



**SAVE  
THEM  
ALL**

**The ABCs of Living with Dogs**  
Care and training resources



## About Best Friends Animal Society

Best Friends Animal Society is a leading national animal welfare organization dedicated to ending the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters. In addition to running lifesaving programs in partnership with more than 2,500 animal welfare groups across the country, Best Friends has regional centers in New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Salt Lake City, and operates the nation's largest no-kill sanctuary for companion animals.

Founded in 1984, Best Friends is a pioneer in the no-kill movement and has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters nationwide from 17 million per year to about 800,000. That means there are still nearly 2,200 dogs and cats killed every day in shelters, just because they don't have safe places to call home. We are determined to bring the country to no-kill by the year 2025. Working collaboratively with shelters, rescue groups, other organizations and you, we will end the killing and Save Them All.

For more information, visit [bestfriends.org](https://bestfriends.org).





## About Sherry Woodard

Sherry Woodard, Best Friends' resident animal behavior consultant, wrote many of the resources in this manual. As an expert in animal training, behavior and care, she develops resources, provides consulting services, leads workshops and speaks nationwide to promote animal welfare.

Before joining Best Friends, Sherry, a nationally certified professional dog trainer, worked with dogs, cats, horses, and a variety of other animals. She also worked in veterinary clinics, where she gained valuable experience in companion-animal medical care and dentistry.



Sherry was initially employed by Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in 1996 as a dog caregiver. Her understanding of animals and insights into their behavior were quickly recognized and, in 1997, she was promoted to Dogtown manager. As manager, she oversaw the daily care and medical needs of 600 dogs. Sherry was also responsible for the intake of new dogs to the Sanctuary, the placement of dogs in appropriate social groups, dog adoption programs, student and volunteer group visits, the foster care program, supply orders, and all matters relating to personnel.

Today, representatives from humane organizations and shelters across the country seek out Sherry for advice. Sherry assists individuals and shelter and rescue personnel with animal behavior, management and enrichment. She offers workshop presentations on animal care, animal behavior, training and adoptions at national conferences as well as shelters.

Sherry has been certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) as a certified professional dog trainer – knowledge assessed (CPDT-KA). In March 2008, Sherry's week-long Dog Behavior and Handling Workshop was approved for continuing education credit by CCPDT.

Sherry has written over 100 animal care, behavior, and training documents for Best Friends Animal Society that are used across the U.S., as well as by groups

internationally. She has created two training CDs with video, a basic and an advanced version. Sherry has also been featured in the National Geographic Channel's TV series "DogTown," which chronicles the physical and emotional lives of dogs at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary.

Sherry has developed canine and feline behavior assessments to help read their body language and assess their needs. Widely regarded as an expert on animal behavior, Sherry has consulted on and assisted with the investigation of animal cases in litigation, testified in cases of cruelty and breed discrimination, and worked with law enforcement on a fatal dog attack case.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Sherry gained on-the-ground leadership experience in disaster response and management of ongoing emergency relief projects when she spent eight months in Tylertown, Mississippi. She helped with rescue, assessment and socialization of dogs; supervised staff and volunteers; and worked with all types of animals, including exotics.

In 2007, Sherry spent six months working with Best Friends' Great Kitty Rescue in Pahrump, Nevada, where over 800 cats were discovered living in horrible conditions. To prepare these traumatized cats for new lives as house cats, she and several colleagues developed a process for socializing fearful cats. As a result, hundreds of cats from the Pahrump compound were adopted into good homes.

In 2009, Sherry was instrumental in developing Best Friends' Canines with Careers program. Sherry is helping rescue groups, dog trainers and shelters to start training and placing qualified shelter dogs as career dogs in loving homes. The dog careers vary and can include therapy, different types of service and detection.

Since 2009, Sherry has personally screened, selected, trained and placed more than 90 dogs for various careers. These dogs work with law enforcement officers, with professional dog handlers on search dog teams, in therapy/crisis response, and as service dogs helping people with a variety of disabilities. Canines with Careers continues to grow. In 2018, 579 rescued dogs were placed in conjunction with this program.



## Why We Use Relationship-Based Training

By Best Friends' behavior consultants

The behavior consultants at Best Friends have found that animal training built on a trusting relationship is the most kind — and also the most effective — method of training. When you have a trusting, cooperative relationship with an animal (whether it's a dog, cat, parrot, horse or other animal), you have his respect, and he'll want to spend time with you and work with you. Best Friends does not stand behind training methods that use excessive force, threats, fear, intimidation, pain or dominance. Training based on such aversive methods damages any sort of trusting relationship you might develop with the animal.



Relationship-based training is effective for either teaching new behaviors or changing current behavior for any physically and mentally healthy animal. By reinforcing behaviors you like and want to continue seeing, you set the animal up for success. Regardless of an animal's age and past experiences, such ethical training methods give the animal the best chance for living happily and comfortably in our hectic human world.

It is also important to understand that every interaction is a learning experience, so every time you interact with your pets you are training them, whether or not you intend to. Relationship-based training is a lifestyle — a constant dialog with your pets, rather than a one-way issuing of commands that only occurs in structured training sessions. So instead of waiting for the occasional chance to work on modifying the animal's behavior, it's better to be aware of every opportunity to arrange your pet's environment to reinforce the behaviors you want.

### Animal training tips

What exactly do we mean when we say “relationship-based training”? It is a method of training that uses the cooperative relationship between the trainer and the animal to achieve mutually beneficial results, while at the same time enhancing and strengthening their relationship. Here are some of the basic principles:

- **Put the animal's immediate needs first.** Is your pet injured, ill, fearful, frustrated, hungry, thirsty, needing to eliminate? Put off training until the animal's immediate needs have been met and he or she can concentrate on the training exercise.

- **Learn to accurately interpret animals' body language.** There are a lot of common misconceptions about animal body language, especially for dogs, due to the prevailing myth of dominance-based social structures. These misconceptions frequently lead to human misinterpretation of the animal's emotional state and intentions. For this reason, it is important to get sound, science-based information about the body language of the species you are working with. All species exhibit telltale signs that let you know how the animal is feeling, whether it's joy, anger, fear, frustration or some other emotion. Understanding body language improves communication between people and animals, and helps keep all involved safe.
- **Find out what motivates the animal (e.g., treats, affection, verbal praise, toys) and use it to your advantage.** It's also important to first make sure the animal is motivated to work with you. We tend to assume that pets should automatically adore us, but that isn't always the case. So the first step is to build a relationship with the animal by spending time with him and creating an association between your presence and things he really likes.
- **Use positive reinforcement to encourage behavior you want.** You can elicit and reinforce desired behavior through the techniques of capturing, luring, shaping or cueing. (See the sidebar on page 3 for a brief explanation of these techniques.)
- **Avoid aversive methods.** Aversive methods such as force, threats, fear, pain, intimidation and dominance are not necessary for eliminating undesirable behaviors. In fact, aversive methods often have many damaging side effects. Instead, ignore the unwanted behavior and/or teach incompatible behaviors. For example, you can teach a dog to sit and stay for a greeting rather than jumping up; it's impossible for him to do both simultaneously. To reinforce the desired behavior, reward the dog with whatever motivates him, whether it's treats, affection, verbal praise, toys or something else. In contrast to aversive-based training, this approach supports the trusting and cooperative relationship between you and the animal.
- **Prevent the animal's ability to continue practicing unwanted behaviors by controlling the environment and controlling the animal's exposure.** For example, distract a reactive dog or limit access to a window, door or fence line if the inappropriate behaviors are happening there.
- **Supervise the animal carefully to set him or her up for success.** You can avoid or prevent unwanted behaviors by simply being aware of what your pet is doing. For example, if a new dog or puppy is not house-trained, don't allow her the full run of the house until she has been house-trained. Giving an animal too much freedom before she has the necessary life skills to navigate that much space can set her up for failure.
- **When an animal's behavior is rooted in a strong emotional state (fear, anger, frustration or even excitement), change the behavior by changing the underlying emotional state.** You can do that by pairing the stressful situation with something the animal really loves until she feels calm and happy around whatever previously upset her. For example, if a dog gets upset when strangers walk by her gate, we can change the way she feels about strangers by having them toss treats over her gate every time they pass by.

## **Capturing, luring, shaping, cueing**

“Capturing” means using praise and other rewards to encourage recurrence of a behavior that occurred spontaneously.

“Luring” involves getting the animal to focus on a treat or other desirable object and using it like a magnet to move the animal’s head or entire body in a desired direction to produce a behavior or posture you want to reinforce.

“Shaping” means rewarding the behavior that most closely resembles your end-goal behavior, and then gradually honing the behavior through a series of small steps until the animal is able to perform the end-goal behavior.

“Cueing” is a technique that pairs a behavior an animal already knows how to perform (through capturing, luring or shaping) with a visual, auditory or tactile signal until the animal learns to perform the behavior when the signal is presented. Examples of cues include holding your hand in front of your dog’s face when you want to encourage a “stay” or patting the seat of the car when you want the dog to jump in.

