

Acclimating an Adult Dog to a Crate

Place the crate in the room where the family spends most of the time.

Put a comfy bed or blanket inside.

Either take the door off or fasten it open so it doesn't accidentally swing closed in the early stages of the training.

If your crate is a wire-mesh type - cover the top, back and sides with a sheet so that it is more like a cave than a cage.

STEP 1

Several times a day - surreptitiously place VERY yummy treats (chunks of meat or cheese) inside the crate for your dog to find on his/her own. At first place them just inside the door and as things progress place them farther and farther back.

STEP 2 - Play the 'Crate Game'

DAY 1

1. Toss a treat near the crate opening (right outside).
2. Praise your dog when she moves towards the crate to get the treat.
3. Do this 3-4 times and then end the session.
4. Do 3-4 sessions during this first day.

DAY 2

1. Toss the treat as in previous session a few times (just outside the crate).
2. Toss a treat just INSIDE the door of the crate.
3. Praise your dog when she sticks her head inside to get the treat.
4. Do this 3-4 times and then end the session.
5. Do 3-4 sessions during this second day.

DAY 3

1. Toss a treat a few inches farther back in the crate than yesterday and repeat the sessions as above.

DAY 4 and then as many days as needed

Continue like this until you can toss the treat all the way to the back of the crate and your dog will go all the way in to get it.

Once she is going all the way inside the crate to retrieve her treat - its time to add a verbal cue to the behavior. To do this: say "Kennel Up" or "Crate" (or whatever you want to call it) AS she is walking in. This will pair the word/s with the behavior. Do not say it before she walks in - say it AS she is walking in (perhaps when her head is to the middle of the crate). You will have to do this pairing of the verbal cue with the behavior about a dozen times before she knows the cue.

NEXT

Toss the treat in but say your cue "Crate" BEFORE she goes in to get the treat. Do this several sessions for several days.

NEXT

Without tossing the treat inside - say your cue "Crate" and if she goes inside - praise her and hand her the treat. Then ask her to come out and repeat the exercise (if she doesn't go in when asked - repeat the previous step a few more days).

Soon she will be happily going into the crate when asked. Praise and treat every time you ask her to do so.

NEXT

To get her to spend more time in the crate, tie a Kong toy stuffed with yummy pasty food (peanut butter, liverwurst, spray cheese, canned dog or cat food, etc.) to the back of the crate (string a thin rope through the top hole and knot the rope)



Ask her to "Crate" and when she goes inside she will find the stuffed Kong. She won't be able to take the kong out of the crate because its tied inside so she should just lie down and lick all the yummy paste out of it. Do this every day.

NEXT

Once she is good with going in and licking all the stuff out of the Kong you can start to shut the door while she is busy with the Kong. Do this every day - increasing the duration of time she is inside.

NEXT

Ask her to "crate" - give her the stuffed Kong and then sit in your chair to read or watch TV while she is inside eating the food out of the Kong.

*Additionally - at this point you can start to feed her dinner inside the crate.

NEXT

Once you are at this stage you can start to leave the room while she is eating the food out of the Kong or her dinner. At first, just leave and come right back. Then start wandering around the house in and out of the room while she is eating. Eventually, you should be able to leave the room for the whole time she is eating.

NEXT

Start to leave the house while she is in the crate with her Kong. At first, for only a few seconds, then a few minutes, then longer.

Things that can help during this process:

1. Adaptil (calming dog pheromone) spray - spray inside the crate before each session.
2. "Through a Dog's Ear" CD - calming music played during the crate game.
3. Rescue Remedy - a natural calming remedy you can put in the dog's food or on a treat for him to eat.

* The most important part of this program is to **GO SLOWLY**. If you rush the process you will not be successful. It may take a month to get your dog to accept spending significant time in the crate. The hope is that this will become her comfort zone for when you are away or when there is a storm or whatever provokes anxiety in your dog.

Why do dogs eat Poop?

Coprophagy, or consuming feces, is common in domestic dogs. Dogs are scavengers, which means that anything can be considered food to a dog. Eating feces, although disgusting to us, is not disgusting to them, it's food. They may simply be harvesting undigested food from the fecal material, whether it's their own or another animal's. Coprophagy may be caused by a nutritional (thiamine or vitamin-B) or digestive enzyme deficiency in some dogs. This possibility should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Coprophagy may be a displacement or compulsive behavior in response to stress, frustration, or anxiety. A dog that is tied up in the back yard for many hours a day is lonely and frustrated. This often results in displacement behaviors such as barking, digging, and coprophagy.

Coprophagy may also be an attention-seeking behavior, for example if the dog has learned that his/her owner comes flying out of the door in response, giving the dog that much needed attention (remember, even negative attention is attention to a dog).

It is even possible that coprophagy is a behavior the dog learned from its mother, since mom dogs consume the fecal material of their puppies. The puppies may learn to eat fecal material from watching her, or from the smell of it on her breath. If the puppy was raised in unsanitary conditions, the smell of feces may be associated with the smell of food since they may have often been side by side.

How do you stop coprophagy?

1. Switch to a high quality dog food to ensure your dog is getting proper nutrition.
2. Have your veterinarian test for nutritional deficiency.
3. Reduce the stress, frustration, or anxiety in your dog's life.
4. Remove your attention in response to the behavior.
5. Add meat tenderizer to your dog's meal to render his feces distasteful.
6. Clean the feces from the yard as soon as your dog defecates.
7. Walk your dog in a leash so that you can control his/her movements.

Coprophagy is a very difficult behavior to extinguish. It may be the case that you will have to manage your dog's environment for the rest of his/her life to prevent the behavior.

Important things for all dogs:

Exercise

Every dog needs physical exercise to stay behaviorally healthy. You should provide your dog with at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise EVERY day (broken into two sessions). Some ideas for you to try include: playing fetch with a toy, ball, frisbee or whatever else your dog may chase; playing the recall game (having the dog run back and forth between two people); or throwing a ball or treat up the stairs several times in a row ("doggie stairmaster"). Without this outlet your dog has tons of bottled-up energy that may come out as inappropriate behavior. A walk around the block is not adequate exercise for a dog.

Enrichment

Dogs also need mental stimulation to stay healthy and happy. You should provide your dog with enrichment activities everyday. Some ideas include:

1. Feed ALL meals in feeder puzzle devices so that he must work for all his food. You can purchase commercially available feeder devices or use an empty soda bottle or wiffle ball.
2. Hide kibble around the house for your dog to hunt and find - "Find It" games.
3. Scatter kibble in the yard or inside the house for your dog to forage for (Food Scatter)
4. Fill or line the inside of a hollow toy (Kong, sterile bones, etc.) with a soft food substance (peanut butter, cheese wiz, cream cheese, liverwurst, yogurt, canned pumpkin, etc.).

Positive Reinforcement Training

Positive reinforcement training will improve not only your dog's behavior, but also your relationship with him/her. Training sessions should be no longer than 5 minutes at a time to keep your dog from getting bored or frustrated. You can do as many 5-minute sessions in a day as you like, but do at least one. Remember to always sound positive and upbeat. Training should be fun for both you and your dog. If you feel you are getting frustrated, stop the session. ALWAYS end a session on a positive note by having your dog do something he/she knows and reward him/her for it. Everyone in the family should participate in the training, including small children.

NO PUNISHMENT

It is never a good idea to physically punish your dog. This will simply make him/her defensive and afraid of you. You should especially NEVER physically punish a dog that is showing fear or aggression. This **WILL** make the problem worse. Fighting aggression with aggression will always backfire on you. Even strong verbal corrections are sometimes harmful. Your dog will associate your punishment with the person or thing that he is already uncomfortable with. This will not help the problem. A stern "NO" or a Time-out are the most effective forms of punishment.

Thunderstorm Phobia

Thunderstorm Phobia is very common in dogs. Below are some suggestions to help your dog overcome his fear of the thunder through the process of desensitization and counterconditioning. This program is designed to help your dog change the way he feels during a thunderstorm and can be very effective. Unfortunately, some dogs also react to the lightning and the pressure changes associated with storms. These are harder things to control and may make your desensitization program go slower than you hoped.

Desensitization involves slowly exposing your pet to the fearful stimulus, increasing the intensity of the stimulus over time, until he no longer reacts fearfully when exposed to it. In this case the stimulus is the loud booming thunder. We often combine desensitization with counterconditioning.

Counterconditioning is a procedure where by you work to change your pet's emotional response to the fearful stimulus, from one of fear to one of acceptance, by pairing it with special treats or fun activities.

Desensitization / Counterconditioning procedure:

Purchase a thunderstorm desensitization CD rom (www.dogwise.com). Start by playing the CD at a volume that you can hardly hear in another room away from your dog (remember that dog's have much better hearing than we do). While playing the thunderstorm CD you will offer your dog the most wonderful special treats in the world or play his favorite game (as long as he is calm - if he reacts to hearing the CD it is probably too loud). Offer the treats or play the whole time the CD is playing. By pairing the special treats or event with the sound of the thunderstorm, you will be changing your dog's emotional response to the noise. He will soon associate thunder with special treats or game.

Over time you will increase the volume little by little. **It is very important to go very slow with this procedure. Never increase the intensity of the stimuli until your dog is perfectly comfortable at the current level.** When he remains relaxed and looks at you for a treat when he hears the thunder you know that you can then increase the volume for the next session. Repeat this procedure until you can play the thunderstorm CD at an extremely loud volume and your dog remains calm. This process may take a few weeks or a few months, depending on the time you put into it and the intensity of your dogs phobia.

While you are working though this procedure it is very likely that a real live storm will occur. Your dog will probably still react to the real storm in his normal fearful way even if he is doing well with the program. **It is extremely important that you comfort the dog in any way that you can during the scary storm.** If you notice that at some point he stops pacing, panting, shivering, etc. reward the calm behavior with a special food treat.

Your dog may need medical intervention to help overcome his thunderstorm phobia. Your veterinarian can prescribe a sedative to be given the day of the storm.

Tethering Your Dog

Tethering is a very useful management technique that controls the movement of the dog in certain situations until he can learn to control himself.

A tether is simply a leash connected to a doorknob, a table leg or an eyebolt in the wall.

Whenever you need your dog to be under more control in a situation, simply tether him.

It's nice to have a dog bed or other mat by his tether place so that he learns that this is the location you would like him to be in.

While tethered, provide chew toys to keep him busy and randomly reward him any time he is quiet or settled there.

Situations you may use a tether:

1. during human meal times
2. when you have a visitor who doesn't care for dogs
3. when you have a delivery at the front door
4. when you want to watch T.V. in peace
5. whenever you want your dog to be quiet and out of the way without banishing him to another room or his crate.

For lots of dogs, tethering is only a tool to reach a goal. Eventually the dog learns to "go to your place" in these situations, especially if he has been heavily rewarded for doing so.

