's because the dog isn't a "good" breed or because the rest of the family isn't following the rules. But, in reality, dogs are reflections of us. As pack animals, dogs react and interact based almost entirely on what they perceive around them. They don't have the same emotions as we do – they have instincts, and those instincts have developed over centuries to respond to how their owners act.

With that in mind, it comes down to the owner to claim control and be the alpha dog in their household. And this is where the problem lies for so many dogs and their behaviour issues. Human beings personify everything they see. So, when we see a dog who looks upset in a way that a human would, we assume they need reassurance and spoiling.

We give our dogs whatever they want because we believe that by providing treats and extra attention to the dog, we are doing a good thing – the same as lavishing attention on a child. But, despite everything we feel, dogs are not like humans. They have a different social structure and in many cases that sad face is your dog's way of acting out – trying to determine the order of you and them in the pack.

Understanding the Pack Mentality

It can be hard to imagine your cute little miniature Dachshund as anything but a domesticated pet. But, even with over 250 years of domestication and breeding (and for some breeds hundreds more years), every dog still has the basic, instinctual needs of a pack animal in their DNA. In the wild, there is nothing quite as dangerous as a wolf. On its own, a wolf is menacing and dangerous, but in a pack, it is nearly unstoppable.

And that is how dogs survive – they group together and work with each other to find food, survive cold weather and avoid predators. Believe it or not, in your living room, a dog will revert to the same instinctual behaviour – trying to determine their place in the pack.

From the time a dog reaches only a couple of months of age, it will begin testing its surroundings and its owners to determine where it stands in the pack order. That early test of dominance is vital in the wild, allowing stronger, younger dogs to rise up

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and lead their fellow pack members. By having the strongest pack leader in place, the rest of the pack can be certain they will survive. Your dog wants the same basic thing – an assurance of safety and well-being.

For human beings, a good job and a big house might be all we need to decide that we are taken care of. However, for dogs, it is a matter of body language, assertive behaviour and consistent displays of alpha leadership. By standing up and becoming the undisputed pack leader of your home, you not only tell your dog that you are in charge and they need to obey your commands – you assure them that, by submitting to your dominance, they will be kept safe and well taken care of. This reduces stress, relaxes your dog, and in many cases can alleviate aggressive behaviours such as fighting, food aggression, and chewing.

What Can Alpha Leadership Help with in Your Home?

The first question every dog owner asks when it comes to taking control of their household and claiming alpha leadership is what this will do for their dog. Will it actually help them stop their behaviours? Just consider the behaviours that the activities you're about to read about have been able to help with:

- Keeping Your Dog off the Couch
- Showing Aggression Over their Food Bowl
- Pulling on the Leash During a Walk
- Jumping on People at the Door
- Barking when You Leave the House
- Aggressiveness Toward Other Dogs
- Trying to Get in the Front Seat of the Car
- Chewing on Your Shoes or Socks
- Barking in the Middle of the Night (when there isn't a threat)
- Showing Undue Fear or Fixation on Things Like Cats, Baths, or Cars

Your dog is a smart animal, but it is an animal first and foremost. As you develop the skills to act like the dominant animal in your own home, you'll be able to show your dog that these behaviours are not okay.

One of the most commonly cited successes when it comes to alpha leadership is that a dog will stop trying to get on the couch. Why is that? It's because you've managed to claim that space for yourself. Your dog will respect that the couch is now

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your space, deferring to your judgment on when they are allowed to be up there. The same will hold true for your bed, the car seats, and your shoes. It's amazing how adept dogs can be at recognizing and respecting when your space has been claimed. But, before they will respect those boundaries, you need to set the boundaries. That's what we'll be working on.

Taking Control of Your Household

In this guide, we're going to discuss not only exactly why you need to take control of your pack, but the exact benefits that you and your dog will gain from doing so. This is not just a quick fix to help your dog behave better. This is a tool that will allow you to better understand your relationship with your dog, and with your fellow human beings.

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Pack Leadership in the House

Before I go any further, I want to lay something out very clearly for you. Your dogs are not people. Every time you pretend your dog is another human member of the house, you're not just ignoring the ways of nature; you're putting expectations on them they cannot hope to fulfil. A dog without a sound pack structure and a clear alpha leader will not understand that growling at the cats when eating is a bad behaviour. They feel the need to protect themselves because you have not asserted clearly that you will protect them.

The same goes for everything you do in taking care of your dog. Every day, millions of dollars are spent to pamper dogs around the world. While there is nothing wrong with good grooming (I encourage it) or an occasional treat, you will never train your dog by lavishing them with expensive meals and pedicures. They need the structure and assertiveness that they expect from you instinctually.