## **Relationship-based animal trainers**

Relationship-based trainers also have realistic expectations. When training animals, we use lots of patience. We understand that animals are not born knowing how to fit into our human lives. Most adult animals we meet have not been properly taught how to be part of a loving human family. Even if they have been in a loving home, they may still lack the social skills to be comfortable around strangers and in new situations. Expecting an animal to know everything is unrealistic and punishing an animal for not knowing something is unfair. In relationship-based training, every animal is seen as an individual and the trainer works with the animal on that basis.

Over the years, as we’ve worked in this field, we’ve become familiar with many other training techniques through working with other trainers and veterinarians, attending conferences, reading books and watching training videos. Our exposure to other training methods only confirms our belief that relationship-based training is more efficient, more effective and safer. It creates less collateral damage in the learner, and is more mutually beneficial to both the animal and the trainer. But it isn’t just our personal experiences and beliefs that drive us to endorse relationship-based training. Many, many studies (dating back to Pavlov’s famous experiments with dogs) have confirmed that such kind and ethical training techniques deliver the most effective and reliable training results.

For these reasons, Best Friends’ behavior consultants have chosen not to use aversive training methods, especially after seeing their detrimental effects on animals. These methods can cause confusion in the animal, lack of trust, breakdown of the relationship, physical injury, fear and so-called “unpredictable” behavior. Examples of aversive training methods include:

- Dominance and physical force: pushing a dog into a sit or down position, alpha rolls, physical punishment (hitting, kicking, slapping, hanging, finger jabs)

- Leash corrections
- Harsh tones, verbal reprimands, the “alpha” voice
- Methods that rely on inflicting pain, such as pinch or prong collars, choke chains and shock collars
- Interrupters such as shaking a can, throwing objects at animals, or otherwise using sudden and/or loud stimuli to scare them

Besides the potentially damaging effect on the animals, and the fact that these techniques don’t work over the long term, aversive methods can result in injury to people and death to animals. How? People who use these techniques can be injured when the animals fight back by biting, kicking, scratching or otherwise inflicting injury. Those animals are then sometimes killed after their people decide they can no longer trust them.

Collectively, we have trained thousands of animals and dozens of species — not just dogs — and relationship-based training has worked for all of them. At the Sanctuary, we receive animals from all over the country, many of whom have been previously trained with aversive methods and who have serious behavior issues, and still relationship-based training has worked for all of them. The success rate for relationship-based training of all species greatly exceeds that of aversive- or dominance-based training.

## Helpful articles

Position statements:

- The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has several [position statements](#) that reflect the society’s opinion on topics such as dominance and the use of punishment.
- The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers has a document called [“Application of the Humane Hierarchy Position Statement.”](#)
- The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants has a document called [“IAABC Position Statement on LIMA.”](#)

Using punishment:

- [“What’s Wrong with This Picture? Effectiveness Is Not Enough”](#)
- [“It Makes No Sense to Punish a Fearful Dog”](#)
- [“Dog Whispering in the 21st Century”](#)

Using shock collars:

- [Letter from Dr. Karen Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, DACVB, CAAB](#)
- [“The End for Shock Collars?”](#)
- [“Vets on Behavior Proclaim, Never Use Shock Collar”](#)



On dominance theory:

- [“What’s Wrong with Using Dominance to Explain the Behaviour of Dogs?”](#)
- American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior: [“Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of Animals”](#)
- Association of Professional Dog Trainers: [“Dominance and Dog Training”](#)

Studies:

- [“You Can Cross Over, But You Can’t Cross Back”](#)
- [“If You’re Aggressive, Your Animal Will Be Too, Says Veterinary Study”](#)
- [“New Study Finds Popular ‘Alpha Dog’ Training Techniques Can Cause More Harm than Good”](#)

## **Animal training books**

If you want to know more about relationship-based training, here are some books that we recommend:

*Before You Get Your Puppy* and *After You Get Your Puppy* by Dr. Ian Dunbar  
Dunbar, a veterinarian and animal behaviorist, covers what he calls the “developmental deadlines” to meet before and after you get your puppy.

*Don’t Shoot the Dog! The New Art of Teaching and Training* by Karen Pryor  
Pryor clearly explains the underlying principles of behavioral training and uses numerous examples to show how to achieve your training objectives through positive reinforcement. She also has a [website](#) on clicker training.

*The Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson  
Donaldson presents a revolutionary new way of understanding the relationship between humans and animals.

*Outwitting Animals: Revolutionary Techniques for Animal Training That Work*  
by Terry Ryan  
Ryan draws on her 25 years of hands-on experience to help people understand animals, train animals, and solve animal behavior problems using kinder, gentler methods.

*Animal-Friendly Animal Training* by Andrea Arden  
This is a great book for beginners.

*Cat Sense* by John Bradshaw  
Renowned anthrozoologist John Bradshaw uses scientific research to dispel myths and help readers to understand cats on a deeper, more compassionate and more functional level.

*The Cat Who Cried for Help* by Dr. Nicholas Dodman  
Dodman, a veterinary behaviorist, offers practical solutions to common behavior issues in cats through providing a deeper understanding of feline nutrition, enrichment and behavior modification.

*Starting from Scratch: How to Correct Behavior Problems in Your Adult Cat*  
by Pam Johnson-Bennett

Cat behavior expert Pam Johnson-Bennett gives detailed instructions on how to address common behavior issues using relationship-based training methods.

*Good Bird! and The Parrot Problem Solver* by Barbara Heidenreich

*Good Bird!* is a short, easy-to-read guide on the basics of using relationship-based training methods to train parrots. *The Parrot Problem Solver* offers more in-depth information on how to address common behavior issues in parrots.

*The Art and Science of Clicker Training for Horses* by Ben Hart

Ben Hart provides a broad overview of how to use relationship-based training methods to better understand and communicate with horses.

*You Can Train Your Horse to Do Anything* by Shawna Karrasch

This book contains easy-to-understand instructions and information on how to use relationship-based training methods to train horses.

### **Other resources**

Check out the many resources on the [Best Friends website](#).

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## A Dog's Place in a Human Family

By Sherry Woodard

What does your dog expect from you? Most dogs need and want a leader. Dogs are social animals and like being part of a group, but every group must have a leader to prevent chaos. For your dog to feel relaxed, he needs to know that someone is in charge. If you don't take on the role of leader, your dog may feel that he has to fill the position. But your dog may not be the best leader; he may not make the best decisions for your family.



As the dog's leader, then, you are responsible for managing the following aspects of your dog's life:

**Safety.** You make sure that your dog is contained — that he doesn't run loose and he's on lead when necessary. You provide him with I.D. on his collar, and perhaps a micro-chip. You make sure that your home environment is safe for him.

**Social skills.** You must manage his behavior at all times. If your dog has behavior issues such as aggressive tendencies toward other dogs or irritability around small children, you must work with him and manage his behavior so that he never gets in trouble. Dogs who are well-socialized are able to go many places; they are comfortable in most situations.

**Manners.** Training is among your leadership duties. You must teach your dog basic cues and basic manners. Well-mannered dogs are much more welcome by other humans than badly mannered dogs.

**Medical concerns.** You are responsible for managing your dog's health. He cannot tell you if he is due for vaccines or if he needs to have blood work done because he is getting older.

**Keeping order.** In your home, it is your job to keep your dog from being destructive. If he is getting into the trash when you're not home, move the trash can or put a lid on it. If he is chewing the children's toys and shoes, teach them to pick things up and put them away, and give the dog some of his own things to chew.

As a kind leader, you will gently teach your dog the things he needs to know to be comfortable in our human world. Don't expect him to somehow magically know how to live in a human family. (He is a dog, after all!) He will love being a valued family member, but he will still be a dog and will look to you for guidance.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## How to Find a Good Trainer

By Sherry Woodard

A dog trainer can help you discourage unwanted behavior in your pet and encourage desirable behavior. They teach the basics: house-training, crate training, and correcting behaviors like digging, barking, chewing, jumping up on people and pulling on lead. Trainers generally don't have medical knowledge or enough expertise to deal with serious behavior problems, but they are the least expensive option among the behavior professionals.



The trainers at Best Friends have found that dog training built on a positive relationship is the kindest — and also the most effective — method of training. Positive training methods have lasting beneficial effects. When you have a positive relationship with the dog, you have the animal's trust, and he/she wants to spend time with you and work with you. Training based on punishment or dominance negates any sort of positive relationship you might develop with the animal.

Anyone can claim to be a trainer, so ask questions like the following if you're thinking about hiring someone.

### **How were you trained?**

Look for someone who has had life experience, someone who has been around animals, not just taken classes. Ask about formal training, but keep in mind that many good trainers are self-taught through experience. Also, the best trainers keep themselves well-informed about new training methods and theories.