Teaching Your Dog The Basics

SIT

- Get yourself some yummy treats and cut them into tiny pieces.
- Stand in front of your dog and place a treat to his nose.
- When he starts sniffing for the treat, move your hand slowly towards the back of his head. This will cause him to lift his head towards the treat and his butt should automatically go down.
- As soon as he sits, say "yes" and give him the treat.
- Repeat this several times with the treat as a lure, but as quickly as possible, put the treat in your pocket and just use your hand motion to direct him into the sit. We don't want to bribe the dog to sit; we want to teach him that sitting brings rewards.
- After several times of luring your dog into a sit with your empty hand, stand in front of him and wait. If he has learned that sitting gets reinforced he will sit without any luring. When he does, say "yes" and give him a treat and huge praise. Your dog has learned that his own action brings on the reward.
- Now its time to add the cue "sit". When you first start adding the verbal cue you must do it **AS** the dog is engaging in the behavior. This way he learns to associate the word with the action.
- Stand in front of your dog and wait for him to sit. When you see that he is about to sit, say the word "sit" as he moves into the position. Say "yes" when his butt hits the floor and give him the treat. Do this several times to make a good solid association. Once this is done you can use the word "sit" to elicit the behavior.
- When you get to this point you should put the reward on a variable schedule, which means that he doesn't get a treat for every sit. Maybe he has to do 2 sits, or 4 sits, or a sit and a down, before getting a reward. Keeping him guessing will improve his motivation to do as you ask.

DOWN

- When your dog is sitting in front of you, hold a treat to her nose and slowly lower it straight to the ground between her legs. Some dogs will fold down if you just hold your fist there; for others you may need to either pull the treat slightly out in front of the dog or push it back between her legs. Do whatever it takes to get her to lie down without pushing on her back. If she stands up, tell her to sit and try again - do not reprimand her.
- When your dog lies down, say "yes" and give her a treat.
- Some dogs will not go all the way down the first time. For these dogs - at first reward any lowering of the body towards the floor. Then require her to go lower and lower each time before you give the treat. This is called "shaping the behavior".
- Once your dog is going all the way down for the lure, follow the same procedure you used to teach sit. Fade the lure and use only your hand motion to get her to go down, then wait for her to offer the behavior, and then add the cue "down", at first **AS** she is going down, later as a cue to elicit the behavior.
- Don't forget to put the behavior on a variable schedule of reward once it is learned.

STAY

- To teach a dog to stay, ask her to sit and then say "stay" and give the hand signal of an open palm in front of her face (like you are stopping traffic). Count a few seconds and then say "yes" and give the treat.
- It's very important when teaching, "stay" that you go slowly. Add time in second increments. Start with 2 seconds, then go to 4 seconds, and then 6 seconds, etc. This is how you build a strong stay. If your dog can sit-stay for 20 seconds, do not then expect him to sit-stay for 2 minutes - you have to build up to that amount of time.
- Once your dog can sit-stay for 30 seconds without you moving at all, you can start to add distance by stepping back one step after asking for the "stay". Repeat this adding a small step back each time. Soon you will be able to be 10 steps back and your dog will stay until you return to her to give the treat.
- Use this same procedure to teach a down-stay.

COME

- Teaching a dog to come when called is very important. The fun game of "doggie in the middle" is a great way to start. Starting in the house where there are few distractions, two people should stand about 6 feet apart and take turns saying, "come", having the dog run back and forth between you. When he gets to you say "yes" and give him the treat. Slowly add distance until you are at opposite ends of the house and your dog is running back and forth to the cue "come".
- Once you have a strong recall in the house, go outside and teach your dog that "come," means the same thing in the yard. Start over, about six feet apart, because there are now a lot of distractions vying for his attention. Once he will come to you from opposite ends of the yard, move on to the park. Again, start 6 feet apart - the park has even more distractions than the yard. Be patient - this is one of the most important things you will teach your dog.
- Reinforce the recall by calling your dog to you at all different times. Reward him for coming to the word "come" with a special treat. Never ever ask your dog to come and then do something bad like cut his nails or yell at him. If you need to do these things - go get him. Coming to the word "come" should ALWAYS be positive.

Training your dog should always be a positive experience for both of you. To do this follow these few simple rules:

1. Keep training sessions short and fun. No longer than 5 minutes at a time.
2. Choose a reward that your dog finds reinforcing. Food is the best for most dogs, but some will work just as hard for toys or play (simple praise is usually not enough).
3. Reward the behaviors you like and ignore the behaviors you don't.
4. The rules of learning say: behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated, those that are not will go away.

Teaching the recall - "COME"

This is the most important behavior you will teach your dog. To start - whenever your dog is walking or running towards you - say "come" as she is on her way and then give a treat when she gets there. By doing this you are capturing the behavior you like (running to you) and teaching her what the word "come" means.

You want your dog to believe that coming to you is always a good thing to do. Recalls should ALWAYS be fun and exciting. You can call your dog and then do something fun like play a game of fetch or tug. Never call your dog to do something she might consider unpleasant. For bath time, go get her.

THE RECALL GAME ("Doggie in the middle"):

You need at least 2 people to play this game. Have the people stand about 6 feet apart at first. Each person should have treats. One person calls the dog by saying "come" in a high pitch voice. As soon as the dog gets to you, give a treat. Then the other person calls "come" - give the treat. Repeat this process over and over. If she won't come or hesitates, move towards her, show her the treat, and lure her towards you. Say "come" as she is following you back to your spot. When you get there give the treat.

Food Toss Recalls:

Toss a piece of kibble about 6 feet away, she will most likely run to it. Once she is done eating the kibble, call her back "come" and give the treat (using a special treat) when she gets to you, then toss another piece of food, etc. Repeat this so you can reinforce the recall over and over.

Restrained recalls:

If you have a helper you can practice 'restrained' recalls. One person holds the dog while the other runs away, turns, and calls excitedly. Then the holder releases the dog. This exercise builds the dog's desire to get to you. Only do this in a safe or fenced area.

Run away recalls:

Show your dog a really tasty treat. Run away from her, calling her enthusiastically as she chases you. Run about 12 feet or so, then turn and praise her excitedly as she approaches you. Give a treat when she reaches you.

Remember to call in a happy voice and give the treat when your dog comes to you. Only say your cue "come" once. If you call and call and your dog does not respond, you are teaching her to ignore you.

Work up to more distracting situations very slowly. You might start in a quiet part of the yard and do a few recalls, then move to the front sidewalk, then to the foot of the driveway, etc. Have a very high value treats for more distracting environments.

When your dog is doing well with the recalls you can add more distance (up to 20 feet). Remember to increase the distance slowly, foot by foot. Use a long line during the recall training when working outside. They come in 20, 30, & 50 foot lengths.

On some recalls ask your dog to sit when she gets to you before treat. On others, ask her to sit, take her collar, then treat. Vary these with the more exciting recalls so your dog is always surprised.

Submissive Urination

Some dogs will submissively urinate when they are approached by people. This is often seen in puppies, young females, insecure dogs, or dogs who have been repeatedly corrected. The cause of this behavior is that the urinary sphincter relaxes during stress.

If your puppy or dog urinates when you approach her try the following:

1. Keep all greetings and departures calm and brief.
2. During greetings your body posture should be non-threatening. Squat down and turn sideways.
3. Let the dog come to you instead of you approaching her.
4. Avoid prolonged eye contact when greeting (this is threatening to dog).
5. Do not pet the dog on her head or back during greeting. Pet her under her chin, behind her ears, or on her chest.
6. DO NOT PUNISH THE DOG UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE !
7. Eliminate odor where dog has urinated using an enzymatic cleaner (Anti-Icky Poo or Zero Odor).
8. Confidence Building - Use clicker training to teach the dog all the basic commands (sit, down, stay, come, watch me, etc.) and maybe even some tricks. Then have the dog perform a behavior to earn not only special treats, but also every resource that you provide to him (food, access to the outside, tossing a ball, belly rub, etc.). When dogs learn that performing a behavior earns what they need and want in this world it builds their confidence that they have control to get these things.
9. Train an alternative behavior - Training your dog to "sit" when they greet someone is very effective for this behavior because they cannot squat and pee if they are concentrating on sitting.

Separation Anxiety

Your dog is showing signs of separation anxiety. This means that he is uncomfortable being left home alone. Because dogs are social animals, it is not natural for them to be away from their social group (you) for long periods of time. However, most dogs can be left alone with no problems. Unfortunately your dog is not one of them and you will have to do some work in order to help him over his fear of being alone.

It is important for you to understand that your dog is being bad (barking, eliminating, chewing, etc.) when he is alone because he is anxious. It is not due to spite or revenge. Because of this, punishing him for chewing the couch or soiling the rug will only make him more anxious. Recognize that he can't help the things he is doing and decide that you love him enough to put the time into helping him.

The program described below will help you teach your dog to be okay when he is alone. Have patience. It often takes several months for dogs to get over separation issues.

Crate training is an option however, most dogs that are anxious when alone are more anxious in a crate. If you decide to crate train your dog make sure you put time into conditioning him to absolutely LOVE being in the crate before you leave him in there for the day.

Video taping your dog while you are gone can be very helpful so that we can determine exactly when your dog becomes anxious, how long he remains that way, and where in your home he has the most trouble. It can also help us determine where your dog is most comfortable so that we can start our counterconditioning in that area.

Dogs with separation anxiety do much better when they live in a stable environment with predictable schedules and consistent rules and communication. Try to decide as a family, what the schedule for feeding, walking, playing, etc. will be and how you will handle certain household rules such as access to furniture or certain rooms.

Techniques to calm your dog

Rewarding Relaxed Behavior and Ignoring Attention-Seeking

The first step is to make sure you reward your dog for relaxed behaviors when you are home. Do not attend to any attention-seeking behaviors such as pawing at you, whining, following you around the house, etc. Ignore those behaviors. But when you see your dog lying down relaxed, praise him for that.

Aerobic Exercise

It is critical that your dog gets plenty of aerobic exercise. Exercise not only dissipates anxiety and tension, but it releases calming neurochemicals in the brain. Remember, a walk around the block is not aerobic to a dog with his four legs. You will need to get your dog running. Either throw a ball or stick, play recall games, or food toss games but you must figure out a way to get your dog's heart pumping for at least 30 minutes each day.

Products to calm your dog

Composure Chews

Composure is a natural stress reliever containing Colostrum Calming Complex (bioactive proteins) L-theanine (amino acid) and Thiamine (Vit B1).

Composure Pro

Composure Pro contains all the ingredients in the regular Composure with an additional ingredient called L-Tryptophan. Tryptophan is the precursor of the calming brain chemical called Serotonin.

Pheromone Therapy

ADAPTIL (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) can be helpful in reducing the anxiety your dog feels when alone. The product, which is a synthetic of the pheromone that a nursing mother dog emits, comes in three forms - plug-in diffuser, spray, and collar. I recommend the collar for most situations because it is on the dog at all times. The collar lasts for about 30 days and then needs to be replaced.

Thundershirt

Thundershirt may help your dog cope with the anxiety of being alone. The idea of the wrap is to provide constant pressure on the sensory receptors, which calms the dog. It is similar to the pressure technique used on autistic children. I suggest you desensitize your dog to wearing it before leaving it on him when alone. To do this, simply put it on in the evening when he is quiet. You can also put it on when you feed him or give him treats because you want to pair the wrap with something good. If you opt to try the Thundershirt you will add it to your program below once your dog is fine with wearing it.

Calming Music

Music has been shown to calm dogs so I advise you to play either classical music (at low volume) or the CD "Through the Dog's Ears" during these matt training sessions and later during your departures.

Medication

We may need to discuss the use of medication with your veterinarian if your dog's separation anxiety is severe.