The honest truth is that a dog understands very little of what you do for it beyond the pack structure you establish and the attention you give it.

How Pack Leadership Ensures an Obedient Dog

So, how is it that people like Cesar Milan can instantly quell the unwanted behaviours of an out of control dog? To be sure, there are some elements of TV magic involved, but in truth, he is merely giving the dog exactly what it wants. And while it may be hard to hear this, your dog needs and desires that stern attention.

Of course, I do not mean you should punish your dog. There is a very definite difference between asserting dominance and punishment. Punishment shames your dog because they did not behave as you expect them to behave. If you never taught them their role in the pack and how they are expected to behave, it is unfair and can exacerbate those bad behaviours. On the other hand, if you simply assert your role over your dog, they will understand that you have a higher social standing, and will slowly learn to accept the commands you give.

When you don't show dominant leadership behaviours over your dog, your dog compensates or attempts to take that control themselves. Dogs with aggressive, alpha personalities will often end up ruling the house themselves, refusing to behave and making life miserable for anyone that gets in their way. Meek, submissive dogs may act out in other ways, by chewing up items around your home, making messes, or barking excessively.

Finally, you should know that there is no in-between for dogs. Everything is very black and white for them in terms of leadership. So, when you start working toward asserting your dominance, you need to do it all in. You cannot waiver, make

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exceptions because they've been "really good" or take a break from asserting the dominant behaviour that a dog needs to see in their owner. You're either a follower or a leader, and you need to be the leader.

How Dogs Interact

Have you ever tried yelling at a dog over and over again when they won't behave? It's almost like they cannot hear you. You may be failing to back up your dominance with the body language and energy a dog needs to see. Raw anger rarely works in combatting a dog with obedience issues. Imagine what would happen if, whenever your children broke a rule, you yelled at them from another room without any visible consequences. Eventually, they would ignore you and start pushing their boundaries.

Dogs are similar in that they need to be shown that there are tangible reasons to respond to your commands. You need to show them with your body language and energy that you are in charge of the situation and you need to use cues that dogs understand to consistently put them back in their place in the pack. Empty punishment and yelling are not going to get either of those things done.

Communication is very important to dogs, but they don't communicate the same way that we do. While you might be able to lie to your spouse and tell them you are okay when you are really angry, a dog will almost always know – picking up on cues in your body language, tone, and behaviour that correspond to your anger.

I once knew a dog owner who would often find the odd behavioural problems her dog exhibited funny. The dog would get confused and jump on the couch when he should not. He would bark at strange lights on the wall. He would occasionally bite pillows and chew up socks. She found it hilarious for some reason, so even when scolding the dog and attempting to show him that those behaviours were not okay, she was exhibiting body language that said she was actually amused. The dog would do it even more often then, because he thought it was a good thing. The words didn't matter, nor did the tone of voice. It was the body language that communicated her true feelings to the dog.

Addressing the Real Problems

When it comes to addressing behavioural problems, they are more often than not related to issues with the owner, and not the dog. A dog is a dog – they don't know anything else. They are not humans and they do not have human emotions (as much as we may transfer upon them), so their behaviours are almost always the result of something else in the household.

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The key to success then is to first recognize the source and cause of the problems – what issues you may have that are causing the dog to behave poorly. Consider some of these possible issues:

- Do you spoil your dog?
- Do you fail to follow through on your punishments?
- Are you meek or apologetic when commanding your dog?
- Do you defer to others in the house about your dog?
- Do you allow your dog to walk you?
- Do you expect human emotions and responses from your dog?

These are all common problems – after all, the emotional connection we create with our pets is above and beyond any simple ownership. They reflect our emotions and at times, we reflect theirs. So, it is important to understand that *everything* you do has an impact on your dog – from the tiniest tone in your voice, to the way you feed or walk them on a daily basis.

By recognizing your own behavioural problems and how they impact the way your dog sees you, you'll be able to change the foundation of the relationship you have and ultimately address the problems your dog has been having.

Dealing with Unwanted Behaviours

Claiming the Alpha position in your pack does many things. But, primarily, it creates a deferential leadership position for you and your dog. What does that mean? It's similar to how a general will salute a private back when the two meet in passing. However, the general does not salute nearly as fully or at attention. They simply acknowledge the respect given to them by the private.

The same will occur between you and your dog. Your dog will recognize that you have a senior position and will defer to you on all major decisions, and for general protection – as it would in nature.