### **What training methods do you use?**

You want to find a trainer who uses humane training methods — someone who will give you and your pet a positive experience. You don't want a trainer who uses punishment or compulsion training (in which the dog is compelled to perform a behavior and physically corrected for noncompliance).

### **How much experience do you have?**

The trainer should have at least six months of experience. Anything less and the person may not know how to work with problem behavior in a calm, confident manner. Animals can sense a lack of confidence, and the training will be less successful as a result.

### **What types of animals have you trained?**

Some trainers work with a variety of animals and some only work with one type. It's most desirable for the trainer to have had experience working with a wide variety of animals, since you learn something different from training each type of animal.

### **Are you certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers?**

This is the only national certification for pet dog trainers.

### **Can I contact a few of your customers?**

Often the most helpful information comes from those who have used the services of the trainer you are interested in.

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While you're talking to the trainer, take note of whether the trainer is patient and clear when explaining the training process and answering your questions. After all, your dog isn't the only one who will be in training. You will be, too, and you'll need to have good communication with the trainer.

We recommend that you visit during one of the trainer's sessions to see the style, techniques and tools being used. If the trainer does anything that you are uncomfortable with, keep looking.

You can find a certified dog trainer through the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers ([ccpdt.org](http://ccpdt.org)). You can also find a trainer through the Association of Professional Dog Trainers ([apdt.com](http://apdt.com)). If there are no trainers in your area, contact one of the trainers listed and ask him/her to recommend someone. If you are told by a trainer that he or she is not qualified for your case, ask for a referral to a behavior counselor or animal behaviorist.

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## Dog Training: A Glossary of Terms

### The Four Stages of Learning

**Acquisition:** The dog understands that the cue is a request for a behavior, understands what that behavior is, and is able to produce the behavior.

**Fluency:** The dog produces the cued behavior regularly and quickly. He no longer has to struggle to think through what to do when he is asked.

**Generalization:** The dog learns that the cue and the behavior remain the same in a variety of locations, for a variety of people, and in spite of a variety of imprecise cues (for example, the handler may wear different clothes, give the cue from a sitting instead of a standing position, speak the cue loudly or softly).

**Maintenance:** The behavior is practiced frequently enough to prevent a decrease in proficiency or potential extinction. (If the cue isn't practiced, the dog will forget what behavior is expected from the cue.)



### Conditioning

**Operant conditioning/learning:** The process by which behavior changes occur related to the outcome of chosen behaviors. Behaviors that result in positive outcomes are likely to increase or remain the same. Behaviors that produce negative or unproductive outcomes are likely to decrease. There are four categories of outcomes that can affect learning: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment. Positive and negative reinforcement support or strengthen the behavior. Positive and negative punishment discourage or weaken the behavior.

**Classical conditioning:** Associations formed between paired events that are not dependent upon choice. In Pavlov's famous example, the natural salivation that occurs when dogs are presented with food became associated with the sound of a bell that was rung when food was being served. The result of this pairing was that the sound of the bell produced salivation even when no food was present.

### Reinforcement

**Reinforcement:** In training, reinforcement can be positive or negative. Reinforcement always supports or strengthens a behavior and increases the likelihood of it occurring.

**Positive reinforcement:** In training, “positive” means “added to.” If you give a dog a treat when he sits, you have added something reinforcing (the treat) to the outcome of the behavior.

**Negative reinforcement:** In training, “negative” means “removed from” or “taken away.” A human example would be if you discovered that pushing a button on your phone stopped the Muzak when you were on hold. Pushing the button would be negative reinforcement because something unpleasant was removed from the situation.

**Premack Principle:** In behavioral psychology, the Premack Principle states that a desirable behavior can be used to reinforce a less desirable one. This is commonly referred to as Grandma’s rule: “After you eat your vegetables, you can have ice cream.”

**Unconditioned reinforcer:** Also called a primary or natural reinforcer, these are things that are valuable or desired in themselves (e.g., food, water, play, affection). These are not the same for all individuals or even the same individual at all times. Examples: A shy dog may experience an affectionate pat as punishment. After a Thanksgiving meal, we may find the thought of more food unpleasant.

**Conditioned reinforcer:** A neutral stimulus that has become reinforcing by pairing it with a natural or existing reinforcer. The bell in Pavlov’s experiment or a whistle in dolphin training are neutral until they become associated with the dog’s food and fish, respectively.

## **Punishment**

Punishment, which can also be positive or negative (meaning that something is added or something is taken away), is a consequence that causes a behavior to be less likely to occur in the future. For punishment to be effective, it must be precisely timed, immediately and consistently presented, and of sufficient intensity relative to the appeal of the behavior and its normal outcome.

**Positive punishment:** The introduction of an unpleasant element as a consequence of an unwanted behavior. Examples: A dog is pulling on the leash and a leash correction (sharp jerk of the leash) is given. A dog nears the edge of the yard and an “invisible fence” causes a shock through his collar.

**Negative punishment:** The removal of a desirable element as a consequence of an unwanted behavior. An example is leaving the area when a dog is being jumpy or mouthy. The desirable element that you are removing is your attention and interaction with the dog.

**Conditioned punisher:** A neutral stimulus that takes on an unpleasant connotation. For example, if you say “time out” right before you put a dog in a time-out (a crate or spare room), the sound of the words alone can become associated in the dog’s mind with the consequence and may decrease the behavior.

**Remote punisher:** An unpleasant consequence that can be employed without your presence. Automatic bark collars, flappers on a counter top, and bitter-tasting substances applied to discourage chewing are examples of remote punishers.

## Other Useful Definitions

**Capturing:** Rewarding a behavior that occurs spontaneously. Most training involves behaviors that occur naturally, and we reinforce them to suit our own purposes. Dogs already sit, lie down, wag their tails and raise their paws before we begin to work with them.

**Chaining:** Teaching multiple simple behaviors in sequence to produce a more complicated behavior. One simple example is teaching a dog to ask for a walk by teaching him to hold his leash, then to carry the leash, and then to carry it to the door and sit. A more complicated example would be teaching a dog to run an agility course.

**Counter-conditioning:** A method of changing a response to a “trigger” or stimuli, usually by introducing a positive element into the situation. For example, a dog who lunges at a stranger across a fence can be conditioned to like the approach of a stranger by setting up training sessions in which the stranger tosses a high-value treat to the dog each time he approaches.

**Counter-cueing:** Cueing a well-established behavior that is incompatible with an unwanted behavior. An example is cueing a “sit” when a dog is jumping up. If the “sit” produces a more positive outcome, it can replace the jumping behavior.

**Cue:** Anything that serves as a signal to request a specific behavior. A cue is a way of asking for a response from a dog. (The terms “command” and “order” are misleading because they do not compel a behavior to occur. The dog still has the power to choose his response.)

**Desensitization:** The process of presenting a weak version of a problem stimulus at a level and duration that does not produce a negative reaction and gradually increasing the intensity as the dog’s comfort level grows. An example is playing recordings of the sounds of thunderstorms at low volume, to begin desensitizing a dog to thunderstorms.

**Displacement behaviors:** Behaviors that are performed out of their normal context. An anxious dog may yawn, stretch or drink water, even though she is neither tired nor thirsty.

**Ethology:** The study of animal behavior, which includes human behavior. It is often used when referring to natural behaviors in an evolutionary context.

**Extinction:** In operant conditioning, extinction refers to the elimination of a behavior that fails to produce desirable results. Ignoring a behavior such as pawing or jumping can lead to extinction of that behavior. Unlike the biological extinction of a species, however, an “extinct” behavior can reappear if it once again produces successful results.

**Flooding:** In contrast to desensitization, flooding is a behavioral technique that involves exposure to an aversive stimulus at full intensity until habituation occurs (i.e., the animal no longer reacts to the stimulus). There is debate about the use of this technique, but it is not operant conditioning. The subject must endure the aversive stimulus until it is removed; there is no behavior the dog can choose that will make it go away.

**Head halter:** Inspired by the lessons learned with larger, more powerful animals like horses. A head halter can reduce the amount of physical effort required to manage a strong dog. Head halters are sometimes mistaken for muzzles, but they aren’t muzzles. Head halters do not restrict a dog’s ability to bite.



**Jackpot:** Giving a large reward (e.g., lots of treats, tons of praise) when there is a breakthrough in training.

**Lure training:** Using a high-value “lure,” such as treats or toys, to produce a behavior that can then be rewarded.

**Physical prompts:** An outmoded technique that involves using physical force to produce a behavior. Examples are pushing a dog down into a sit or reeling in a dog to make him come.

**Proofing:** Practicing a behavior in different environments and situations, until the dog generalizes the desired behavior and can do it anywhere, even with distractions.

**Shaping:** Similar to chaining, except the “simple behaviors” are small steps toward what is often considered a single behavior. For example, getting a dog to respond to a “down” cue may be shaped by luring and rewarding “head lowering,” then “elbow bending,” then “body on the floor.”