Confidence Building

Daily training sessions will help to build your dog's confidence. Have at least two five-minute training sessions every day where you work on basic commands (sit, down, come, stay) and/or tricks (spin, shake, speak, roll-over). Remember - training should ALWAYS be positive, especially with anxious dogs. Use food treats as rewards (not as bribes). Performing behaviors on cue for food treats is a great way to build self-confidence in your dog. Clicker training is a wonderful training method that helps build self-confidence because it encourages the dog to think on his own (www.clickertraining.com for more information).

Low-Key Departures and Arrivals

Usually when people have a dog with separation anxiety they often make a big deal before they leave the house "don't worry fluffy, mommy will be home soon", and a big deal when they come home. This does not help your dog with his anxiety, in fact it is feeding into it. When you do these things you are creating a huge disparity between the time you are home and the time you are away. Therefore I recommend that you do not have long good-byes or greetings. Keep them calm, controlled and short.

It is also advisable that you learn the signs of your dog's anxiety (whining, trembling, not eating, panting, pacing, ears back etc.). They usually begin before you actually leave the house. Resist reassuring him when showing these signs of anxiety or you may actually be reinforcing the behaviors.

Habituate to departure cues:

Make a list of all the things that you do when preparing to leave the house that make your dog anxious. Perform these tasks (pick up keys, purse, brief case, make your lunch, put on your coat, etc.) several times a day without leaving. Work on one thing at a time until your dog no longer reacts to it, and then move to another trigger.

Comfort Place

Your dog needs to have a place to go when you leave where he feels safe and secure. This might be his crate (although many dogs with SA can't be crated), his bed or even your bed. It doesn't matter where the comfort place is it just matters that he has one. Sometimes it helps to teach your dog that a specific bed or matt is the comfort place. If you want to do this see below insert on how to train your dog to "go to your matt".

Matt Training

If you need to establish a comfort place for your dog you can teach him to "go to your matt", lie down and be calm. To do this, follow the below instructions:

Lure your dog to his matt with a treat - reward with a treat when he steps on the matt. Do this with the food lure 2-3 times.

Then lure with your hand without the treat (use the same hand motion) and say "go to your matt" as he is moving to the matt. Repeat this a dozen times or so from all different directions around the matt.

Once you have paired the cue "go to your matt" with the action a dozen times he should know the cue. Test it by asking him to "go to your matt" and then reward when he does.

Practice this over and over from all different directions and locations. Soon you will have a dog who runs to his matt when cued.

Next: ask for a sit on the matt then reward with a treat

Next: ask for a sit-stay on the matt -increasing the duration slowly.

Next: ask for a down on the matt - reward with a treat

Next: ask for a down-stay on the matt - increasing the duration slowly.

Soon you will have a dog who runs to his matt, lies down and stays when you say "go to your matt"

Independence Training

Dogs with separation anxiety are often referred to as "velcro dogs" because they follow their owners everywhere. The first step in treating separation anxiety is to break this habit. This is hard for some people to do, but remember, you are trying to reduce the anxiety your dog feels when he is left alone and this is the first step. You can't expect your dog to be able to feel okay about being alone in the house if he can't even be alone in another room when you are home.

Start this by teaching your dog to "down" and then "down-stay" (asking him to do this on his matt is helpful). Add duration to the stay first with you standing right next to him.

Once he can stay for 30 seconds reliably, you can start to add distance - one step at a time. Work to get the other side of the room but go slowly with this training.

Behavior Modification Sessions to teach your dog to be okay when alone:

If you are using the Thundershirt and/or the Adaptil spray - you should incorporate them into the below sessions.

Turn on the calming music and ask your dog to go to his comfort place.

Introduction of the KONG

When your dog can lie quietly on her spot while you are a few feet away its time to introduce a stuffed Kong during the exercise. Fill a Kong with tasty food paste (liverwurst, cream cheese, canned pumpkin, peanut butter, etc.) and give it to her during the session. Always end the session BEFORE she is done eating the food out of the Kong. Just quietly walk to her, take the Kong, turn off the music and bring the Kong to the kitchen for storage until the next session.

You will slowly move closer and closer to the door of the room while she eats the food out of the Kong. Eventually you will move just outside of the room so that you are not technically in the room but she can still see you while she is eating the Kong. Make sure that you always come back before she is done and pick up the Kong and turn off the music. Soon you should be just out of view in the other room while she is eating the Kong. As you can see, the goal is for your dog to be able to calmly eat out of the Kong in one room while you are in another.

Repeat this exercise daily until your dog gets the game, relaxes on her place and calmly eats her Kong while you are going about your business in the house.

If at any point your dog gets up from her place to follow you out of the room, you are going too fast and/or you need better food inside the Kong.

**** DO NOT** give the Kong or play the music when you leave for work at this point. This will ruin your ability to use these things during your planned departures because it will be another cue that you are leaving.

Counterconditioning and Desensitizing to your absence

After you are able to leave the room for 15 minutes while your dog eats her Kong, you can begin leaving the house. *Leave by a different door than you usually use if possible during training and desensitization.* Get the Kong, put out the matt, turn on the music, give him the Kong and walk out. Come back inside in a few seconds (before he starts to get upset), take the Kong away, turn off the music and go about your business (don't say a word).

Establish a Safety Cue:

It is often helpful if you establish a cue that means you are only leaving for a minute. This cue can be a simple phrase like "be right back". The safety cue tells your dog that this is the practice session and you will be right back. Eventually you will be able to give your safety cue when you actually leave for the day in addition to the other strategies.

Start to stay away for longer periods of time. Leave for one minute and come back, and then two minutes, etc., then longer and longer. Use a variable schedule for how long you stay away - 1, 2, 5, 11, 7, 2, 12, 1, 14 minutes - so that he will never be able to predict when you will return.

Once you can go outside and stay there for 5-10 minutes you will have to start adding other cues, like the car. Start by simply opening and closing the car door, before you return to the house. Do this several times. Next start the car; then pull out of driveway; then go around block, etc.

Go slowly!

Do each step until you know he is not getting upset. Use a video recorder if you have one so you will be able to see his reaction. If he ever becomes upset, simply back up and stay away for a shorter time period.

When you have gotten to the point that you can be away for 30 minutes and he is no longer getting upset, you should be okay. At this point you should be able to leave him with his stuffed Kong and music on for all real absences. Don't forget to give the safety cue as you walk out.

This program has proven to work for many dogs. It is very time consuming and requires a huge commitment from you. The key is to go at your dog's pace. Do each step until he is no longer upset before moving to the next step.

IMPORTANT:

While working through this program it will help if your dog is never left alone for long periods of time. Use a doggy-day-care or a dog sitter if you can and work on the program in the evenings and on the weekends. If you are unable to do this, put your dog in a small area (different from where he is left during the exercises), away from the windows and doors, where he can do limited damage, whenever you leave for extended periods of time (8 hour work day). Leave him with your scent (a t-shirt that you slept in works great).

Resource Guarding

Resource guarding refers to a dog's propensity to covet and guard things that are considered valuable. Dogs with this propensity can exhibit aggressive behavior when someone goes near them while they are eating or when in possession of a valuable resource such as a bone, toy, stolen object, found object or any item the dog is in possession of for which he/she feels is worth guarding. Some dogs exhibit guarding behavior over resting places (their dog bed, the sofa, the owners bed, etc.) and can become aggressive when someone comes near or tries to remove them from the location.

Most of the time there is a genetic component to resource guarding. This means that dogs are born with the propensity to guard coveted items. Because of this, we can sometimes see resource guarding in very young puppies. Resource guarding can get worse due to environmental influences however. Dogs with the propensity to guard resources learn that the behavior "works" for them to keep people and other animals away. Owners often make resource guarding behavior worse by their response - typically punishment. For example, if a dog growls when a person goes near him when he has a bone and the person yells and takes the bone away anyway - the dog learns that growling doesn't work to retain the bone so the next time he has one he may escalate to snapping or biting if someone tries to take it. Physical punishment is never advisable with a resource-guarding dog as this response often makes the behavior worse.

The degree to which behavior modification will improve the response of a resource guarding dog depends on many factors: how strong the response is; how long-standing the behavior is; how generalized the behavior is (does the dog guard one thing or many); and how severe the aggressive response is (does the dog growl or does the dog bite). Obviously, dogs that have been exhibiting the behavior for a long time, who will guard many different items, and whose response involves severe aggression like biting, will be very difficult to modify. In these severe cases, management is very important (feeding in a room behind a closed door or in a crate, not giving the dog valuable resources such as bones, etc.). It is never advisable to have a resource-guarding dog in a home with young children.

Behavior modification is used to teach a resource guarding dog to give up items upon request and to accept people near their food bowl and possessions, but the tendency to guard may stay with the dog for life. Even a dog that has gone through a behavior modification program might guard something in the future because dogs do not generalize their learning well. This means that if the dog gets ahold of something precious like a meat wrapper from the trash or a chicken bone on a walk, he may revert back to his aggressive guarding behavior if someone tries to get the item away from him regardless of any previous behavior modification. It is also the case that behavior modification may not generalize to people outside of the individuals who work on the program or in locations other than the place the behavior modification is practiced. So even after working through a behavior modification program owners must **ALWAYS** supervise a resource guarding dog around visitors (especially children) and when in unfamiliar places.

The program to deal with a resource guarder involves training and the behavior modification techniques called systematic desensitization and counterconditioning. We want the dog to be under good verbal control and have a good history of responding positively to commands. We want the dog to learn that NOT guarding is more reinforcing than guarding. This program may take a long time and will require you to practice often.

Food Bowl Guarding - the goal is to teach your dog that food and humans go together.

Repeat each of the following steps until the dog is comfortable before you move to the next step (but do each step at least for a couple of days even if there is no issues). If, at a given step, the dog demonstrates any guarding (including growling, stiffness, freezing up), back off to an easier exercise and proceed more gradually to the problem exercise.

1. Hand feed your dog his entire meal for two weeks (handfuls, not individual pieces). Ask him to sit, lie down, watch me or any other behavior he knows and then offer the handful of food. This step teaches the dog that his food comes from YOU and that YOU control the resource. Use your clicker to mark the correct response before you hand him the food.
2. Feed in installments - Hold the dog's empty bowl, keeping one hand on it while you feed in handful installments by reaching to get the food out of another bowl on the table or counter with the other hand. Ask him to sit and wait for him to look at you - CLICK and give him a handful of food.
3. Put the empty bowl down on the floor next to you and then one handful at a time feed him his meal. Ask him to sit and wait for him to look at you before you CLICK and give the handful of food.
4. Put down an empty bowl and walk away. Then walk back to the empty bowl and dog, ask him to sit, pick up the bowl, put a handful of food in it, put it back down and retreat. Repeat until the whole meal has been fed.
5. Hold the full bowl, ask him to sit - CLICK and then offer the bowl (you are still holding it). Talk to him while he eats, and occasionally add a tasty treat to bowl with other hand.
6. Ask him to sit - CLICK and then give him his bowl of food on the floor. Reach for a special treat and drop it into his dish while he is eating. Repeat 2-3 times during the meal.
7. Work on approaching the dog while he is eating. Start by stopping far enough away that you do not trigger any response - CLICK and then toss a piece of chicken or other special treat at the dish, retreat and repeat, gradually closing the distance between yourself and the bowl before you CLICK and toss the treat (over the course of many sessions). This teaches the dog to anticipate something wonderful when he sees you coming towards his dish.
8. Start at #1 with another person (each person in the house should work on these exercises).