This does many things. It makes it easy to claim space in your home. You can claim your couch, your bed, your car, your door, your windows. They are all your space and your dog will only infringe upon them with your express permission – that salute back to them. If you don't give it, they cannot get on the couch.

Ideally, with the right training and attitude, your dog will learn to defer to your leadership in almost all situations – learning to walk on a leash, eat their food without

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showing aggression, stay on the floor, and to respect other dogs and people and their space.

Dealing with Dogs and their Problems

To quote John Holmes, “A dog is not almost human”, and the person who attempts to train their dog to be somewhat human is missing the point. On the flip side, you should be working to become part dog, assuming their behaviours in a way that will make them more comfortable and capable of responding to your commands and your intentions.

Identifying Problems in Your Dog

The first thing you need to do, and something you probably have already done, is to recognize the behavioural problems your dog may have. For any dog owner, this should be easy. Unless you have unrealistic expectations of your dog, it should be very simple to recognize what is wrong with your dog on the surface.

They might bark when you leave the house, get into the garbage, growl at other dogs on a leash, get aggressive over their food. Every bad behaviour you’ve seen could be a symptom that your dog is slightly unstable and needs special attention.

However, the first thing to remember is that your dog does not remember the bad things it does. It has no sense of “problems”. It could snap at another dog one moment and the next moment be wagging its tail and waiting for praise. Only human beings feel solid regret and can dwell on bad memories. While it is possible to instil a sense of shame instantly in a dog, directly after they do something wrong, yelling at them an hour or two later would be pointless.

Every dog is capable of being good, and it doesn’t come down to yelling and screaming and punishment. You just need to spend a bit of time asserting your role as the pack leader and showing that you are the dominant one in the relationship.

There are a number of specific issues you may have, that can all be repaired by careful attention to the pack structure in your home. Here are a few of them:

- **Hyperactivity** – An overactive dog is one that jumps on people, jumps on furniture, breaks things, chews things, digs things up. This is not happiness – this is excess energy that the dog does not know how to handle.
- **Aggression** – Aggression toward any other animal or person in the form of growling, biting, snapping, or possessiveness of food is not a healthy behaviour.

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- **Obsessions** – When a dog gets fixated on an object – be it a ball or a cat – they are unhealthily channelling into that object. Fixation means they respond to nothing.
- **Low Self Esteem** – A dog with low self-esteem may be weak, fear other dogs for no reason, or freeze up in situations with people or other animals.
- **Anxiety** – This includes barking, scratching, or destruction of items when you leave the home.

All of these behaviours might appear on occasion in your dog, but they are not normal when they occur repeatedly and excessively. If they do, it is time to rethink how the household is operated. Keep in mind that all of these issues are normal dog behaviours grown out of control. A dog should always be energetic, but they should not jump on people or break things. A dog should always be excited to play, but fixations are unhealthy.

Why Punishment Doesn't Work

As human beings, we have a very highly developed sense of right and wrong. No other animal in nature has that. There are no other creatures that perform an action and realize that what they did was wrong. Unfortunately, we tend to assume that the same punishments we use for our children – timeouts, yelling, taking away of personal possessions – will work on our dogs.

Unfortunately, all you ever do when you act this way is confuse a dog. Even yelling or threatening a dog, which seems to have a direct impact on them, will only confuse them because they do not understand why you are upset.

So, when trying to change the behaviours of your dog, you'll need to use corrective and disciplinary actions that will teach your dog to change their behaviour in the language they are used to. If you have ever watched the *Dog Whisperer*, you may have seen Cesar Milan grip a dog lightly on the neck to simulate how a mother dog communicates that a pup has done something unacceptable. Or how he taps a dog in the hindquarters with his foot. These are not violent actions – but corrective physical cues that tell a dog the action they just performed was not acceptable.

Touching a dog calmly without any anger or aggression behind it is effective because for a dog, it is communicative. You could never walk up to someone in a crowd and tap them with your foot to communicate that they should talk quieter on their cell phone, but it is effective when attempting to teach a dog to stop chewing on your shoes.

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Avoiding too Much Reassurance

Another major issue for dog owners is reasserting behaviour unknowingly. For example, if your dog missed a step going up and hit their paw, they might be in a little bit of pain, but they would simply learn to be more cautious of the steps and to not be so aggressive in climbing them. However, if you took the dog aside and cooed over it for a long time after that injury, you may further instil the danger of the stairs to the point that you create a phobia.

Reassurance is an emotion that dogs rarely understand. The negative effect of an action they take can be good for them in that they learn a lesson (similar to the old adage of a child touching a hot stove). It is not good and you should check to ensure they are not injured, but you should not baby them afterwards or it can create anxiety and phobias where there were none before.