## Recommended Dog Training and Care Resources

By Sherry Woodard

### When you need a professional

Training a dog can be very challenging, and you may decide that you need some help. The resource “How to Find a Good Trainer” can point you in the right direction. For help with basic manners and other minor issues, you can find a certified dog trainer through the website for the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers ([ccpdt.org](http://ccpdt.org)). You can also find a trainer through the Association of Professional Dog Trainers ([apdt.com](http://apdt.com)). If there are no trainers in your area, contact one of the trainers listed and ask him/her to recommend someone.



If your dog has more challenging behavior issues, or if you are told by a trainer that he or she is not qualified for your case, ask for a referral to a certified behavior consultant, a certified applied animal behaviorist, or a veterinary behaviorist. A behavior consultant or certified behaviorist can assess a dog’s history, temperament, environment and reaction to various situations to help everyone involved understand what it will take to manage or correct the behavior. Here are several options for finding a behaviorist:

- You can find a certified behavior consultant through the International Association for Animal Behavior Consultants ([iaabc.org/consultants](http://iaabc.org/consultants)).
- To learn more about finding a certified behaviorist, talk to your vet or go to the Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists’ website ([corecaab.org](http://corecaab.org)).
- You could consult a veterinarian who has undergone extensive training and education in animal behavior. The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists (ACVB) lists their members on their website ([dacvb.org](http://dacvb.org)).

### Books

*Before You Get Your Puppy* by Dr. Ian Dunbar

Dunbar, a veterinarian and animal behaviorist, covers what he calls the three “developmental deadlines” to meet before you get your puppy: completing your education about puppies, knowing how to assess your prospective puppy’s progress and instituting errorless house-training.

*After You Get Your Puppy* by Dr. Ian Dunbar

In this book, Dunbar covers the three “developmental deadlines” to meet after you get your puppy: socializing your puppy to people, teaching bite inhibition and continuing socialization in the world at large.

*Pet Behavior Protocols* by Suzanne Hetts

This book is for veterinary professionals, shelter staff, breeders, trainers, and animal control agents who want to help people find sensible solutions to their pet behavior problems.

*Don't Shoot the Dog! The New Art of Teaching and Training* by Karen Pryor

Pryor clearly explains the underlying principles of behavioral training and uses numerous examples to show how to achieve your training objectives through positive reinforcement. She also has a website on clicker training: [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com).

*Dogs Are from Neptune* by Jean Donaldson

Donaldson draws from real cases to provide clear, step-by-step advice for troubleshooting dog behavior problems — ranging from obedience stumblers like pulling on lead to serious issues like biting and fighting.

*The Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson

Donaldson presents a revolutionary new way of understanding the relationship between humans and dogs.

*Outwitting Dogs: Revolutionary Techniques for Dog Training That Work* by Terry Ryan

Ryan draws on her 25 years of hands-on experience to help people understand dogs, train dogs, and solve dog behavior problems using kinder, gentler methods.

*Dog-Friendly Dog Training* by Andrea Arden

This is a great book for beginners.

*Love Has No Age Limit: Welcoming an Adopted Dog into Your Home* by Patricia McConnell and Karen London

This book helps ease the transition from shelter to home.

## Periodicals

### The Whole Dog Journal

This is a monthly guide to natural dog care and training. You can subscribe (and get a free 14-day trial subscription) at [whole-dog-journal.com](http://whole-dog-journal.com) or call 800-829-9165.

### Your Dog

This is a monthly 24-page newsletter for dog enthusiasts published by Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. You can subscribe by calling 800-829-5116. For more information, go to [tuftsyourdog.com](http://tuftsyourdog.com).

## Videos

*Unleash Your Dog's Potential: Getting in TTouch with Your Canine Friend*

The TTouch method helps you achieve a relationship with your pet based on appreciation and friendship, rather than on dominance and submission. There are several videos for dog people. Call 800-797-PETS or visit [animalambassadors.com](http://animalambassadors.com) (click on "Store").

*Puppy Love: Raise Your Dog the Clicker Way* with Karen Pryor

This video shows you how to use a clicker to train your dog. (See also *Don't Shoot the Dog!* by Karen Pryor in the book section.) Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

### Clicker Fun Series with Deborah Jones

This series of three videos shows you how to use clicker-based methods to change your dog's behavior. Each video comes with a clicker. Available on the Canine Training Systems website: [caninetrainingsystems.com/products](http://caninetrainingsystems.com/products).

## Products

### Controlling your dog

The Halti head halter is an effective alternative to the choke collar, enforcing the simple principle that a dog's body will follow where his head leads him. Available at pet supply stores.

The Gentle Leader Headcollar is another product that helps you to control your dog humanely. For more information, visit [gentleleader.com](http://gentleleader.com).

A martingale or limited-slip collar offers greater control without the danger of choking. Available at pet supply stores or at [premier.com](http://premier.com) or [sitstay.com](http://sitstay.com).

A front-clip harness is another option. Check out the various harnesses available: the Halti from the Company of Animals ([companyofanimals.us](http://companyofanimals.us)), Premier's Easy Walk harness ([premier.com](http://premier.com)) and the SENSE-ation harness from Softtouch Concepts ([softtouchconcepts.com](http://softtouchconcepts.com)).

DirectStop citronella spray is a humane way to prevent or stop dog fights. Available at pet supply stores or at [premier.com](http://premier.com).

### Soothing your dog

Dog-appeasing pheromone is a spray/plug-in that provides an effective way to control and manage unwanted canine behavior associated with fear and/or stress. Available at Doctors Foster and Smith: [drsfostersmith.com](http://drsfostersmith.com).

Bach Flower Essences can soothe your dog during times of stress. For more information, visit [bachflower.com](http://bachflower.com) and [rainbowcrystal.com/bach/floweran.html](http://rainbowcrystal.com/bach/floweran.html).

BlackWing Farms provides an array of aromatherapies to help your dog find a healthier emotional state. For more information, visit [blackwingfarms.com](http://blackwingfarms.com).

### Toys

All of the following are available at pet supply stores.

Kongs are durable rubber enrichment toys that can provide you and your dog with hours of fun. For more information, visit their website: [kongcompany.com](http://kongcompany.com).



*Treat-dispensing toys can engage the dog's mind as well as his body. Be sure to use a size appropriate to the dog.*

Nylabone makes a variety of chew toys and interactive toys for dogs. Check out their products at [nylabone.com](http://nylabone.com).

Dispensing toys are great for mental stimulation. You hide treats in the toy and the dog has to figure out how to get the treats out. Try a TreatStik ([treatstik.com](http://treatstik.com)), Busy Dog Ball ([busydogball.com](http://busydogball.com)) or Buster Cube ([bustercube.com](http://bustercube.com)). Nina Ottosson also has a wide variety of food puzzles ([nina-ottosson.com](http://nina-ottosson.com)).

### **Cleaning products**

Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently. Available at pet supply stores.

OdoBan is an odor eliminator that cleans, disinfects, sanitizes and deodorizes. For more information, go to [odoban.com](http://odoban.com).

Finally, remember to periodically check out the pet care section of the Best Friends website. We are adding new resources all the time!

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

Rev. 11/15

## How to Choose a Dog

By Sherry Woodard

If you're thinking about getting a dog and you've never had one, please do some research first. Learn about what's involved in having a dog — basic dog care, medical needs, training and behavior. In particular, ask yourself the following:

- Do I have the time to give a dog the love and attention she deserves?
- Can I offer her daily exercise and interaction with people and other dog friends (if appropriate)?
- Can I afford the costs of having a dog (food, routine vet care, and possible additional medical costs, such as medication)?
- Are my emotional expectations realistic? (A dog is not a furry little person.)
- Will she be living in the house as a valued family member? (Dogs are social animals and don't do well living alone outside.)



### Should I get a puppy?

One of the first questions that people ask themselves is whether to get a puppy. Lots of people don't realize that puppies need almost constant attention (almost as much as a human baby). Do you have the time or the inclination to raise a puppy? If you're gone for long periods of time, are you willing to pay for daycare or a sitter? Do you have the time to properly train your puppy? All puppies and dogs need to learn how to be well-behaved family members.

To grow into emotionally balanced and safe dogs, puppies must also be socialized. They must be trained to act appropriately in different settings — around children and other animals, on busy city streets, in parks, around people who are strangers.

Other considerations when getting a puppy: Think about how big he'll be and how active he'll be when he grows up. If you live in an apartment in a city, a large dog may not be the best choice. If you're a couch potato, you may want an older or more sedentary dog.

### Should I get a purebred dog?

The next question people usually ask is whether they should get a purebred dog. If you decide that you want a purebred, please investigate the different breeds carefully before choosing a dog. Dog breeds vary quite a bit in their temperament, the amount of exercise they require, and the amount of care (e.g., grooming) they might need.

Almost every dog breed was created for a specific purpose; hunting, herding, and guarding are examples. Knowing the characteristics of the breed can help you decide whether a dog of a particular breed will fit into your family's lifestyle. Your plain old mutt is actually a much more adaptable dog for the way that most people live today, since most people don't need a dog who excels at hunting or herding!