It is important that your children learn to respect the dog while he is eating or has a chewy. Older children should not do these exercises until all of the adults in the house have worked through to step 9. When you start to have the children work this program, you **MUST** supervise each step. Tether the dog while he eats using his leash so that he cannot lunge at, chase, or bite your child. Keep your children safe at all times, do not let them near the dog when he is eating while you work through the program. Small children should not participate - simply keep them away from the dog while eating.

Possession Guarding

Some dogs guard very specific items (bones, toys, tissues, etc.) while others guard items they have stolen (which can be anything). The more generalized the behavior, the harder it will be to modify. Practice these exercises every day.

Systematic Desensitization and Counterconditioning - changing the way your dog FEELS.

You need to teach your resource-guarding dog that your approach while he has an item is a good thing. To work on this, give your dog an item (bone, toy, etc) and let him settle in with it (tether him if you feel you need to be safe). Then approach to a distance that does NOT trigger the aggression and CLICK and toss a special treat if you see no aggression. Repeat this at this distance until you see your dog anticipate the treat when you come towards him. Then move a bit closer and repeat the exercises. Do this until you can walk right up to him CLICK and hand him a treat. **GO SLOWLY!**

Training - Drop It and Leave It

To teach your dog to accept giving up anything he has in his possession, you will have to teach him to "drop it" and "leave it". Practice first with boring objects and later with the objects that your dog guards. Do these exercises every day with as many objects as you can. We want the dog to realize that when he hears "drop it" or "leave it" he will be rewarded for complying no matter what he has in his mouth.

- Drop it: Use the "drop it" command to teach your dog to give up things that she has in her mouth. When she has an item approach her with a high value treat, show it to her, and when she spits out the item to get the treat say "drop it" in a cheerful voice and click and treat. Then pick up the item she dropped and give it back to her. Repeat this several times in a row and then leave her with the original item. This way she learns that dropping an item is rewarding and she will often get the item back in the end. Once you have associated the words "drop it" with the behavior of spitting something out of her mouth, you can start to use it as a command for the behavior.
- Leave it: Use the "leave it" command when you want your dog to move away from something. To train the command - have a helper tempt your dog with a low value item (dry food, boring toy) - when she shows interest in the item move towards her, put a yummy treat right to her nose and lure her away, cheerfully telling her to "leave it" as she is moving towards you. Click and treat when you have moved her several feet away. Do this several times so that you associate the command "leave it" with the act of moving away from something. Once you think she has the association, you can start using "leave it" as the command. When she is interested in something, say "leave it" without showing her the treat. If she has learned that those words mean move away from one thing and get something better - she will do it. The next step will be to increase the value of the items she must move away from.

Set up practice sessions so the dog learns what is expected of him. **Any object that your dog currently guards should be forbidden until you have worked your way up to them in the practice sessions.**

Trade Game

Before you have the "drop it" command reliable - if your dog gets a hold of something that he is not supposed to have or something you know he will guard - either ignore him (if not valuable to you or dangerous to the dog) or play the trade game. Get a handful of VERY tasty treats (chicken, cheese, etc) and toss them on the floor several feet away from the dog. Once he runs to get the pile of treats on the floor - pick up the item. The key is to get the item without eliciting aggression. You may have to keep tossing treats farther away from the item before it is safe for you to pick it up.

Location guarding

The classic location guarder is a dog who gets on the sofa or bed and becomes aggressive when you tell him to get off or ask him to move over. These dogs should not be allowed on the furniture unless you are working on the behavior modification below!

Teaching the "off" command

First, ask the dog to get on the sofa by patting the cushion encouraging him to jump up. When he does, praise him (no treat). Now lure him off of the sofa with a tasty treat. When he moves off, say "off" and then give him the treat (click & treat if using a marker signal). You will be pairing the word "off" with the action of getting off the furniture until he learns what the word means (this usually takes a couple dozen trials). Repeat this process a few times in a row. You will soon be able to use the cue "off" to prompt the behavior. Say "off" when he is on the furniture and reward him for getting down. **Do not use the word "down" for this training because this command means lie down to most dogs. Do not confuse him.**

If you have to show him the food treat to get him off the sofa the first few times that's fine but fade that out as soon as possible. We don't want him to require seeing the treat to move, we want him to move off because you ask him to.

Set up as many sessions as you can fit into the day so he learns this well. You may want to ask him to jump up and tell him to lie down before you ask him to get off, to better simulate the eventual real-life scenario.

After you have done many set-up sessions you can start using the "off" command in real life situations, when he is already on the couch. It's important to vary the treat. Taking the dog for a walk after asking him to "off" is very effective. Wait until the dog is comfortably lying on the couch. Say "off" and if he complies, then say "want to go for a walk?". **DO NOT** use the "want to go for a walk" as a way to get him off the couch. The walk is the reward for his compliance not a bribe to get to do the behavior.

Do these exercises over and over. Have everyone in the family practice. Your dog should get "off" whenever **ANYONE** asks.

Remember: If your dog aggressively guards furniture he should **NOT** be allowed on the furniture unless you are working on the behavior modification. A bed guarding dog who sneaks up on the bed in the night while you sleep should sleep in a crate or be tethered.

Counterconditioning

In addition to working on teaching your dog the "off" command you can start working on counterconditioning his feelings about you approaching, sitting next to or moving him when he is on the couch or bed.

1. When you see your dog on the furniture - walk up to him, staying a few feet away and CLICK if he doesn't aggress and toss the treat.
2. Repeat this over and over - moving closer each time (we want your dog to start anticipating a treat when he sees you coming)
3. Once you can walk right up to your dog, CLICK and hand him a treat - sit down next to him and feed him a few treats.
4. Eventually (when he is comfortable with you being next to him) touch him slightly and CLICK if he doesn't show aggression and give him a treat.
5. Repeat step 4 adding some petting.
6. When you can pet him and not elicit any aggression, nudge him a little and CLICK and treat for no aggression .
7. Repeat step 6 nudging a little harder each time.

Putting everything together:

You should now be able to either ask your dog to get "off" the furniture, or sit down next to him and push him over if you need more room, without eliciting aggression. If at any time your dog reverts back to his aggressive ways, go back and repeat the behavior modification. Surprising him with a treat every once in a while for not exhibiting aggression will help him remember the game.

***Response to aggression:**

Until your dog is reliable with these exercises he should be wearing a house line at all times. If you ask for an "off" and your dog becomes aggressive - say "too bad", pick up the end of the house line and pull him off the furniture (not in a rough harsh way) and tether him to something. He should then be banished from the furniture for a while.

Owner Guarding

Dogs often show what we would call "protective" behavior or "jealously" when they are with us. This behavior, which may become aggressive at times, is often directed towards other beings (humans or other animals) that get too close to you. This can be a form of resource guarding also because you, their wonderful human, are a very valuable resource.

Your response to this behavior is very important. If you sooth your dog by saying things like "It's okay Sugar - she's a nice lady" then you may be inadvertently reinforcing the behavior. Your dog thinks you like when she acts like that. Conversely, if you yell at or physically punish her for acting aggressively when someone comes close you are helping to form an even more negative association - 'I hate kids - and now I hate them even more because when they are around I get in trouble'.

The proper response to owner guarding behavior is for you, the object of the guarding, to get up and leave the room as a consequence of the aggressive behavior. Because dogs learn through the consequence of their behaviors (if the behavior is rewarded it will continue - if it is ignored it will go away) this is the most effective response. What you are doing is saying to the dog - when you become aggressive to someone in my presence I will leave (this is obviously not what the dog wants to happen).

If your dog is exhibiting aggression in these situations you should tether him/her during times when you expect people to come close. Put her leash on and hook the handle end onto something like a chair leg. This way when you get up and leave the room, she cannot follow you or go after the other person. Repeat this over and over until your dog realizes that it is her own aggressive behavior that is causing you to leave.

In addition to this response you also want to reward your dog for not acting aggressively when someone comes close. Have treats ready and when he acts appropriately - CLICK and give the treat. Eventually you can start having the approaching person toss the treats as they approach. By doing this, you will be slowly counterconditioning your dog to not only act differently when people approach, but also to feel differently. Now people or other dogs coming close predict good things and your dog will be happy about it.

****IMPORTANT NOTES:**

Try desperately to not trigger the resource guarding aggressive behavior. Every time your dog triggers to aggression the behavior gets stronger.

DO NOT punish the growl. The growl is communication ("STAY AWAY") and if you punish it your dog may simply increase his aggressive response to lunging, nipping or biting.

If your possessive aggressive dog won't drop it, leave it or play trade when he has an item - LEAVE HIM ALONE unless the item is dangerous to him or valuable to you.

Reading your dog's body language so you know how he/she is feeling

Dogs use their bodies to speak to each other and to us. It's important that you pay attention to your dog's body postures and signaling in order to be able to know how he/she is feeling at any given moment. Below are some things to look for that will help you speak 'dog'.

If your dog is feeling happy you might see the following body postures or signals:

- Low (below the horizon of the back) wagging tail
- Happy face - open loose mouth, no tension around eyes
- Wiggly body (loose muscles)
- Jumping up and down in place

If your dog is feeling playful you might see the following body postures or signals:

- Bouncy movements
- Play bow (butt end up, front end down)
- Low (below the horizon of the back), usually fast wagging tail

If your dog is feeling stressed or anxious about something you might see the following body postures or signals:

- Tongue flicking
- Lip licking
- Yawning
- Blinking
- Panting
- Drooling
- Avoiding eye contact (head turned to side)
- Sweaty paw prints
- One front leg held up (may switch between them)

If your dog is feeling afraid you might see the following body postures or signals:

- Lowered body
- Ears back
- Tail tucked
- Whale eye (exposing the whites of their eyes)
- Trembling

When you see your dog exhibiting signs of stress, anxiety, or fear remove him/her from the situation. Do not yell at your anxious or fearful dog - this will only make him/her more anxious or fearful.

If its an environmental stressor upsetting your dog, like a thunderstorm or the sound of a chainsaw next door - comfort your dog or try to get him/her into a more positive emotional state by bringing out the toys or the yummy treats.

If the stressor is another dog - move your dog away and let him/her feel safer while looking at the dog at a distance.

If the stressor is person - ask the person to stop approaching your dog and to turn side-ways so that he/she is less threatening. You can have the person toss some yummy treats to your dog if you/they have any.

It's always important to pay attention to your dog so that you know how he/she is feeling in every situation.

Important New Puppy Recommendations

Socialization

Socializing a new puppy is the most important thing you can do to create a wonderful dog. Many behavior problems in older dogs stem from the simple fact that the dog was not socialized as a puppy. It's easy, it's fun, and it's important!

Dogs have a natural period between 3-12 weeks of age when they are open to learning about their environment. This is an adaptive process that allows puppies to habituate to all the things they will normally encounter in their world. After this period is over they will often avoid novel things. Using their natural flight or fight response, they will try to increase the distance between themselves and anything they were not socialized to.

It is extremely important to introduce the puppy to as many different things (people, animals, sights, sounds, textures, etc) as possible during this socialization period. Because dogs do not generalize well, you should socialize your pup to as many things as possible.