You may have also heard of using positive reinforcement with clickers or treats to teach your dogs to behave. This is a very effective method when a dog is already well balanced and healthy. On the other hand, when a dog is unbalanced and confused about the pack order, all you may be doing with treats is reinforcing those behaviours and creating a negative behaviour in which your dog constantly wants treats.

Your Dog's Assimilation

I can talk all day about how dogs are not humans and have natural inclinations, but we must also remember that dogs live in a human world and for all the natural inclinations they have, we also need to teach them to fear unnatural dangers and to behave in situations they may never have encountered in the non-developed world.

This is another reason why pack leadership development is so important. Rather than simply responding to everything a dog does, you create a relationship between you and your dog that highlights the positive effects of the situation. You teach your dog that, when you correct a behavior, you are doing it to help them fit in.

Imagine walking up to a stranger on the street and telling them that they shouldn't run on the sidewalk. They would probably give you a strange look and keep on running. However, your children would likely stop running because someone they respect and look up to told them it was dangerous. Your dog is the same. If you try and correct a behaviour before you have established dominance, all you will do is confuse them and it will likely lead to anger - which will only further confuse them.

However, if you have full control of your dog as the pack leader, you can make those corrective disciplinary movements and in an instant, you will not only show your dog that something needs to be changed, but you will make the situation safer for yourself and the dog.

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Avoiding the Pitfalls of Modern Dog Ownership

Before we move on to the final sections of this guide and start talking about specific pack leader exercises you can perform on a daily basis to establish dominance and stop dog obedience problems, I want to lay out a few reasons why so many people seem to have trouble with their dogs today. Dog obedience is not a new issue – people have been trying to get their dogs to behave for centuries, but in the past it was often the people who understood and had a strong hand over dogs that would raise them – rather than today where it is those who can afford it.

Today, there are millions of dogs in the United States and every dog owner has been told or shown something different about what is healthy for their dogs.

Dogs want you to take control of the pack and show them what to do. It allows them to relax, know that they are safe, and to start listening to you and your corrective commands.

But, it can be hard to take control of your dog. You feel self-conscious about those assertive behaviours, the way you must act in front of others, and what others think. But, keep in mind, that what you are doing is not bad for the dog. It is, in fact, the single most valuable thing you can do for your dog – showing them who is in charge and how they fit into the social structure around them. Only then will they be able to relax, trust you, and follow your commands.

Becoming the Pack Leader

Hopefully this book has shown you thus far not only the value of being a pack leader, but how your dog views the world around them and how you can adjust your perceptions to be more like your dog, and not expect them to do the same. After all, human beings are the ones that can adapt and adjust to the behaviours of others. We are the ones that can understand the consequences of our actions. Dogs cannot.

And because they cannot, we need to perform specific tasks on a daily basis that will establish dominance and create a pack structure that will sustain for the life of your dog. Ideally, these strategies will start as soon as your puppy is old enough to start testing you for the alpha position – often times at 3-4 months of age. But, do not fret if you're working with an older dog who has become too much to handle. Even a dog with many years can learn how to behave.

Pack Leader Strategies

Before we go into specific exercises, here are few things you should be doing on a daily basis to establish not only rules for the house (that all members will follow), but rules for you and your dog. If you know the rules, it is easier to enforce them when your dog does something they should not.

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Rules for Your House

- Set Rules with Everyone in the House before you Deal with the Dog
- Be Consistent with Your Dog About Everything – never waver
- Start Enforcing the Rules Immediately, Even with a Puppy
- Be Calm and Assertive – Never Enforce Rules if You're Angry or Tired
- Never Yell or Hit Your Dog
- Don't Reinforce Any Behaviors that Are Aggressive or Fearful
- Use Treats and Affection as Rewards

With those things in mind, let's start looking at the rules for how you can establish dominance on a day to day basis.

Tools of the Trade

When training your dog, you will need to use certain tools to show them how to behave. These tools include a good leash and collar that match the specific needs of your dog. There are dozens of different types of leashes and collars, including harnesses and leads, that fit different personalities, ages, and situations. Be sure to match them carefully.

Additionally, treats or a clicker are invaluable for training a dog. They will help you show your dog what is good behaviour and what is not. Remember – training is a great way to keep your dog active, both physically and mentally.

The Right Frame of Mind

Claiming the alpha position in your relationship requires a number of things. While we will go over specific situations at the end of the guide, here are a few important factors to keep in mind as you interact with your pet on a daily basis.