Also, mutts are often healthier animals, because of "hybrid vigor"; many purebred dogs have breed-specific health problems. For example, Labradors often suffer from hip and elbow dysplasia, and Chihuahuas can have heart problems and hypoglycemia.

### **Where should I get my dog?**

There are many wonderful dogs (including purebreds) at your local shelter. Statistics show that 25 percent of dogs in shelters are purebred animals. When you choose one of these dogs, you often get the added bonus of knowing that you have saved a life.

Getting a dog from a breed rescue group is another option to consider if you have decided upon a particular breed. These groups rescue purebred dogs that have been given up, for one reason or another, and find new homes for them. Some breeders also do rescue for their breed. To find a rescue group for the breed you're interested in, do a search on the Internet (for example, search for "dachshund rescue").

Petfinder.com is also a great resource when looking for a specific breed or breed mix. This website allows you to search for dogs available through rescue groups and shelters by location, breed, age and gender.

We don't recommend that you buy an animal from a pet store. Most pet stores buy from puppy mills and "backyard breeders": people who are just in it for the money and often don't care about the health or well-being of the dogs.

As an organization committed to reaching a day when every pet has a loving home, it goes without saying that Best Friends encourages everyone who is looking to bring a pet into the family to choose adoption over purchase. Although we recognize that there are caring and reputable private breeders who breed responsibly and ethically, it's difficult for us to endorse any kind of breeding while so many animals are dying in shelters.

### **How do I choose a dog who will be a good fit for me?**

First, consider what you will want this dog to be doing in daily life. Will the dog be:

- Playing with children?
- Living with cats?
- Living with or playing with other dogs?
- Going to dog parks or doggie daycare?
- Learning to compete in dog sports such as agility or flyball?
- Going running or hiking with you?

Not every dog can or will be appropriate for all of these things. Choose a dog whom you will be ready to learn and grow with. Before going to meet a potential canine candidate, read "Dog Body Language" to help you recognize the dog's comfort level. When you go to meet the dog, take some small, soft chicken treats (not dry biscuits) and a couple

of toys. See if the dog takes the treats gently and wants to play with a toy. If the dog doesn't want the treats, he/she may be ill or fearful. Don't be alarmed if the dog doesn't want to play with the toy. It can take a little time for a dog to warm up to the idea of playing, or the dog may not be feeling well.

To find out the dog's comfort level with handling, ask his caregivers if you can give him a quick little exam. Touch his ears, look at his teeth, lift a paw or two, give him a hug, lift the dog. If the dog is small, you may want to see if he is comfortable being carried. Even large dogs will be lifted if you are helping the dog onto a grooming table or into a tall vehicle. Every dog will need grooming and vet care in the future, and handling by strangers often happens in any public setting.

When you're doing the exam, use caution: Many dogs are fearful about being handled by strangers. Don't be shy in asking for help. The dog's caregiver or the adoption staff should know something about each dog's behavior. If they can't help you with introductions or with handling the dogs, ask if anyone else can help you. If not, I recommend that you go elsewhere to adopt.

If possible, take your potential new family member out to meet dogs, cats, children and other adults. See how the dog acts on leash. Watching the dog's comfort level overall in public will help you know if this dog is going to enjoy and be safe doing the things you plan to share together. One caveat, though, about the dog's behavior: It may change some once he is home and more comfortable.

Many rescued dogs come with a few challenges — behavioral or physical — that can be overcome with a bit of patience and understanding. Some dogs in need of new homes have disabilities, such as blindness or deafness, or chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes or thyroid issues. Caring for a special-needs pet is often not as daunting as it seems. Dogs with disabilities often surprise their people with how resilient and adaptable they are. Special-needs pets can teach us a lot about compassion, acceptance and perseverance.

If you choose a dog who lacks social skills (and many do), please plan to help this dog become more comfortable in our human world. Many of the resources in Best Friends' pet care library describe simple, positive ways to do this. It is important to teach and reward wanted behavior so your dog develops good manners.

In fact, socialization is a lifelong process. All dogs should be socialized throughout their lifetimes to become and stay relaxed and comfortable in different situations. Even if you are not a very social person, you should help your dog to trust some other people, since the more social the dog is, the safer the dog will be in our human world. Most bites happen when a dog is fearful.

Having a great relationship with your dog is based on building a foundation of trust. If you read through the rest of the resources in Best Friends' online library, you can help to set a dog up for great success as a member of your family for life. Remember, you will be responsible for this dog's behavior wherever he goes and with whoever he meets. Keep him happy, healthy and safe.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Promises to My Dog

By Sherry Woodard

Bringing a dog into your family causes great joy all around. But making a commitment to a dog is much like making a commitment to a human being: Both relationships require daily care and nurturing in order to flourish. So, as you embark on this new commitment, here are some promises to consider making to your dog:



**I promise** to have realistic expectations of the role my dog will play in my life. I will remember that she is a dog, not a furry little human; she cannot satisfy all my emotional needs.

**I promise** to learn to understand my [dog's body language](#). If she starts to show me that she is uncomfortable, I will remove her from that situation for her own protection and well-being as well as that of the people and dogs around her.

**I promise** to protect my dog from dangers, such as traffic and other creatures who might want to hurt her.

**I promise** to keep her well dressed with a collar containing up-to-date I.D.

**I promise** to learn [relationship-based training](#) methods so that she can understand what I am trying to say.

**I promise** to be consistent with my training, since dogs feel secure when daily life is predictable, with fair rules and structure.

**I promise** to match her loyalty and patience with my own.

**I promise** that my dog will be part of my family. I will make a commitment to schedule time every day to interact with her so that she will feel loved and will not develop behavior problems from a lack of stimulation and socialization.

**I promise** to seek professional help from a relationship-based trainer if my dog develops behavior problems that become unmanageable.

**I promise** that my dog will have opportunities to exercise and honor some of her instincts. She'll have walks and runs outside of her daily territory, so she can sniff and explore.

**I promise** to provide veterinary care for her entire life. I will keep her healthy and watch her weight.

**I promise** that if I move, marry, have a baby, or get divorced, she will continue to share my life, since she is a beloved family member.

**I promise** that if I absolutely must give her up, I will find an appropriate home for her that is as good as or better than my home.



## Welcome Home: Preventing Problems from Day One

By Sherry Woodard

Before you bring your new dog home, there are a number of ways that you can prepare for the new addition to your family. First, before you pick up your new pet, get the dog an ID tag with your information on it (name, phone number, address).

Before leaving the adoption site, check that your new dog's collar is not too loose. Many dogs in new situations pull out of their collars and run. If your dog pulls out of her collar, she will be loose in a strange area with no contact information. To be extra safe, you might want to purchase a martingale collar (a no-slip collar available at pet supply stores) or a harness to use, in addition to the regular collar, until she has demonstrated that she can handle all the new and startling experiences of a new environment, such as other dogs, city noise, and traffic.



Keep your new dog on lead except in a fenced-in yard or an approved, fenced off-lead area. Always use a leash or lead near traffic, since your dog can be distracted or fearful for just a second and run into the street. If your dog is very nervous or shy, you can even leave a light leash on her to drag while she is getting used to her new family and surroundings.

### What does my new dog need?

To be happy and healthy, your dog will need the following:

- Constant access to a bowl of fresh, clean drinking water
- A nutritionally balanced diet
- A safe place to eliminate outside (if she's not being litter-trained)
- Some daily exercise

If she hasn't had any yet, your new dog will also need some training. Investigate the dog trainers in your area and pick out one who uses humane methods. Humane trainers do not use chain or prong collars, nor do they advocate yanking on or lifting the dog by the collar. For more information, read [How to Find a Good Trainer](#).

Your dog will rely on you to show her the way, so you will also benefit from the training classes. If you don't take this responsibility in building a positive relationship with your dog and providing gentle guidance, she will start making decisions on her own, some of which may be inappropriate or dangerous.

Your dog also needs daily, loving interaction with you and a social life. Socialize your dog by bringing him on car rides, letting him be around children and other dogs, taking him to the groomer, shopping with him at pet food stores (some of them let you bring your dog in), and walking him in public places. However, watch your dog's body language to make sure he is comfortable in these situations, as you want these outings to be fun and not stressful. For more about signs of stress, read [Dog Body Language](#).

#### **Things to buy before getting your dog:**

- Food and water bowls
- Food (To ease the transition, stick with the food your dog is used to eating at first. Then, if necessary, gradually switch to a higher-quality food.)
- Treats
- Collar with ID tag
- Leash
- Dog bed
- Dog toys
- Dog brush

Strive for structure and consistency in your dog's daily routine to give him a healthy feeling of stability as a member of the family. The relationship between your family and your new family member can be great if you are patient and positive.