People: women, men, teenagers, children, toddlers, babies, all races, peculiar gaits, handicapped, uniforms, bearded men, people with hats, people acting weird.

All the experiences with these people should be positive, using play or treats. A good suggestion is to have a "stranger goodie bag" that you carry. Every time you meet someone new, ask that person to give your puppy a treat.

The puppy should also be exposed to being petted and handled by as many different people as possible.

Situations: crowds, kids on bikes, traffic, car rides, soccer games, different sounds, floor textures, etc. Again, make positive associations with all of these situations using food treats or play.

Other animals: especially other dogs, but also cats, squirrels, livestock, etc.

Exposing puppies to tons of different people, situations, and things in their environment will enable them to cope better with new experiences later in life.

Puppy classes are very helpful for socialization, but it's not enough to just go to class once a week for 5 weeks, you need to do more. An active approach of exposing the puppy to tons of things and making a positive association with them will reduce the risk of fearfulness and aggression in adulthood.

Play with other dogs

It is important to allow puppies to play with other puppies and non-aggressive adult dogs. This is the only way they learn proper canine social skills. Dogs that do not learn "dog language" are tense and antisocial and cannot read other dogs well. They are consequently, at higher risk for dog-dog aggression or fearful reactions to other dogs.

Bite Inhibition

It is normal for puppies to mouth you. They do it because they are teething and because they are exploring their world. But puppies are genetically programmed to learn that it is not okay. Mother nature set dogs up with a system to learn "bite inhibition" by giving puppies needle sharp teeth that hurt even with a small amount of pressure. Mom is the first to start teaching the puppy bite inhibition when she corrects her pups for biting her too hard. A mother's correction is timed perfectly, just the right amount of correction to make her point, and over very quickly. Littermates are next in line to continue the lesson of bite inhibition. During play, if one pup bites another too hard, the one who was bitten will scream and stop playing. So the biting puppy learns that all the fun stops if they bite too hard. With all of this great canine feedback, puppies start to learn bite inhibition. The problem is that we take them away from their mom and litter before they are done learning this important skill. So it is up to us to continue the lessons.

When your puppy puts his mouth on you, scream "OUCH" in a high pitched tone as though it hurt way more than it did and give him the cold shoulder for a few seconds. This is simulating the feedback the puppy would get from his littermates - "When you bite too hard, I scream, and stop playing". After a few seconds start playing again but try to direct your puppy's biting onto a toy instead of your hand. Repeat this procedure over and over until you notice he is biting less often. You will be teaching your puppy mouth self-control - or bite inhibition. After a few weeks of this your puppy should stop biting. At that point, if he does bite - he should hear the "ouch" and then be put in a time out. A time out is 30 seconds in social isolation (either put him in a bathroom or tether him to a doorknob and walk away). After 30 seconds are up, if he is quiet, let him out of the bathroom or un-tether him from the doorknob and continue your interactions with him. This should happen every time he bites so that there is a consequence for the inappropriate behavior. Consistency is key!

Alone time

Dogs are social animals and genetically are not very well prepared to be alone. It is therefore very important to get your puppy used to being alone. Leave him alone for brief periods of time,

over and over. Put him in his crate and leave the room, at first for a short amount of time, and then for longer and longer periods. Give him a chew toy to focus on while he is alone. When you leave do not say "goodbye" or anything else to the puppy - just leave. When you come back, do not say "hello", just come back in the room. If the puppy starts to cry or bark when you leave the room - DO NOT go back in. This will reinforce that behavior and he learns that crying brings you back. Wait for a lull in the crying or barking and then go back.

Physical handling

It is important to handle your puppy as much as possible. The puppy should be handled everyday, preferably by many people. They should stroke the entire body, look inside the ears and mouth, pick up the feet, etc.

In addition to normal handling it is essential to prepare the puppy to be handled in ways that they might find frightening or painful. Most people (and all children) act inappropriately around dogs because they do not understand the things that upset them. The most common bite provokers include some variation on a behavior that humans consider friendly - approach and reaching toward the dog or hugging the dog. Owners need to take the time to teach the puppy that human proximity and actions are not threats. Gently and gradually accustom the puppy to accept inappropriate human actions. If done properly, the puppy will quickly come to enjoy these exercises and look forward to being suddenly grabbed, restrained, and stared at.

Proximity - have many people approach the puppy and hand him a food treat.

Staring - start by holding a food treat by your eye and when the puppy looks up, give the treat. Slowly increase the time he must look into your eyes before he gets the treat. Then have visitors and strangers do the exercise.

Reaching down - repeatedly offer a food treat with one hand and slowly reach down with the other. After a few trials, make contact, first one scratch behind the ear, then two, then several, before each treat.

Grabbing - As the above exercise proceeds, gradually increase the speed with which you reach for him. Similarly, increase the vigor of the petting, patting, and scratching with each trial. The aim is for the puppy to associate a rapidly approaching hand with profuse praise and wonderful treats.

Hugging - Many children will go up to a strange dog and give it a hug. This is often considered unwanted restraint to the dog so we must teach puppies that being hugged is not a threat. Hug the puppy and then give a treat. Do it many times before letting a child do it.

Feeding time

Some dogs aggressively guard their food, a behavior that is unacceptable and dangerous in the human household. You must teach your puppy that humans and food go together. Hang around with him when he is eating. Sit on the floor next to him and pet him and put your hands in his bowl. Hand feed him part of his meal so that he makes an association between your hand and receiving food, not having it taken away. Occasionally take the bowl away while he is eating and add a special treat. Walk up to the puppy while he is eating and drop in a special treat. Walk by the puppy while he is eating and "accidentally" bump into him. This work is very important to teach your puppy that he doesn't have to guard his food.

Other items

Dogs often guard other things like toys, bones, or tissues. The puppy must be taught that you can take anything away from him. To teach this, give your puppy a toy but hold onto the other end. Show him a treat and when he lets go of the item say "drop it" and give him the treat. Then let the puppy take possession of the item and do the same thing. Offer the treat, when he drops the item to get the treat, say "drop it" and give him the treat. Then pick the item up and give it back to him. By giving the toy back you let him know that it's not a bad thing to let go of his toy, he gets a treat and then gets the toy back. Repeat this exercise several times in a row with that item. Eventually you will be able to use the "drop it" as a command for the puppy to release the item. At this point you can start to fade out the treats and replace them with verbal praise. Repeat this over and over with as many items as you can.

Training

This is the best time to start training a puppy. Puppies learn so quickly. Using positive reinforcement, start teaching him to sit, down, and come. It is untrue that puppies can't learn these things until they are 6 months old.

Punishment

NEVER physically punish your puppy. The only thing this teaches the puppy is to be afraid of you. In addition, you should NEVER even verbally punish the puppy unless you catch him in the act of doing the inappropriate behavior. Unless punishment comes at the time of the behavior or within a half of a second, the dog has no idea why he is being yelled at.

The key to a good dog is to praise the good things and ignore the bad. Don't let it be that the only time he gets your attention is when he does something bad. Teach your puppy what you want through positive reinforcement. Doing this will create a great dog and a wonderful bond.

Congratulations and good luck with your new puppy! If you have any questions concerning his behavior or training, don't hesitate to call us.

Puppy Nipping

It is normal for puppies to mouth you. They do it because they are teething and because they are exploring their world. But puppies are genetically programmed to learn that it is not okay. Mother nature set dogs up with a system to learn "bite inhibition" by giving puppies needle sharp teeth that hurt even with a small amount of pressure. Mom is the first to start teaching the puppy bite inhibition when she corrects her pups for biting her too hard. A mother's correction is timed perfectly, just the right amount of correction to make her point, and over very quickly. Littermates are next in line to continue the lesson of bite inhibition. During play, if one pup bites another too hard, the one who was bitten will scream and stop playing. So the biting puppy learns that all the fun stops if they bite too hard. With all of this great canine feedback, puppies start to learn bite inhibition. The problem is that we take them away from their mom and litter before they are done learning this important skill. So it is up to us to continue the lessons.

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Dragging leash (house line)

If your puppy is the type that either comes right back at you after you yell "ouch" or gets even more feisty - have him drag a light weight leash at all times (when you are home) and if he bites - say "OUCH - TIME OUT" and pick up the end of the leash and tether him to something like a table leg or door knob. Leave him tethered for about 30 seconds (or until he is quiet) and then untether him. Repeat this every time he bites.

Tethered play sessions

Another helpful procedure for mouthy puppies, especially if there are young children in the house, is to tether the puppy while you or the kids are interacting with him. As soon as he mouths you - scream "ouch" in a high pitched way and walk away from him. Stay away for 30 seconds (or until he quiets down if he throws a fit) and resume play with him using a toy.

Pulling

Does your dog practically pull your arm off when you take him for a walk? Has it become so unpleasant that you no longer want to walk him? Well, you're not alone. Many dogs that have never been taught to walk on a loose leash pull their owners down the street. This is because dogs have what we call "opposition reflex", which means they pull against pressure. When a dog feels pressure on the front of his throat from his collar, he actually pulls against it. This is why choke collars only make the problem worse. The tighter the collar gets, the more he will pull - it's a vicious cycle. In addition, choke chain collars and prong or pinch collars are painful and can actually damage your dog's trachea. There is no need to hurt your dog because he is doing what comes naturally.

The best method to teach your dog to stop pulling is to "become a tree" when he pulls. Start walking, and whenever the leash becomes tight, you simply stop, plant yourself like a tree, and don't say a word. Your dog will eventually look back at you as if to say, "hey, why aren't we moving?". When he does this he will most likely move slightly toward you, loosening the leash. When there is slack in the leash, start walking again. He will eventually learn that when he feels tension on the leash, he doesn't go anywhere, but when the leash is slack he is allowed to walk.

In addition to stopping when your dog pulls on the leash, you need to reward him when he DOESN'T pull. This is a perfect place to use your clicker. When he is walking with a slack leash - randomly "click" the clicker - marking the loose leash walking. When he hears the click he will most likely come back to you for the reward. Between these two things - stopping when he pulls and only moving forward again when he slackens the leash and then rewarding the loose leash with a click and treat your dog will learn how to walk properly.

Some dogs need a little extra help learning not to pull on the leash. Perhaps he is particularly strong or he has spent years pulling so it has become a bad habit. For these dogs, a head halter can help. There are several different kinds of canine head halters (Gentle Leader, Halti, Snoot Loop, Comfort Trainer) and they work on the same basic principle - if you control the head of an animal, you control the entire body. The canine head halters were designed after the horse halters - sort of like power steering for the animal. When a dog is wearing a head halter he is discouraged from pulling because as he does, his head is brought around towards you, making it difficult for him to pull you down the street. Head halters usually require some desensitization to help your dog get used to the feel of something on his face. This process usually involves a few days of putting it on and off several times - increasing the amount of time it stays on each time. To help the process along, offering extra special treats every time its put on will help.

Another wonderful tool to help the pulling dog are the front-clasping body harnesses (the Easy Walker and the Sensible or Sensation Harnesses). These harnesses are designed so that the leash comes out from the chest instead of the back. So when the dog pulls forward - his entire front half moves around to the side, making it difficult to continue any forward movement.