1. **Be Calm and Assertive** – To be in charge, you must be sure of yourself at all times. If you decide something, you must be persistent. Don't tell the dog to sit and then give up when they ignore you the first two or three times. They need to know that when you give them a command, they should follow it.
2. **Require Calm and Submission** – Before you allow your dog to do something, you should require them to remain calm and submissive. This will be important for leash training and feeding time and will also make it easier to avoid anxious behaviours when you leave the house or come home from a long day.

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3. **Rewards are Important** – Like all living things, dogs can be conditioned with rewards. If you are training a dog to sit and you give them a treat the first 15 times they sit, they will learn that sitting is a good thing. Later, you can replace the treat you gave with praise and they will likely still sit, expecting your positive attention. Eventually, simply responding to your command will be enough.
4. **Make the First Move** – Taking the first move is important in many situations. You may not need to eat first or step into a room first, but neither should you allow your dog to pull you down the street or take scraps off your plate. Be calm but assertive and hold your position, making sure your dog knows that you are the leader.
5. **Body Language is Key** – Dogs respond to many stimuli and body language is one of them. Stand tall, hold your head straight and don't back away when addressing them. You don't need to stare them in the eye or yell, but you should always remain confident and in full control – this will improve their response.

Speaking to the Breed of Your Dog

Your dog is a specific breed and that breed has certain expectations. Few dogs were originally bred to sit around the living room and play with a rubber ball. They are workers – hunting, herding, running. As animals, it is their duty to work for food and water and as dogs, they need the social interaction that was bred into them.

So, you will need to ensure you have the time and the energy to keep up with the breed you brought home. There are multiple different kinds of breeds, each with its own expectations in a household. Here is a short breakdown of each:

- **Sporting Dogs** – Sporting dogs are those descended from hunting dogs – trained to locate and retrieve game. These dogs were adapted and bred to use their innate hunting instincts to track animals and find game, but not to kill that game – a very important distinction. For these animals, games like fetch, swimming, and Frisbee are all very popular because they allow them to utilize those tracking and finding instincts. Keep in mind that not all sporting dogs are high energy, but they will track toward having high energy. Spending time with your dog will help establish those pack sensibilities while playing. One trick you might find useful is to get your sporting dog a backpack – a small weighted pack that straps to their back to add some weight to their workload. Just be sure to see a vet first before using this to keep from causing any unwanted health or back problems.

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- **Hounds** – Hounds are trained to hunt their pray – often small mammals – and to go ahead of hunters to trace out the quarry. There are scent hounds like bassets, beagles, bloodhounds and dachshunds that are bred to hold a scent longer and to ignore noises (hence the big floppy ears). Keeping these dogs busy involves putting those noses to work. Burying items, putting treats into toys and letting them dig them out, or going hunting are all good ways to engage your hound.
- **Working Dogs** – Working dogs are those that guard, rescue, or pull. This includes Malamutes, Mastiffs, Akitas, Great Danes, Dobermans, Rottweilers, and others. Basically, dogs that are bred and set to a specific task are working dogs. To keep these dogs happy, they need to be given work. To some, it seems cruel, but in reality, they are eager to be kept busy. Strength oriented activities are important here, like pulling or carrying weight.
- **Terriers** – Terriers are bred to hunt down and kill vermin such as mice, rats, moles, and groundhogs – actually digging into the earth to get them in some instances. These dogs have a lot of energy and are often quite intelligent, making them a handful to deal with. Play with them often, get them off the leash outside if possible, and put their brains to work. Trick toys, special commands, and other things like that will help them to stay busy.
- **Toy Dogs** – Toy breeds were bred originally as companions and only companions. The result is a subset of dogs that is very cute, and as such, can manipulate its owner. You will need to be just as strict with a toy dog as you would with a Pitbull or Rottweiler. They need to be shown that their behaviour cannot be allowed. Things like biting, barking, or destroying items are the same negative behaviors performed by big dogs, and yet many people tend to overlook them in toy breeds.

The breed of your dog is important in determining how they might act. It's like your genes. If your grandfather was diabetic, there is a chance you could carry the gene for diabetes. You'll need to watch your diet as you age and get your blood checked often. However, you may never get diabetes, because it is not guaranteed that a gene will transfer between generations.

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The same is true for dogs. The breed does not make the dog. And in some cases, the physical abilities and appearance of a breed can harm them more than anything, as is the case with Pitbulls or Rottweilers, which have a reputation for being vicious, but are generally only vicious when their owners train them to be so, or neglect them. In reality, they can be some of the sweetest, best trained dogs around.