You should also select a veterinarian with whom you are comfortable, since you'll need to bring your dog in for regular checkups. Finally, find out what the local dog laws are (such as leash laws) and what the licensing requirements are for dogs in your area.

#### **Do I need to dog-proof my house?**

Before your new dog arrives, you should dog-proof your home in much the same way that you would child-proof your home for a toddler. Look at your home from a dog's eye level. What can he reach? If you don't want him drinking out of the toilet, tell everyone in the household to make sure they put the cover down. If anyone in the house smokes, put ashtrays out of reach, since cigarette butts, if eaten, can lead to nicotine poisoning.

Will his wagging tail inadvertently wreak havoc on your prize possessions? Dog tails have been known to sweep the contents off the top of a coffee table. If you like to keep lit candles around, make sure they are above the dog's reach. Is there anything he can trip on or become tangled in (such as electrical cords)?

#### **How can I prevent my new dog from chewing up my stuff?**

If your new dog has her own toys, she may not be as interested in chewing up human things (though leather shoes are hard to resist). Buy durable rubber or nylon toys that satisfy the dog's urge to chew. Toys that you can stuff treats into (like Kongs and Buster Cubes) should keep her occupied for a good long while. If she starts chewing one of your personal items, immediately get her interested in a dog toy instead.

## What should I know about making my yard safe?

Do a walkabout of your yard. Is your yard completely fenced in? Are there any spaces or gaps that your new dog or puppy can escape through? (They can squeeze through very small spaces.) Is there anything that he can climb on that would allow him to escape over the fence (e.g., a wood pile, fountain, latticework, garbage can)? Some dogs know how to flip open gate latches, so latches should be clipped or locked if your dog can reach them.

What sort of plants do you have in your yard? Snail bait and some plants (such as oleander, azaleas and rhododendrons) are poisonous to dogs. Antifreeze is another hazard for dogs — it is toxic and can be fatal. Dogs are attracted to its sweet taste, so don't allow your dog to drink from standing water near where cars have been parked.

Do you have an uncovered pond or pool in your yard? Dogs have been known to drown in backyard pools when they jumped or fell in and couldn't get out. You should also make sure your garbage cans have tight lids — to avoid “dumpster diving” by your dog. Besides the smelly mess that an overturned garbage can creates, some of the items in your trash (like chicken bones) may be dangerous for your dog to ingest.

Ideally, you should check your yard for safety before your new dog comes home. If you haven't done this prior to the dog's arrival, supervise the time that your pet spends outside. Even a child's toy can be trouble if it is chewed up and swallowed.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## What Dogs Need to Be Happy

By Sherry Woodard

Most dogs are loving, intelligent and loyal. They want nothing more than to be members of a family. They give unconditional love, but they need love, attention, and kindness in return. In this fast-paced world, we all have so much to do that a dog's needs can be easily forgotten. Some dog owners may not even realize how much attention a dog needs for him or her to live a happy life. This story illustrates how this "benign neglect" can happen.

### Cowboy's Story

Cowboy is a border collie mix. When he was brought home as a puppy from a local shelter, his adoptive family thought the world of him. The boys spent hours playing in the yard with Cowboy, and every night he climbed into bed with one of the kids. In the beginning, it seemed like there wasn't enough of Cowboy to go around. He was very much a part of the family.



Slowly, however, things began to change. As Cowboy grew into an adult dog, he started losing his puppy charm. The family started feeling that he required too much attention. He had never had training, and the antics that were cute when he was a puppy were now annoying. He had never been taught the difference between appropriate and rough play, so the boys avoided playing with him. His uncontrolled exuberance in the house caused him to break things. When he scratched a visiting child, he was exiled to the backyard from that day on.

The family bought Cowboy a nice doghouse and new, bigger bowls for food and water. The boys were assigned the job of feeding Cowboy and keeping his water bowl filled. As the days passed, however, the boys stopped giving Cowboy daily meals. They just filled his big bowl every two days; his water was often dirty and warm.

One day, the family came home and Cowboy was gone. They found a hole that Cowboy had dug under the fence. His family walked the streets near their home, calling his name. They found him at the park; the boys used to play with him there when he was small. Cowboy ran to them when he saw them; they were so glad to see him that they hugged him and walked him home.

But then, after a few days, Cowboy escaped again. This time, the family decided that for Cowboy's safety, they should tie him on a chain so that he could not dig out again. As the weeks passed, Cowboy waited in vain for the boys to come out and play with him. He started barking, sometimes for hours, trying to relieve his boredom and loneliness. When the boys came out to feed and water him, Cowboy naturally became very excited. He would leap and jump at the end of his chain. The boys didn't let him off his chain very much, since he was hard to catch when it was time to put the chain back on.

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Unfortunately, this story is true for many dogs. In most communities, there are dogs living through each day alone in a backyard, some on chains. Now, all people would agree that intentional physical abuse of animals is a terrible thing. Yet, the isolation and neglect that Cowboy suffered, however unintentionally, is also a form of abuse.

Dogs are social animals, and one of their most basic needs is to spend time with other creatures. Dogs who are left alone most of the time are being asked to go against their basic nature, and that's too much to ask of a dog.

Because there are no laws that require love and attention be given to animals, no one can demand that dogs like Cowboy be treated differently. Often, the dog's distress gets worse over time. The neighbors start complaining about the incessant barking. The family starts yelling at the dog to get him to stop. Whenever anyone does spend time with him, the dog is unruly and overexcited, so they avoid him even more.

Chaining a dog as a form of long-term containment is often damaging to his health and disposition. Out of sheer frustration, many dogs run for hours every day in the circle allowed by the chain. They run through their own waste, and flies are attracted by the smell and may begin to eat away at the dog's ear tips until they are raw and sore.

If a chained dog is released by his family for exercise, he often will refuse to come when called, since he's so reluctant to be chained up again. The family may see this as disobedience, so the dog is put back on the chain and is let off less and less. Some chained dogs will begin to exhibit aggression, and some lose the ability to interact with other dogs.

What happened to Cowboy? Cowboy was one of the fortunate ones. He came here to Best Friends because his family thought he was too much of a nuisance. At first, he only walked and ran in circles; he had been on his chain for almost a year. He loved people but could not focus. He would stop for a toy or treat and then begin to circle again. As the months passed, however, his circles became bigger and bigger. Eventually, he was adopted into a good new home. We have kept in touch with his new family and they say, "He is the world's greatest dog!"

We hope Cowboy's story can help to change the lives of other dogs like him.

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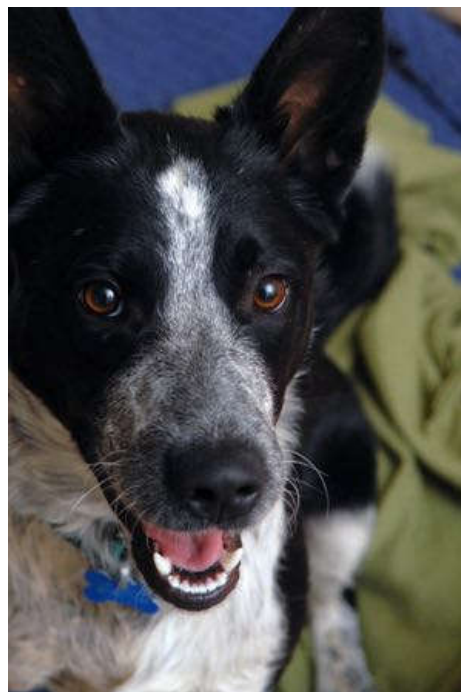
## What's in a Name?

By Sherry Woodard

Teaching name recognition is a great way to start a personal relationship with a dog. When I work with a dog, I teach her to respond enthusiastically to me by calling her by name in a happy tone of voice. A dog's name should be a good thing for her to hear. Even shelter dogs should be given names and be taught to respond to them.

What is the hidden value in a dog loving her name?

- It can be used as an attention-getter. Your dog will run — not walk — to you when she hears her name.
- You can use her name to interrupt and distract her from any behavior (e.g., barking, chewing inappropriate items) that you want to stop. Remember to keep your tone happy. You don't want the dog to associate her name with a reprimand.
- You can use her name and the positive associations she has with it to help her become more comfortable in scary situations. For example, you can say her name and consequently have her focus on you when walking by something that makes her fearful or anxious. If she is relaxed and distracted until you pass the scary situation, she will realize that it wasn't as frightening as in the past.
- If your dog knows her name and has good recall, you can call her away from a potentially dangerous situation.



To teach name recognition, pack a treat pouch with about a hundred pea-sized soft treats. Take the dog somewhere with few distractions. I put the dog on a leash or tether her to me, a doorknob or a chair leg so she won't wander off. Have a treat in your hand ready and when she looks at you, say her name and give her the treat. Interact with her briefly, then wait for her to look away and repeat the exercise. Make sure that you only say the dog's name once per exercise. Repeating the name too much will diminish your effectiveness at getting her attention. Do the exercise over and over; to keep it fun, always use a happy tone.