Preventing Separation Anxiety in Dogs

Congratulations on adopting your new dog. As you know, dogs are social animals and some have a hard time being alone. Dogs who are anxious when alone can sometimes bark all day, chew things, or eliminate in the house despite being housetrained. The following suggestions can help prevent separation anxiety or improve mild cases of the disorder.

1. Aerobic exercise before you leave your dog home alone is a great idea. Exercise allows the dog to get rid of excess energy and the endorphin release they get when exercising helps them to stay calm afterwards. Take your dog for a brisk walk, jog or toss the ball in the yard for at least 15-20 minutes before you head out. As they say - a tired dog is a good dog.
2. Keep your departures and your arrivals very low key. If you make a big deal right before you leave and right when you come home you put a huge disparity between when you are home and when you are not.
3. When you leave your dog alone, make sure to leave the radio on for some company. A station that plays soft soothing music is best but a news stations works well for company too. Try to avoid leaving the TV on because the flickering lights can over-stimulate the dog.
4. It's also helpful to leave your dog with a special treat whenever you leave to pair something good with your departure. I suggest leaving a Kong or hollow marrowbone stuffed with some kind of food paste (peanut butter, liverwurst, wet dog food, etc.) that will keep him busy for a while after you leave. You should also hide some treats around the house for your dog to search for in your absence.

These practices can help relieve any anxiety your dog has about being left alone. If your dog is experiencing the more severe symptoms of separation anxiety you will need to work through a more detailed and thorough program to address it. Your dog may also benefit from anti-anxiety medication from your vet if the anxiety is severe.

Jumping Up

Dogs naturally greet people by jumping up on them but this is an unacceptable, and often times, dangerous behavior. You must teach your dog to sit whenever he greets you or other people. One thing to remember is that jumping up persists because the dog is usually reinforced for doing it. When you give your dog any kind of attention for jumping on you, even negative attention (yelling at him, pushing him off, or even kneeling him in the chest) the behavior will continue. So the best way to stop a dog from jumping up is to remove the reinforcement - your attention.

Jumping on you

Any time your dog jumps on you - turn and walk away without saying a word. If you are sitting, simply stand up, shrugging him off in the process, and walk away. Your dog will learn that jumping on you chases you away regardless of the situation.

Jumping up on people entering the house

When you enter the house and your dog jumps up on you, turn right around and go back outside. Wait a moment and then re-enter. If the dog jumps up again, leave again. Repeat this process until the dog chooses another strategy, like sitting, when you enter. The dog will learn that when he jumps up on you as you enter, you leave, but if he sits you give him the attention he wants (and a yummy food treat). Repeat the exercise often until your dog learns to sit every time you enter the house. Practice at each door. Have every member of the family and then some visiting friends practice as well. We want the dog to learn that he must sit to greet all people entering the house.

Jumping up on approaching people

One person should have the dog on lead while another approaches. If the dog starts to jump up on the approaching person, he/she should turn around and walk away. Repeat this over and over until the dog remains standing or sits, at which time the approaching person will praise the dog and give him a treat. Repeat this with as many different people approaching as you can, so that the dog learns that he must sit to greet all people.

If you are using a marker signal like a clicker - CLICK when the dog chooses the correct behavior (not jumping) as you enter the house or approach the dog.

Leash management

If you do not want to ask the approaching person to walk away when your dog jumps up you need to manage her so that she can't do it. The most effective way to do this is to step on her leash right before they approach. Find the place on the leash where if you step on it your dog can still sit comfortably but will be prevented from jumping up. Then mark that spot with a piece of tape or sharpie marker. When someone is approaching simply step on the mark. This will help your dog learn not to jump.

This technique can also be used when visitors enter your home.

Impulse Control Exercise for Jumping

Ask the dog to sit. When he is sitting in front of you hold a small treat about a foot over his head. Entice him to jump up for it by wiggling it around.

If he jumps up to get the food - use a 'no rewards mark' ("et et" or "oops") and pull the treat away.

If he holds the sit - click and give the treat.

Increase the amount of time he must sit patiently before you click and deliver the treat.

Owner Guarding - "Jealous" Behavior

Dogs often show what we would label "jealously" when they are with us. This behavior, which may become aggressive at times, is often directed towards other beings (humans or other animals) that get too close to you. They simply do not want to share your attention. There are other reasons why dogs show this behavior however and you must try to identify the underlying motivation if you are to handle it properly. The other reasons include "protective" behavior (a form of resource guarding) or fear. Dogs who are fearful garner some "bravery" when they are with you and can become more assertive about chasing off the scary person or dog. If you think your dog is just showing good ole fashion "jealousy" then follow the instructions below. If there is another motivation it should be handled differently.

Your response to jealous behavior is very important. If you sooth your dog by saying things like "It's okay Sugar - she's a nice lady" then you may be inadvertently reinforcing the behavior. Your dog thinks you like when she acts like that. Conversely, if you yell at or physically punish her for acting aggressively when a person or another dog comes close you are helping to form an even more negative association - 'I hate when that dog comes close - and now I hate him even more because when he comes close I get in trouble'.

The proper response to jealous behavior is for you, the object of the jealousy, to get up and leave the room as a consequence of the behavior. Because dogs learn through the consequence of their behaviors (if the behavior is rewarded it will continue - if it is ignored it will go away) this is the most effective response. What you are doing is saying to the dog - when you become jealous and act out aggressively to someone in my presence I will leave (this is obviously not what the dog wants to happen). Simply say "too bad" and get up and leave the room.

If your dog is exhibiting aggression in these situations you should tether him/her during times when you expect people or other dogs to come close. Put his/her leash on and hook the handle end onto something like a chair leg. This way when you get up and leave the room, he/she cannot follow you or go after the other person or dog. Repeat this over and over until your dog realizes that it is his/her own aggressive behavior that is causing you to leave.

In addition to this response you also want to reward your dog for not acting aggressively when a person or dog comes close. Have treats ready and when he/she acts appropriately - say "good dog" (or click) and give the treat. By doing this, you will be slowly counterconditioning your dog to not only act differently when people or dogs approach, but also to feel differently. Now people or other dogs coming close predict good things and your dog will be happy about it.

Introducing a New Dog To Children

1. The child should be standing still or sitting when the dog is first introduced.
2. With dog on leash, let the dog approach the child instead of the child approaching the dog.
3. Have the child toss small treats on the ground as the dog approaches.
4. Tell the child to not look directly into the dog's eyes or reach toward, lean over or hug the dog.
5. When the dog looks comfortable picking up the treats from the ground at the child's feet, have the child hold her hand at her side with a treat in her fist. She should not move her hand toward the dog.
6. When the dog sniffs her hand, she can slowly open her fist and allow the dog to take the treat from her open palm. Repeat this over and over.
7. When the dog is comfortable taking the treat from the child, she can gently scratch him under the chin as he does so (never reach over his head).
8. The child can then ask the dog to "sit" for a treat reward.
9. Gradually introduce more interaction (petting and stroking) if dog is doing well.
10. If the dog is fearful, DO NOT tighten up on the leash or require him to sit-stay. This may increase his fear because he cannot back away. Do not force scary interactions with the child/children on the dog.
11. If the dog is not fearful but is boisterous and jumping up instead, require him to sit for a treat. You can also step on the leash to prevent jumping up.
12. NEVER leave the dog and child unsupervised!
13. DO NOT use physical punishment - this will only pair the child with a negative event.
14. Teach your child appropriate behavior around dogs.

Introducing a New Dog to a Resident Dog

1. Introduce the dogs in a neutral location (at the shelter, at a park, etc). If you have more than one resident dog, introduce them one at a time.
2. Take the dogs for a side-by-side walk first. Starting with them 10 feet apart or so and let them get closer slowly during your walk.
3. When the dogs greet and sniff each other, talk to them in a happy friendly tone of voice.
4. Introduce the dogs only for brief amounts of time, but do it repeatedly.
5. Try to keep the leashes loose at all times. A tight leash transmits your anxiety about the situation to the dogs and increases their tension.
6. Watch for any body postures that tell you that the dogs are getting tense (raised hackles, baring teeth, growls, stiff-legged gait, prolonged stare). If you see these behaviors, interrupt them by calling the dogs away from each other and have them do something else like sit.
7. Next move the dogs to your yard for a while and then finally into the house. Keep the dogs on leashes at first when inside the house until you know that your resident dog will be okay with this new housemate inside his/her home.
8. Until the dogs are comfortable with each other do not let them together in a small space like a car or hallway.
9. Until the dogs are comfortable with each other do not leave them alone unsupervised.
10. Whenever the dogs are together, speak in a happy encouraging voice. If they are behaving well together, give treats so they associate good things with each other's presence.
11. Go slowly, if they don't do well at first, separate them except during managed interactions. Make sure all interactions are positive using happy voice and treats.
12. DO NOT USE PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT if fighting breaks out. Try a loud noise like a whistle, an air horn or a squirt of water to interrupt the interaction. Then call the dogs to you and have them sit.

Introducing a New Dog to a Resident Cat

When you bring your new dog home do not let him have full access to the house. Confine him to one or two rooms using baby gates. Let your cat investigate this newcomer at her own pace. She will most likely sneak a peak and then run off. Eventually she may become brave enough to go up to the baby gate for a closer look; when she does, praise her and give her a treat for her daringness. Keep the dog confined until the cat is comfortably moving about the house and approaching the baby gate to investigate.

Next you will set up some controlled meetings. Put the dog on lead and walk him into the room where the cat is, or sit in a room with the dog on leash and entice the cat to come into the room with a dish of tuna fish. Do not allow the dog to act inappropriately toward the cat (barking, lunging). A mild correction ("no") and a request to "sit" should suffice. If the correction is too severe the dog will associate getting into trouble with the cat. Reward calm behavior from the dog using praise and food treats. The whole point of these sessions is for the dog to learn not to chase the cat and the cat to learn that she is safe around the dog.

If the dog continues to bark and/or lunge at the cat you may need to purchase a headhalter (gentle leader or Halti). A headhalter allows you to control the dog's movements and stop any barking at the cat. If you decide to use a headhalter, you will need to desensitize your dog to wear it first by putting it on several times a day - giving treats when it's on. To use the headhalter during introductions - gently pull the leash towards you if the dog lunges at the cat, which stops the lunge. If the dog barks at the cat, gently put UP on the leash to tighten the nose loop of the headhalter to close his mouth and stop the barking. If done correctly this does not cause any harm to your dog - just gentle pressure to let the dog know that he/she is being inappropriate.

Expect a certain amount of hissing, swatting, and growling from your cat. Do not punish her for this or she will associate the dog with the punishment. Be patient, let her get used to the idea of this big goofy dog sharing her home.

Repeat these controlled meetings until both animals remain calm and relaxed with each other. Don't let the dog have free run of the house unless you are present until you are sure they are fine together. This could take weeks to months. Don't expect too much too soon.

Housetraining

The key to housetraining your puppy is to prevent accidents inside and to reward successful elimination outside. Crate training is a wonderful aid to housetraining because dogs will typically not soil their sleeping area. To properly crate train your puppy, refer to the crate training write-up.

When housetraining a puppy it is important that you take her outside at the times she is most likely to eliminate. These times include:

1. first thing in the morning
2. after each meal
3. after play time
4. when coming out of her crate
5. once an hour when you are home

Go out with your puppy each time so that you can provide feedback when she eliminates.