Remember, when thinking about the breed of your dog, it has an effect on how they might act, but it should never be an excuse for behaviors. Any dog can be a good dog, regardless of natural energy levels or aggressiveness.

Dogs Are Not Out to Get You

While most of this book has talked about gaining and holding respect from your dog and giving them a powerful leader to follow, this is not the only way to gain control of your dog. Recent studies have shown that dogs learn more from experience and behaviour than from dominance. I want to make sure you understand that this book is not designed to teach you how to completely dominate your dog and you should never assume that your dog is trying to threaten your dominance every time they wet the rug or chew up a shoe.

However, being an alpha leader will help immensely in controlling these behaviours by giving the dog a leader to follow, reasons to avoid behaviors, and a clear path to approval from their pack. If you establish dominance safely, without provoking your animal, show them that you are in charge but also part of the “we” that is their universe, and are consistent in training, the process will run smoothly and result in long term, positive effects.

Establishing the Pack Order and Handling Behaviours

In this last section, I want to go into specific situations in which you will need to put your dog's anxieties to rest and take control of the situation. This involves stepping up, being the alpha leader and showing your dog the proper way to act.

Meeting a Dog

One of the biggest issues that lead to problems with dogs is a misunderstanding over how a dog should be approached. When you meet a dog for the first time, there is an underlying etiquette regarding how the meeting should take place. When you break that etiquette because you think the dog is cute or are afraid of it, you create a situation in which the dog may not respect you or may, themselves, become afraid. Here is how to successfully approach a dog for the first time.

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In nature, followers approach the leader. In this case, you should wait for the dog to approach you. If the dog decides it is afraid of you for some underlying reason you do not understand or is simply grouchy, it will choose not to approach and you should respect that, the same as you would if a fellow human being did not want to shake your hand. Do not walk up to a dog and attempt to force the meeting.

Dogs need time to get to know you. They need to smell you, explore you, and learn more about you. For this reason, the easiest way to meet a dog is to ignore them, letting them to do their own exploration. Many people don't do this and can create anxiety and fear in a dog when they are overly eager to meet them. While the dog is sniffing you, do not talk to it, touch it, or make eye contact. The sniffing process is a very particular meeting process for a dog – don't interrupt it.

Only when the dog is done sniffing will it tell you if it is ready to meet. Some dogs will run away – you should respect this. However, if the dog rubs against you, bows in submission or excitedly rubs against your hand, feel free to show affection in return. If a dog ignores you, ignore it back. You never know how a dog will react if you push the issue, so respect their lack of interest.

If a dog becomes aggressive or attempts to assert dominance with bumping, stepping on your feet, or raising of the lips, do not get aggressive back. Simply hold your ground, do not show fear, and do not avoid eye contact. Staring down a dog who is aggressive can be seen as a challenge, but being willing to look at them and show them that you are not afraid will often be enough to take control of the situation. If the dog needs to be removed, make sure everyone stays calm and assertive and that you do not succumb to fear, or the dog will develop problems with you that could last.

Walking Your Dog

One of the most common situations in which someone might have a problem with their dog is on a walk. They might pull on the leash, chase after cars, run into the street, dig, eat food off the ground, or attempt to chase other animals. Some dogs become quite aggressive on leashes as well, feeling the need to protect themselves and their owners. This is a prime example of a situation in which you need to take control and be the alpha dog.

Make time for your walks. A walk is an important part of the day for the bond between you and your dog. Make time and allow for a nice, leisurely walk. When you're in a hurry or stressed about being late for work or hungry after you get home, your dog will feed on that anxiousness.

To control the overanxious desire to go out, you need to wait until your dog has calmed before taking them out. It will be nearly impossible to eliminate that instant

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excitement when it's time to go out, but you can remove the excited, happy tones you use when you call them. Don't let them jump on you, bound around, bite their leash or bark when it's time to go out. Hold your ground and be assertive until they sit and relax. Only then should you put a leash on. If they immediately grow agitated when you open the door, once again wait until they are calm and submissive.

Assertiveness is important. As a pack leader, you need to show that you know exactly what you are doing and why you are doing it. When you go outside, you should not let the dog pull you across the street, down side alleys, or wherever it wants to go. Letting your dog explore and sniff its territory is a good thing, but letting it control the walk is not.

Never rush. Whenever you need to do something outside, make the dog sit and take your time to calmly complete the task. This can be locking the door, picking up their poop, or getting into the car. Never rush or allow your dog to hurry you.