Once you have practiced in locations with few distractions, start practicing in locations with more distractions. Then, add other people to the game of learning. Start with the exercise described above: Have a friend stand near the dog and instruct him/her to wait until the dog is not looking and then have your friend call the dog's name and give her a treat. Next, stand a short distance from your friend and alternate calling the dog's name and giving treats. You and your friend can start moving farther away from each other

and have the dog on a long leash so she can run between you for fun and treats. This can grow into a long-distance game of recall. It's a great way for your dog to interact, exercise and learn to enjoy more people.

What should you name your dog? Most people try a variety of names before settling on one; some dogs have first, middle and last names. I knew a dog with a long Russian name. Most long names chosen are eventually shortened or replaced by nicknames. If you have nicknames for your dog, be sure to teach her those, too. I think the important part of choosing a name is that the dog learns that it is his name.

Some people worry about changing a dog's name after adoption: Will the dog be confused? Will it be difficult to teach him a new name? I haven't found it to be a problem. Dogs generally respond just fine to name changes or nicknames if the names are properly taught and maintained as positive associations. Every socialized dog will want to come when called, looking forward to spending time with humans because humans can be best friends to dogs.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

*Rev. 7/15*



## Dog Body Language

By Sherry Woodard

Just like people, dogs communicate using body language. Your dog is communicating with his entire body, not just his tail or his voice. You'll need to learn to read your particular dog's body language if you want to know how your dog is feeling. To get a sense of what your dog is trying to tell you, spend as much time as you can observing your dog and his body posture.

Because each dog is an individual and will express fear, aggression, stress or joy slightly differently, there are no hard and fast rules for interpreting dog body language. Tail-wagging, for instance, can indicate several emotions. The important thing is to look at the entire body of the dog. With that said, here are some examples of dog body language and what they might mean.

**Play bow.** The rear end of the dog is up, while the front is down. The play bow generally means "I want to play" (see photo at right).

**Tail wagging.** Contrary to popular belief, tail wagging (and the position of the tail) can mean many things:

- A low-hung wagging tail could mean "I am scared or unsure."
- A high, stiff wag can mean "I am agitated, unsure or scared, but not submissive. I might bite you or your dog." If the dog's body is stiff, he is staring, and his ears are up, use caution. Keep the dog out of trouble — he may be about to make a bad decision.
- A loose wag — not really high or really low — normally means "I am comfortable and friendly." But, you should keep watching the dog's entire body: Some dogs have a large personal-space requirement. They will tell you if you get too close.

**Freeze.** A dog freezes if she is scared or guarding, or feels cornered. She may bite, so please slow down.

**Rolling over.** A dog rolling over onto his back can have multiple meanings. Rolling over generally means "I am not a threat." If the tail is gently wagging and the mouth is slightly open, the dog is probably comfortable and asking for a belly rub (see photo at right). If the tail is tucked and the lips are stiff, however, the dog may be scared. Some dogs will solicit attention by rolling over, but then become fearful or defensive, feeling that this position is not safe. The dog may even panic and start snapping. Again, observe the whole dog, looking for comfortable, loose body language. To be safe, don't hover over a dog or crowd him



when he's upside down. Dogs do best when they have the space and ability to change from one position to another quickly and comfortably.

**Ears perked up.** When a dog's ears are forward, he is alert, interested in something.

**Tail between the legs.** If the dog's tail is tucked between her legs and her ears are back against her head, she is afraid, uncomfortable with something.

## Signs of stress

When a dog is stressed, he often shows displacement behavior — any of a variety of activities that seem inappropriate in the situation they are seen in. These behaviors occur most often during times of emotional conflict. For example, a dog starts self-grooming when he's afraid and faces the decision to fight or run away; grooming is an odd response to a "flight or fight" situation. Displacement behavior can be the dog's attempt to calm himself.

Here are some typical displacement behaviors:

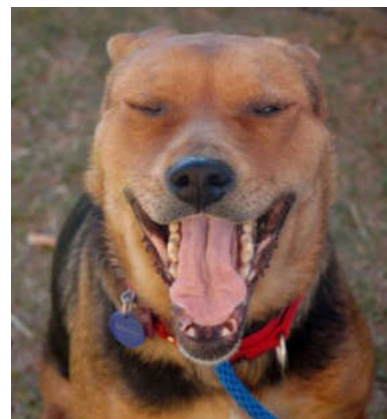
- Yawning in new or emotional situations
- Panting when it's not hot
- Lifting a front paw as someone walks toward the dog
- Licking his lips, even though the dog hasn't been eating or drinking
- Scratching himself when he's not itchy
- Looking away as a person or another animal walks toward the dog
- Shaking off after someone handles the dog or another dog plays too roughly
- Stretching out as though doing a play bow, but not asking for play (sometimes a greeting when a dog is stressed)
- Making a puff (exhale) of breath, sometimes whining at the same time, and looking away or turning away
- Lying down and trying to make whatever is happening stop by not taking part in it

There is stress along with fear when a dog:

- Starts to drool when she normally doesn't
- Paces or circles



*Tail tucked, body stiff, looking away: indicates fear, discomfort.*



*Yawning may be displacement behavior.*



*Unsure or fearful: Ears back, whites of eyes are showing.*

- Tucks his tail and moves away from something
- Starts to whine
- Sweats through her feet
- Puts his hackles up, his tail is low or high, and his body is still
- Starts to growl, and may start to move away, though not all dogs move away from things they fear (Many people punish dogs for growling, which takes away a valuable form of communication)
- Starts to curl her lips (Sometimes this is all the warning a dog will give before biting)
- Starts to show his teeth (Again, the warning before biting can be brief, so try to remember every detail of what triggered the behavior so you can work on improving or at least managing it)



*Running with teeth showing could mean several things. If you don't know the dog, you will learn more shortly.*

## Diffusing the stress-inducing situation

If you notice that a dog appears stressed, stop whatever you are doing and try to determine what the dog is reacting to. You want to help the dog become more comfortable or manage the behavior in the future so that a bite to a person or animal doesn't happen.

Often, if we slow down whatever situation caused the fear and start exposing the dog in small amounts at a distance, we can help him to completely overcome his fear. We can also help dogs to become more comfortable in general, in order to keep them safe and to keep us safe.

## To learn more

If you want to learn more about your dog's body language, Turid Rugaas has a lot of information in her book *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals*. And in her DVD, *Calming Signals: What Your Dog Tells You*, viewers can see her pointing out various signals dog use to communicate with each other. Other valuable books include these:

- *Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide to Interpreting the Native Language of the Domestic Dog* by Brenda Aloff
- *Canine Behavior: A Photo Illustrated Handbook* by Barbara Handelman
- *Dog Language: An Encyclopedia of Canine Behavior* by Roger Abrantes

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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**Disclaimer:** Best Friends Animal Society is not responsible for any injuries to anyone using the techniques described in this article. Any person using the techniques described here does so at his/her own risk.



## How to Educate Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

Dogs need guidance and consistent training from their people if they are going to live in harmony with humans. All dogs must be taught acceptable behavior, and one way to do that is to train your dog or pay a trainer to do it. Dogs are happiest when they know who's in charge and what's expected of them.

When you are looking for an obedience class or a trainer, shop around and ask questions. You will want to find a trainer who uses humane methods, someone who uses positive reinforcement rather than punishment. Ask if you can watch the trainer give a class and speak with people who are currently taking a class. If the trainer says or does anything that you are uncomfortable with, you may want to look elsewhere. For more tips, read [Find a Dog Trainer](#).



With positive reinforcement — treats, rewards like ball-playing, and praise — training can be fun for all involved. If you develop a loving, fun relationship with your dog, she will enjoy the time spent learning.

You should be integrally involved in your dog's training. The trainer should also be training *you*, so that you understand how to practice with your dog what she has learned. Training your dog doesn't end after the class is over; you will need to practice cues with your dog throughout her life.

Your dog should be taught helpful cues such as come, sit, wait, down, stay, leave it, and drop it. Consistent training can produce a dog who will walk nicely on lead, which makes outings a lot more enjoyable. Your dog can learn to give greetings by politely sitting (instead of jumping up) when meeting new people.

Though training is a good thing, keep in mind that dogs still need to behave like dogs. They need to play, run, dig, and chew. These are natural behaviors that can happen in appropriate ways and places. Here are some ways that you can give your dog the opportunity to express natural canine behaviors:

- Make sure your dog gets plenty of running and playing outside the house; that way, she will be less inclined to be rambunctious inside the house.
- Provide a dirt box out in the backyard for your dog to dig in. You can bury a variety of toys in the box to encourage him to dig there (instead of in your flower beds).

- Supply your dog with a variety of appropriate things to chew on. Some examples are frozen carrots, Kongs stuffed with peanut butter or treats, bully sticks, rawhide chips and Nylabones.