Choose an area outside where you will take the puppy each time. Pace back and forth for a maximum of 5 minutes. Do not interact with the puppy. If she eliminates, provide huge praise and a food treat when she finishes. Then, if you have time, have a play session or go for a walk. If she doesn't eliminate, go back into the house and either put her in her crate or supervise her by keeping her leash on. Try again in 15 minutes. When she finally eliminates, pour on the praise and goodies. Only when you know she is "empty", can you allow her more freedom when you go back inside the house (but you must ALWAYS supervise).

When inside the house your puppy should be supervised at all times. Learn the signals that indicate she needs to eliminate (circling, restlessness, sniffing). Whenever you see these behaviors, say "want to go out" and take her outside.

If you catch your puppy starting to eliminate in the house, interrupt her with a sharp sound (clap your hands). Then urgently say "outside" and take the puppy out. Stay outside for 5 minutes and praise and treat her if she finishes eliminating.

If the puppy has an accident in the house and you did not see it happen, you **must not** punish her for it because she will not connect the accident with the punishment. This will only cause your puppy to be afraid of you. Simply clean it up (with an enzymatic neutralizer) and pay better attention next time.

Fear of the Car

Recognize that your dog's behavior in the car is most likely an emotional reaction that stems from fear. This fear may be the result of scary experience he/she had in a car in the past or just a lack of experience riding in a car. Some dogs don't like the car because of motion sickness. It's always a good idea to try using motion sickness medication to see if the issue stems from that before applying behavior modification procedures. Some dogs don't like the quick motions passing by their eyes during the drive. To rule this out you can put your dog inside of a covered crate or use a Calming Cap (a doggie blindfold) that will cut out that visual aspect of the ride. If these things do not help you will have to do behavior modification in the form of 'systematic desensitization' and 'counterconditioning' to help your dog over his/her fear of the car.

Systematic Desensitization involves slowly exposing your dog to the fearful stimulus (in this case the car), increasing the intensity over time. We often combine systematic desensitization with counterconditioning in order to help pets overcome fear.

Counterconditioning is a procedure whereby you work to change your pet's emotional response to the scary stimulus, from one of fear to one of acceptance, by pairing the scary thing with special treats.

The first step is to reward her with a high value treat for just walking towards the car. Walk only to the point where she is still okay - give the treat and then move away from the car. Do this over and over, moving slightly closer each time, until she readily walks all the way up to the car.

The next step is to have the door open with a treat sitting where the dog can reach it without going inside the car. Do this over and over until the dog readily approached the car and takes a treat off the seat or running board.

The next step is to have your dog jump into the car for a treat. Feed her a few treats while she sits in there and then have her come out and end the session. Do as many of those sessions as you can until she is fine getting into the car. Then start to increase the duration of time that she stays in the car eating treats. The next step would be to give her a stuffed Kong or something yummy like a bully stick that takes longer to eat while she is in the backseat and you are in the drivers seat (do not turn the engine on at this point).

Once he will sit in the back seat (or in his crate) calmly eating the goodie, you can start the engine (but don't drive anywhere). Do this as many times as you can until he is comfortable eating his treat while in the back seat while you sit in the driveway with the engine running.

Eventually, while she is eating her treat, you will start driving slowly for short distances, and then longer distances. You get the point!

Things that can help the process go better:

1. Use extra special treats like chunks of meat in the beginning
2. When at this step make sure the yummy treat in the Kong is irresistible like liverwurst or canned cat food.
3. Spray Adaptil Calming Pheromones in the car before a ride.
4. Playing calming music while she is inside.
5. A Thundershirt might help your dog feel more comfortable.
6. Make sure you *GO SLOWLY*. The process is going to take a while, weeks to months.

Destructive Chewing in Dogs

Chewing is a natural behavior in dogs. They use their mouths to explore and investigate their environment. If the dog is not provided with appropriate chew toys and encouraged to use them, this natural behavior often results in damage to valued household items. Puppies that are teething can be especially destructive. Providing your puppy with plenty of chew toys and properly supervising him will help save your furniture, shoes, and other precious possessions.

Purchase a dozen or so chew toys (Nyla bones, Kong toys, antlers, etc.) and rotate them so he doesn't get bored. Encourage toy usage by incorporating his toys into play sessions or by smearing food in or on the item to increase it's appeal or soaking the item in chicken broth. Praise your dog for chewing on his own toys. If you catch him chewing on an inappropriate item, ask him to "give" in exchange for a food treat and then replace the item with one of his toys. If your dog is chewing on the furniture or woodwork you can spray the area with a bitter tasting product like Fooey. You must renew the spray everyday until the dog learns the item always tastes bad.

Do not provide your dog with chew toys that look like items he is not allowed to chew on. Giving your dog an old pair of sneakers or socks only muddies the water. His chew toys should clearly be chew toys!

Often times, dogs learn that getting a hold of a forbidden object brings attention from their owner. In order to get rid of this attention seeking destructive behavior you must learn not to respond to it. DO NOT get into a game of chase with your dog even if it means sacrificing the item. This is exactly what he wants, and oh how fun it is! Be sure to give your dog plenty of attention when he is being good. It's also advisable to teach your puppy a "drop it" or "give" command so that you can retrieve items he has gotten a hold of without engaging in a chase.

Never punish "after the fact". If you do not catch your dog in the act of chewing you CANNOT punish him. The dog will not connect the two events and he will just learn to be afraid of you.

Crate Training your Puppy

The key to housetraining your puppy is to reduce the possibility of accidents in the house. Crate training can help you with the process because dogs naturally do not soil their sleeping area. If you properly crate train your puppy he will be happy to spend time in his crate. A crate is a safe place for your puppy to go when you can't watch him closely.

Ideally you should gradually accustom your puppy to his crate. To do this, follow the steps listed below:

1. Put the crate in a busy location in your house such as the living room or kitchen where your family spends a lot of time. Put a blanket and toys inside and leave the door open. Occasionally toss a treat in the back of the crate for your puppy to find on his own.
2. Bring your puppy over to the crate and encourage him to go into the crate by throwing a treat just inside the door. When he puts his head in the crate to get the treat, praise him "good boy". Continue this procedure but throw the treat farther and farther into the crate until the puppy is going all the way in. Praise him every time he goes in to get the treat.
3. Next, try asking him to go into the crate - "Buster, get in your crate" as you motion with your hand. If he goes in, praise him and give him the treat. Then call him out (no treat for coming out) and do it again. Repeat this many times until he is reliably going in and out of the crate on command.
4. When your puppy is reliably going in and out of the crate you can start to close the door for short periods of time. Practice a couple of in and outs, but one time when he is inside, close the door. Praise him and give him food treats while he is inside, and then open the door and walk away (no treats for coming out). Repeat this over and over, slowly increasing the time the door is closed. Eventually, take a few steps away from the crate and then return and praise him while he is still inside. Slowly increase the distance you go away from the crate. Remember treats are only given when the puppy is inside. When letting him out of the crate, simply open the door and walk away.
5. You are now ready to teach your puppy to stay quietly in his crate for a prolonged period of time. Put the crate next to your chair in the living room

and prepare a chew toy stuffed with peanut butter. Ask your puppy to go into his crate, give him the chew toy, close the door and turn on the T.V. If he begins to cry you should ignore him. If you let him out when he is crying he learns that this is how to get out of the crate. After an hour or so, if he is quiet and settled in the crate, open the door. Remember, when letting him out of the crate, do not say anything, just open the door.

6. At night, move the crate to your bedroom, ask the puppy to go inside, turn off the lights, and ignore any crying. **Remember however that a young puppy may not be able to go all night without eliminating. So if you hear him crying, he may need to go out. Use common sense!**
7. For the next few days lock him in the crate when you are at home going about your normal business of making dinner, doing the laundry, etc. Be sure to give him a fun crate toy each time. Ignore any crying, whining, or barking. When he is going in the crate without fuss and does not cry, you can start leaving him in the crate when you leave the house. Puppies under six months of age should not be expected to stay in a crate and not eliminate for longer than 3-4 hours at a time. You will be able to increase the time he is expected to "hold it" as he gets older.
8. A good 'rule of thumb' is that your puppy can only "hold it" for the number of hours he is in age plus one. So if your pup is 3 months old, he can only be expected to hold it for 4 hours.

Chasing Fast Moving Objects

Dogs often chase fast moving objects such as cars, people on bikes, and kids on skateboards. This behavior can stem from the fact that fast moving objects trigger a dog's natural predatory instinct. This is the same instinct that encourages dogs to chase cats, rabbits, and squirrels. Sometimes however, the behavior stems from fear. If the dog is afraid of the object, due to either a lack of socialization or a past fearful experience, he/she may be simply trying to chase the scary object away.

In order to stop this unwanted behavior we must change the way your dog perceives the object and then condition a new response to the sight of the object. To accomplish this goal we use positive reinforcement training (operant conditioning), desensitization (gradually exposing the dog to the object and increasing the strength of the stimulus over time), and counterconditioning (changing the dog's emotional response to the object).

Operant conditioning enables us to condition a new response by exposing the dog to the fast moving object and reinforcing any behavior except the old reaction (i.e. lunging, barking, etc.). We are essentially "shaping" the absence of the unwanted behavior. Using food rewards you will be able to communicate to the dog which behaviors are acceptable in the presence of the fast moving object.

In order for the behavior modification to work you must manipulate the strength of the stimulus so that your dog's natural instinct and habitual response is not triggered. We do this using distance. If your dog chases cars, you will start at a distance far enough away from the road that he/she doesn't react to the sight of a car. When you see a car coming, you will give the treat for any calm behavior, for example: sitting, looking up at you, or simply just standing there not reacting. Once he/she is calm with every passing car at this distance, you will move closer and repeat the process.

In the course of using this behavior modification procedure you will be desensitizing your dog to the presence of cars (by repeated exposure) and counterconditioning his/her emotional response to them (passing cars predict treats). By pairing a yummy food treat with the sight of a car your dog will soon offer a different reaction upon seeing the car - he/she will look at you for the treat. Because behaviors that are rewarded will increase in frequency, these new calm behavior around cars will eventually become his/her automatic response.

Once your dog is reliably looking at you when he/she sees a passing car, bike, skateboarder (because you have conditioned this response with treats), you can start asking for a "watch me" behavior. As soon as your dog sees the moving object say "watch me" and give the treat for the response. Over time you will wait longer and longer before you give the treat so that your dog must hold eye contact with you the whole time the object is moving past.

If your dog is very reactive (lunging and barking aggressively) to the site of the moving object a gentle leader head collar is recommended so that you can control your dog's movements in a human way during this procedure. Chasing fast moving objects is very self-rewarding to a dog - and behaviors that are rewarded will continue. Using the gentle leader you can prevent your dog from "practicing" the behavior and thus reduce the likelihood of internal reward. By preventing the behavior we don't like (chasing the objects) and rewarding the behaviors we do like (calm behavior in the presence of the object) you will eventually condition a new response.

Go slowly! This process may take a few weeks or a few months, depending on how engrained and habitual the behavior is in your dog.

Behavioral Adoption Counseling - DOGS

1. SAFEGUARD AGAINST SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dogs bond quickly to their new owners, a quality we love but that may lead to separation issues if you spend 24/7 with your dog the first few days and then suddenly go back to work. To help your dog adjust to your schedule make sure that you leave him/her alone for bits of time starting on the very first day you bring him/her home. When you leave, turn the radio on and give the dog a food filled Kong or hide treats around the house to keep him/her busy and form a positive association with your departure. Don't make a big deal about leaving and greet your dog calmly when you get home.