When you get outside, you need to take control of the walk. You should never allow the dog to walk in front of you pulling on the leash, because they are not following or paying attention to you. They are rushing forward to fulfil their specific needs. For 10-15 minutes, force your dog to walk at your side, without sniffing, looking around, or barking at other dogs. You can of course let them relieve themselves first if it is necessary, but afterwards walk with them calmly for a prolonged period.

After the calm walking period, allow the dog to go ahead and sniff on their own for, at the most, 5 minutes. You should never allow the dog to walk in front of you without permission – this will make them think they are leading the pack. A trying experience can be taking your dog for a walk with another person. Often times, a well-trained dog will walk as they are trained when you are alone, but adding another person will bring out that desire to lead again. Don't let them get carried away.

A good trick, when your dog is especially eager to pull ahead or is aggressive with other dogs or squirrels, is to force them to stop what they are doing and sit, paying attention to you. They should learn that, on a walk, the path to them getting to explore and sniff is to pay attention to you at all times. Fixation can result on things like squirrels, cats, or other dogs if you allow the benefit of the extra lead.

When you return from your walk, make sure the dog remains calm and submissive as you remove their leash and settle them back into the house. Many times, feeding a dog after a long walk is a good idea, though some dogs may prefer to rest first.

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Feeding Your Dog

Another major issue people have with their dogs is food aggression or overexcitement. Learning how to feed your dog and how to deal with food aggression issues will go a long way toward saving yourself some energy.

Dogs need to earn their food. This is a fundamental aspect of their psychology. As animals, they are used to hunting and tracking to get their food and then being rewarded with it, only after they've completed a hard task. When possible, you should do the same thing for them. Playing games, making them sit, or feeding them after they come inside will all be helpful in this regard.

Make them wait for their food until they are calm and submissive. This will remove many of the seemingly demanding behaviours a dog can exhibit when waiting for food – the barking, the jumping, and the aggression towards other pets. This will also reward them once the food is given. You're challenging them to remain calm and relaxed after they are fed.

It's also possible to reduce their fixation on the food by requiring their attention be on you rather than the food dish. You do not need to deny them the food, but the same as you do when you walk them – require their attention so they don't fixate on other animals or people – you should get them to focus on you rather than the food.

Aggressiveness with food is a big issue and always has warning signs. If the dog tries to cover the dish, their hair rises on their back, or you see their teeth when you or another pet comes near the dish, you may have a problem. These are specific messages from your dog saying "this is my food, leave it alone". If you have multiple dogs, there are a few solutions. You can feed them at the same time, separately, or you can feed only the calm, submissive dog first, when he relaxes. This teaches the other dogs that submission will earn them the reward of the food.

If the dog is aggressive towards you, be extremely careful. Even the calmest, happiest dog in the world, when they have food aggression, can become dangerous. Never give them affection to stop the behaviour, as you'll only reinforce that behaviour. Waiting for food can be a good tool here, but if you cannot get it to go away, you may need to find an expert to help relieve the problem.

Your Space

Dogs with behaviour problems very often make a habit of climbing on furniture, going into the rooms they should not, and getting into your possessions. You need to stake a claim in the items and spaces that are yours and assert alpha dominance to control them. Just watch your pets if your cat tries to climb on your dog's favourite bed. The dog may allow it, but there is quite a bit of body language that passes between them during the process.

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This is not about being “the big guy”. Rather, it’s about showing your dog when something belongs to you and you alone. Imagine your house as multiple spaces, and determine which spaces your dog is allowed to inhabit. If you claim the space, the dog will respect that claim if you are consistent and if you are assertive.

Pulling an animal away or pushing them off a space will not work. It only makes them more intent on claiming that space. So, instead, you need to use body language to claim your space. Stand firm in front of them, be assertive and circle them carefully to show them that the space is yours. Dogs are incredibly adept at picking up on your intent. It might even seem silly (and no, they cannot read your mind), but the confidence you feel in how you stand up to the dog will come out in your body language. You believe, so they will as well.

Be realistic about what you claim. Many people will claim the door to keep dogs from running to them to bark or jump on visitors. Others will do the same with windows or porches. You can also claim your couch, and should always claim your bed (in the wild, the pack leader often has their own sleeping space. They may share it when needed, but only when the others are invited). Pulling a dog away from something is the same as inviting them to play with you or to compete for control of it. Use your body language and calm, simple commands to control the space, rather than trying to do it physically. Also, never be hesitant and never ask the dog to do something. They only understand simple, direct commands. Trying to offer compromise will only create further problems.

