

How to Get Your Dog to Behave

Many times, the key to getting your dog to do what you want – or to stop doing what you *don't* want – comes down to using the right technique. You must teach your dog what you do want him to do rather than only telling him what you don't want him to do. Scolding and punishing your dog for his natural behavior can break down trust between you and your dog as well as cause your dog to do these behaviors when you aren't around or aren't looking instead of not doing them all together.

Many of your dogs nuisance behaviors are behaviors that are natural to him such as chewing, jumping, and housesoiling. Dogs don't inherently know that people don't enjoy these things so they must be taught.

There is a basic principle underlying all behavior modification techniques, which is that if your dog's behavior gets him what he wants he will continue doing it and if his behavior does not get him what he wants he will cease doing it.

Here are some techniques to encourage more of the behavior that you do want and less of what you don't want:

1. Give positive attention for the things that you want your dog to do. This includes giving your dog food, treats, praise, affection, playing with them, etc.

Any time your dog does anything you like and want him to continue doing, (i.e. chewing on the appropriate toy, doing something cute, when your dog does something that you ask him to including sit, down, wait, etc.) give him positive attention. Don't take these behaviors for granted and remember to reward your dog with positive attention to let him know what you want him to do. You should also do the same



Additional Resources

Please contact our Behavior Team to speak with a skilled behavior specialist.

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Most people don't realize that negative attention (i.e. yelling at your dog to get off of you, repeating his name several times to get him to stop doing something, chasing him when he grabs something he is not supposed to have, etc.) can actually be perceived as positive thing by your dog. Being scolded is unpleasant for a person, but for a dog it's another way of engaging with a human and, for most dogs, they will simply take what they can get.

Check the link above for upcoming classes to learn more about getting your dog to behave.

thing when your dog stops doing any unwanted behaviors (leaves the cat alone, stops chewing on inappropriate items, removes feet from the table top, etc.)

2. Redirect your dog when he is doing something you don't want him to do (chewing the wrong thing, feet on a table top, walking towards something that might get him into trouble). Call your dog away in a friendly manner and give him something equal in trade. For example, if he is chewing on something he shouldn't, give him an appropriate chew, or if he is up on a table top looking for food, do some training with food treats or provide your dog with a food filled enrichment toy such as a Kong Classic toy.
3. Manage your dog's ability to get to things that might get him in trouble. If your dog gets into trouble by tearing up things or having accidents in the house when you are not home then you should keep your dog confined either in a crate or in a dog proofed room when you are not home. Likewise, if your dog is inappropriate with guests by either jumping on them or behaving in any other inappropriate manner you can either put your dog in his dog proof area, in a kennel, or keep him on a leash so that he doesn't practice behaviors that might get him the attention that he wants.
4. Ignore any behaviors that you want to go away (i.e. jumping on you without invitation, demanding attention by barking, pawing, licking, etc.).

Being consistent is the key to getting this to work. If you sometimes ignore the behavior and then sometimes you welcome this behavior it will not be clear to the dog when it is acceptable and when it is not. Also, be prepared for your dog's behavior to get worse before it gets better, this is called an "extinction burst". If the dog isn't getting results with a behavior that worked before, they will step up their efforts and it may become increasingly difficult to ignore them – but you *must* so that you remain consistent.

At times you may have to make it clear to the dog that you are deliberately ignoring them. You can do this by giving them the "cold shoulder", turn your head or body away from the dog, folding your arms, or actually walking away.

For dogs that are more needy or demanding of your attention, you should be sure to initiate interactions with your dog first rather than only responding to your dog when they are begging for attention or they are being pushy. This way you get to decide when interactions begin and when they end which will teach your dog that you will make time for them but only when the timing is appropriate.