2. HOUSETRAINING

Before you bring your new dog into your home, take him/her for a walk so that he/she is "empty". Keep your dog on a leash when you go into the house for the first time. Walk him/her around on leash so he/she gets to know the house. Supervise your dog for the first week or so. The only time you can reprimand a dog for eliminating in the house is if you catch him/her in the act so supervision is important. If you catch the dog starting to eliminate - say "et et" sharply and then take him/her outside to finish. Make sure you take your new dog outside regularly and praise and give a food treat for outdoor elimination.

3. INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENT CAT/S

Make sure that your new dog never has the opportunity to chase your cat. Bring him/her into the house on leash and keep him/her behind a baby gate when you are not there to supervise. Once your new dog and cat seem fine together you should still make sure that your cat always has an escape route to get away from your dog. A baby gate in a doorway that your cat can jump over or run under to escape the dog is best.

4. INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENT DOG/S

You should introduce your new dog to your resident dog/s off territory. Take them for a walk in the neighborhood to get started. After the walk, take them into your yard and let them wander around together (still on leash). If all goes well you can remove the leashes and let them play. Then put the leashes back on and take them into the house. Walk them around the house together. If all looks okay you can let them off leash. Supervise the dogs well for the first few weeks as they learn to share the house and other resources.

5. PHYSICAL EXERCISE

All dogs need aerobic exercise (a leash walk is NOT aerobic to a dog). Make sure your new dog gets at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise each day. Suggested activities include fetch with a ball, going for a jog with you and playing the recall game where the dog runs back and forth between two people for treats. A tired dog is a good dog!!

6. MENTAL STIMULATION

A bored dog can get into trouble as he/she tries to entertain him/herself so you want to provide your dog with some mental exercise too. The best mental stimulation for a dog is using his nose. Take your dog for a walk and let him sniff things. Hide treats around the house for him to search for. Lay a trail of treats through the yard or house for him to follow. Additionally, putting your dog's meal inside puzzle feeders, feeder balls (an empty soda bottle will do) or a Kong toy can make it a challenge to get the food, thus providing mental stimulation each day at feeding time.

7. TRAINING

Dogs do not come knowing what you want them to do. You need to teach them to be polite members of the family and the community. Reward the behaviors you like (with praise and/or a food treat) and ignore the behaviors you don't like. Dogs learn through the consequence of their behavior – if the behavior is rewarded it will happen again, if its not – it will go away. Resist the urge to simply punish the behaviors you don't like or your dog will learn that's the only way to get your attention. Find a good positive reinforcement training class to help you understand how to train your dog.

8. KIDS AND DOGS

Kids sometimes do things to and around dogs that make dogs nervous or afraid. Things like hitting and kicking a dog can cause the dog to defend himself. But even behaviors like hugging, kissing, laying on top of the dog can also trigger fear and cause the dog to act aggressively to stop the unwanted interaction. Please teach your children to respect the dog and to not hit, kick, hug, kiss or lay on top of your new dog.

Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons. They could be alerting you of an intruder (alarm barking), demanding your attention (request barking), trying to drive off something or someone they are afraid of (fear barking), or they may simply be bored (boredom barking). In order to control excessive barking, you must first figure out what type of barking you are dealing with.

Request Barking

Many dogs learn that barking gets them what they want (food, attention, door open, etc.). If this is the kind of barking your dog is exhibiting, you must teach him that the behavior no longer works. To do this, ignore your dog completely when he barks at you (or better yet - walk out of the room and close yourself behind a door until he is quiet). By removing the reinforcement (whatever it is he is used to getting when he barks) the behavior should disappear. Keep in mind, however, that because this behavior has worked for so long it may get worse before it disappears. It is very important that you DO NOT give in because this will only make the behavior stronger. Once he is quiet you can give him what he wants if it's appropriate.

Fear barking

If your dog barks at something or someone out of fear you will have to work to change his emotions about the scary person or thing. This is called counter-conditioning. Get some really yummy treats (hotdogs, chicken, cheese). Set up scenarios in which the scary person or thing arrives on the scene, but is far enough away (or quiet enough if the scary thing is a sound) that your dog is aware of it but does not bark. Start giving him the treats when the scary thing comes into view (or is heard) and stop when it leaves or stops. Slowly have the person or thing get closer and closer (or louder and louder) while you are giving your dog the treats. Over time your dog should change his opinion about the person or thing he was afraid of because it will now predict great treats.

Boredom Barking

Your dog may be barking simply because she is bored. Increasing her physical and mental stimulation should help. Try the following suggestions:

1. Exercise her well every day. A walk is not always enough, play fetch or the recall game (having her run back and forth between two people) for 20 minutes.
2. Hide food around the house for her to search for.
3. Give her a toy stuffed with food (Kong toys or hollow marrow bones work well).
4. Practice simple obedience commands (sit, down, stay) every day.
5. Teach her some tricks and have her perform them every day.
6. Play 'hide and seek' with her toys.
7. Play 'hide and seek' with family members.
8. Leave a radio or T.V. on when you are gone.

Courtesy of Kelley Bollen, MS, Certified Animal Behavior Consultant

Separation Anxiety

If your dog barks only when you are not home it's possible that he is suffering from separation anxiety. Dogs with separation anxiety often show other signs that indicate that they are anxious about being alone. If your dog is overly attached to you and follows you from room to room, or if he shakes, pants or cries as you prepare to leave for the day he may indeed be suffering from separation anxiety. You should consult a behaviorist to help overcome the problem.

Alarm Barking

If your dog barks at intruders, like the mailman, delivery people, or neighbors walking by her property, most likely her barking stems from territorial behavior. Alarm barking is a natural behavior in dogs and we can't expect to completely eliminate it, but we can learn to control it.

To deal with this type of barking you will need to teach your dog a 'quiet' command. Set up scenarios whereby someone walks past your house and triggers your dog to bark. After 3-4 barks, show your dog a really special treat (hotdogs, chicken, or cheese). When she stops barking to retrieve the treat say "quiet" and give her the treat. Repeat this until you have paired the word "quiet" with her silence a dozen or so times. Then try to use your quiet command to stop her barking without showing her the treat. If she learned the command, she will stop barking, and you can go ahead and give her the treat as a reward. Once she knows the cue "quiet" means shut up - start to increase the duration of quietness you require before you reward (just like teaching the stay command - add duration slowly). Dog barks - you say "quiet" - she shuts up - you count to 10 seconds in your head - then click and give the treat.

Teaching "Quiet" command

Does your dog bark constantly when someone knocks on the door or a person walks by your house? Alarm barking is a natural behavior in dogs and we can't expect to completely eliminate it, but we can learn to control it. What you need to do is teach your dog to stop barking on command. We essentially want to tell the dog "thank you for that warning, now be quiet".

First find out what triggers your dog to bark (doorbell, other dogs, etc.). Then work the following sequence in practice sessions that you set up with a helper:

1. Have your helper initiate the trigger - (rings the doorbell or walks by with a dog)
2. Your dog will start barking
3. After 3-4 barks put a really yummy treat in your dog's face and when he stops barking to get the treat, you say "Quiet" (you do not have to shout, just use a normal tone of voice) - then say "YES" and give him the treat.
4. Repeat this 5-6 times per session and do a few sessions each day for a week.
5. Test your cue - when your dog starts barking - say "quiet" without showing the food treat first. If he has learned the cue he will stop barking and look for the treat - at which time you should say "YES" and give the treat. If he doesn't stop barking - go back to pairing the word "quiet" with the behavior of not barking until he better understands the cue.
6. Once your dog knows the cue "quiet" - start to wait a little longer each time before you say "YES" and treat so that you condition in a longer duration of quiet behavior.
7. You will want to play this game in different locations in the house so the dog generalizes.
8. You will also want to do practice sessions with each trigger that sets off your dog.
9. Eventually you should switch to random reinforcement for the quiet command (not treating each time).
10. In time, you will be able to cue the dog to "quiet" and say "good boy/girl" without giving the treat reward.

It is important that you do many set-up practice sessions before trying this on the real thing. Once you have your dog reliably barking and quieting on command during these sessions you can try it in the real world. Don't be surprised if it doesn't work the first time. Go back to showing the treat up front as you say "quiet".

Outdoor Barking

Some dogs bark incessantly when outside in the yard. The barking can be triggered by just about anything - a passerby, a dog barking down the street or a leaf falling to the ground. This can be a hard behavior to control because you are in the house when it happens. If you don't reward or punish the behavior while it is happening or at least within a half a second, the animal doesn't make the connection, which means that you won't be able to punish this type of barking effectively.

For these dogs, I like to train in a reliable whistle recall. Teaching the dog to come into the house when he hears the whistle will at least allow you to cut the barking episodes short.

In some cases, I may recommend a citronella bark collar. Citronella is a harmless substance that some dogs simply find offensive smelling. The true beauty of the citronella bark collar is that the dog's barking gets punished EVERY time it happens and you don't have to be anywhere nearby. The collar works by detecting the barking through a microphone. The barking then triggers a spray of citronella in his face. Both the startle effect of the spray and the odor of the citronella can help to stop the barking.

This is a harmless device, as it does not cause pain. This said however, it is never recommended for dogs that are barking due to anxiety. For those dogs - we need to address the source of the anxiety. Stopping the barking will only cover up a symptom.

The downside to using a citronella bark collar:

Not all dogs are deterred from barking by the citronella bark collar. Some dogs simply don't care about the spray in their face while others learn to turn their head just so, to avoid the spray. Many dogs become "collar wise" meaning they learn that when it's on they can't bark but when it's not on they can. Some dogs may eventually habituate to the spray and therefore it stops working after a while.

A shock collar is NEVER recommended. These collars cause fear and pain and can make your dog very anxious or even aggressive.

Attention-Seeking Behaviors

Dogs are great at learning how to get our attention. They bark at us, scratch at the door, whine, nudge us with their noses, paw at our hands - anything to get us to pay attention to them. The reason these annoying behaviors never seem to go away no matter what we do is because we are often inadvertently reinforcing the behavior with our attempts to stop them. Essentially, we give the dog the attention he is seeking when we yell at him or push him away. You see, even negative attention from a beloved owner is better than nothing.

It is very important for dog owners to understand how dogs learn. Behaviors that are rewarded will continue to occur and may even increase in frequency. Even if the reward only comes 5 out of 10 times the dog exhibits the behavior. This variable reinforcement actually makes the behavior stronger. It's kind of like you are a giant walking slot machine and the dog becomes addicted to pulling your handle in hopes that he will eventually get the pay off. Jackpot!

The only way to get rid of these annoying attention-seeking behaviors is to completely remove the reward. Figure out what the dog gets out of the behavior (attention, food, going outside, etc.) and then take that away in response to the behavior.

An example is the annoying behavior of barking at you for attention. If the barking causes you to get up and walk out of the room (something he certainly doesn't want) then the behavior will no longer be rewarding. You will be taking away something good (your attention) in response to the unwanted behavior (barking). If done consistently the dog soon learns that barking no longer "works for him" to get attention. Dogs do what works for them - plain and simple.