Obsessive and Fixated Behaviour

This is a big one for many dogs, especially the high energy ones. If you’ve ever seen the Pixar movie, “Up”, you probably remember the scene where the dogs in the Amazon all stop and turn when there is a mention of a squirrel, dropping the important work they’re doing - however ridiculous it all seems. That moment of absolute clarity is exactly what a fixated dog will do – and there is little we can easily do to reclaim their attention.

Exercise your dog as much as possible. A dog with too much energy will almost always have problems like this, and it’s just their way of getting rid of that energy.

Stop the obsession before it gets worse. Sometimes, you’ll start to see signs before it turns into a real problem. For example, your dog might be obsessed with reflections on the wall or a laser pen. If they start to get excited when you pull out a pen to do the bills, stop, use your calm assertive stance and force them to relax and pay attention to you. You can cut off the bad behaviour before it even develops.

Do not take obsessive objects away from the dog or the dog away from them. Just like the door, if you pull your dog away, you only make it worse. This is most often

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seen when walking a dog on a leash. If you pull them away from another dog who they are fixated on, they may start barking or pulling. Instead, make them sit and focus on you until they either forget or stop fixating. You'll be surprised how often this works. The main issue that you'll see with many dog owners is that this can be time consuming. Try taking a walk when your dog stops and goes after everything that moves. This is why it is important to give yourself a lot of time to deal with such issues.

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Conclusion

A dog truly is a person's best friend. They can recognize our emotions are probably the least selfish creatures on the planet – thinking in plural terms always and always seeking attention and affection. But, when that attention and affection turns into behavioural problems, you need to take action – and put your dog into a calm, submissive state that will allow them to relax and understand that you are the alpha in the pack.

Alpha leadership may seem hard to grasp, especially if you are used to pampering your pet and letting them have the run of the house. But, once you get used to being assertive, stepping up when your dog has behavioural problems to correct them, and most of all, feeling confident that what you are doing is good for your dog psychologically and physically, your home will be much more comfortable and relaxing to live in.

Your dog will behave, you will once again control your home, and the time you spend together will be that much more enjoyable. So, spend the time necessary to develop the proper relationship with your dog, and start enjoying the happy, healthy household you've just created.

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Recommended Reading: Secrets to Dog Training – By Daniel Stevens

<http://www.training-dogs-information.com/secretstodogtraining.php>

Secrets to Dog Training presents an unusually detailed and thorough look at how to both prevent and deal with the more common problem behaviors exhibited by dogs.

Written by a seasoned dog trainer, you can relax in the knowledge that all the tips and advice included are tried and true, and come from Stevens' real-life experiences as a professional dog trainer.

There is also a straight-talking, easy to follow 30-minute downloadable video which provides real-life examples of doggy bad behavior along with solutions and remedies to change them.

What's Covered?

There's a pretty impressive range of information packed into this guide.

It's not just the problem behaviors that are covered: The book starts off with new-owner advice (how to choose a puppy/dog, the best places to get one from, breed information, puppy/dog-proofing your home, the first vet visit, housetraining, etc) and then moves on to the more advanced stuff: behavioral problems (such as aggression, dominance, chewing, digging, excessive barking, separation anxiety, to name a few), intermediate-level obedience commands, health-related dog problems (allergies, cat/dog coexistence, fleas, heatstroke, and so on), and advanced commands and tricks.

The 30-minute downloadable video gives a great insight into a dog's quest to be the alpha dog and how you can prevent this.

Its quick steps to stop bad behaviors such as housebreaking right through to leash pulling are so simple you can start trying them out on your dog straight away.

Particularly Good Parts

In addition to the contents listed above, there's also a pretty impressive section on dog whispering, which – in case you haven't heard of it already - is a method of dog training based on a philosophy of clear communication and mutual respect.

It's been popularized in recent years by Cesar Millan ("The Dog Whisperer"), and is becoming increasingly well-known as an alternative and humane method for disciplining and training your dog. Secrets to Dog Training has dedicated an entire section to dog whispering:

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Daniel Stevens explains the background of the technique, how to utilize voice and body language to your best advantage, and how to use the technique to calmly, assertively, and effectively correct and train your dog.

Step-by-set instructions are included for the common commands (sit, down, come, stay, quiet, etc).

If you are serious about putting a stop to your dog's behavior problems for good (including aggression, digging, barking, whining, jumping, pulling on the lead, bolting out the front door, chewing, flatulence, house training and more) then I highly recommend that you get yourself a copy of Secrets to Dog Training right now.

You can pick up a copy from the link below:

<http://www.training-dogs-information.com/secretstodogtraining.php>

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