You also need to socialize your dog — to get him accustomed to behaving acceptably in public, and comfortable with meeting new people and other dogs. If your dog is properly socialized, he will enjoy meeting other animals and will be able to safely interact with them. A socialized, emotionally healthy dog allows handling of every part of his body, not only by you, but also by the veterinarian and the groomer.

If at any point, your dog's training doesn't seem to be working or his behavior is problematic, please seek help before becoming frustrated with him. Try to remember that he needs continuing education throughout his life. Some problems are easy to fix by going back to basic training and practicing cues consistently. For more complex issues, you may want to consult your veterinarian. If the cause is not medical, your veterinarian may recommend a behaviorist, who can do an in-depth assessment and develop a plan for behavior modification and long-term management of the problem.

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## Daily Activities for You and Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

If you want a well-trained, well-mannered, well-socialized dog, interact multiple times every day with your dog, with the goal of building a foundation of trust and a healthy relationship. (See [“Why We Use Relationship-Based Training.”](#))

All dogs benefit from learning and practicing skills daily. Keep all interaction fun; if you are stressed on a particular day and will not play nicely with your dog, skip spending time with your dog that day. Dogs are sensitive to your emotional state and will pick up on your stress.

### Things to Teach and Practice Daily

**House-training.** I add the words “Go potty” right away. I set each dog up for success by walking him or her outside about every 45 minutes on lead to allow the dog many opportunities to get it right. I supervise the dog inside the house because it’s much easier and faster to help her learn where to go potty before she starts having “accidents” in the house.

**Name recognition.** Use the dog’s name often when you’re praising and playing with her, and always with a happy tone. Dogs should have only positive associations with their names and nicknames.

**Recall.** Call the dog to you often — again, always using a happy tone. Add treats sometimes to pleasantly surprise her and keep her coming to you fast. Remember to practice recall frequently, not just when something fun is about to end. People often lose great recall because they only call the dog for negative reasons or use a negative tone. Why would any dog want to come running to you if you seem angry or if the fun almost always ends when she runs to you?

**The joy of touch.** Teach your dog to enjoy being touched on all body parts. Start with getting your dog to enjoy your touch and work toward the goal of getting him comfortable with being touched by people he doesn’t know. It is important that dogs allow us to touch them because they may need to be handled by various people: strangers, rescuers after an emergency, the vet, the groomer. They may need to be picked up off the ground or floor for grooming or medical reasons. If you can lift the dog’s body up off the floor, practice this to help him relax and realize that nothing bad happens when he is lifted.



Can you trim your dog's nails? Is he comfortable having his feet touched? Grooming has many benefits for dogs, so teach your dog to enjoy grooming. Make sure that anyone who grooms your dog is kind and gentle to help ensure that you have a dog who is safe for others to handle. You can help him to feel more relaxed by adding positive experiences to his grooming memories.

When I have a new dog in my home, I massage the dog every day, touching his entire body and continuing to touch him until he relaxes. Many dogs are so excited and reactive to our touch that this is a challenge. To help the dog learn to relax and enjoy touch, I do the massage in a quiet room without a lot of human or non-human traffic. If your dog does not allow touch, please read "[Teaching Your Dog the Joys of Touch.](#)"

**Rest and relaxation.** Dogs don't know how to control their own energy and the result can be destructive, nuisance or rough behaviors. There are dogs who bark incessantly, chew up everything within reach, dogs who mount, pull humans around by the limbs or hair, knock down children, and decapitate Barbie! People must teach their dogs to have an "off" switch. Many dogs are dropped off at shelters because their people became frustrated and felt they could no longer control their dogs.



Every day, you can help your dog by teaching her how to rest and relax in your home and during outings. Going on walks or riding in a vehicle should be relaxing for both human and dog. When I have a new dog in my home, I practice R&R daily by having the dog either tethered to me or crated for a while. I tether new dogs or crate them for travel; I do not allow them to jump around barking while I drive.

They also enjoy walking on lead without pulling. How? Because they are taught to walk without pulling: I simply stop walking until they ease up on pulling. Going for walks is much more enjoyable if the dog isn't yanking you along. Also, any dog will be more welcome in public settings if she has manners. Her energy will be more focused and calm if she is not in emotional overdrive while out walking.

**Retrieve.** The retrieving game is not for every dog; those who enjoy it will let you know. I start with a toy tied on a lunge whip. Drag the toy around excitedly and the dog will probably chase it. If he does, this can be the game for a while. Then I start throwing one toy tied with a thin line a short distance and have another toy in my hand. If the dog goes to the thrown toy, I guide her back with the line and show her that I have another toy.

The two-toy method helps many dogs learn to interact instead of just taking a toy and going off to play with it. The dog also learns to trade the toy in his mouth for the toy you have in your hand, which is more fun because you can keep that toy moving to entice him to continue to play with you. I add words for trading toys; "trade," "drop it" or "give" are common words used.

**Tug.** I teach dogs to tug. The game of tug, with rules, is a very healthy, educational

game. You start and end the game, and if the dog ever puts her teeth on your skin, the game is over. I use an emotional tone to say “Ouch!” if I feel teeth on my skin. This helps dogs learn to play within limits. Self-limiting behavior is normal for dogs: Watch well-socialized adult dogs play with puppies or senior dogs. They sense what is appropriate and play accordingly. Again, you can use two toys to help the dog learn to drop the one she is holding, signaling the end of one game and the start of another.

**Search.** Keep them thinking! I hide food, treats and favorite toys to encourage my dogs to search daily. When a dog finds these hidden treasures, I reward him with lots of praise.

**Agility.** Many dogs enjoy agility training and benefit from the experiences that come with doing something physical. In agility training, dogs learn how to really use their bodies — and all four feet. Fearful dogs learn to be more confident, overweight dogs get some great exercise, but just about any dog can benefit from learning to negotiate his way over, under, through and around objects. Agility training can be fun for your dog and for you, too. Remember to check with your veterinarian before beginning any weight loss or exercise program with your dog.

## Getting the Behavior You Want

Be proactive by teaching your dog to perform the behavior you want! We can reward any behavior we like and want to see more of, including being calm and gentle. The most effective way to squelch unwanted behavior is to ignore it. Why? Because giving any attention (even negative forms of attention, such as saying “no!”) for unwanted behavior is still seen by the dog as a good thing because he’s getting attention. You can immediately ask for another wanted behavior while ignoring what the dog has offered.

**Hand-feeding.** Taking treats gently from all human hands is a valuable lesson and, of course, dogs love practicing it. Hand-feeding a dog is a great way to raise the value, in his mind, of interaction with all people. This simple human behavior builds trust in fearful or shy dogs. For all social dogs, we can hand-feed while practicing all known cues.

**Lure training and capturing.** These are primary ways to train easily and quickly. In lure training, I guide the dog with a treat or toy (the lure) into a sit, down, stand, or up (jumping or climbing up on something). You can use lure training to teach a dog to use his paws to touch an object. For example, in my house I have a bell on the door to the yard. I show new dogs that the bell ringing causes the human to open the door. I teach dogs to ring the bell to go outside, which is helpful once a new dog has been house-trained.

I use capturing to reward any behavior I like, such as sneezing. You can capture any behavior and cause the dog to repeat it by assigning a word to the behavior and rewarding the dog whenever she does the behavior. I give it a word right away and use the word every time they do the behavior. Many dogs in my life sneeze as a way to request things they want; I prefer this to barking as a way of asking for things. I do teach “Speak” and give it that word (speak) from the beginning. However, I am careful to only reward “speaking” (barking) when it is wanted. Otherwise, “request barking” can become a problem behavior; if a dog believes that barking will get her what she wants, it can easily be overused by the dog.

**Teaching “wait.”** I teach every dog to wait. I use wait at doors before going in or out,



in the car, when I'm giving a dog a bowl of food, if I drop something I do not want the dog to pick up. The cue I use is a hand signal: palm up, facing out toward the dog. I say "au auat" (a sound more than a word); my tone is firm but not harsh. The dog can be standing, sitting or lying down. If the dog tries to move forward, I physically block him with my hand, trying not to touch him but clearly communicating that he needs to pause briefly.

**Teaching "stay."** Once a dog has learned to wait, it is easier to teach stay, which is used for longer periods of time than wait, times when you don't want the dog to move. To start learning to stay, the dog should be in a sit or down position, since standing for long periods can be physically difficult, causing the dog to break position to get more comfortable.

I start very close to the dog and reward often for non-movement. I build up the length of time the dog stays still before I start to move away. When I start to move during the stay, I take baby steps around the dog, not away from him. Many dogs want desperately to be near us, so go slow when teaching stay. If we cause a fear reaction, it is much more difficult for the dog to learn. Just like us, dogs learn best when they are enjoying the learning experience and aren't stressed, emotional or distracted.

**Teaching social skills with other animals.** Most of us want to take our dogs out in public. Going places, of course, means that our dogs meet a variety of people and other animals, and they get to practice their social skills. Please protect your dog by not letting her have negative experiences. One way to help dogs learn to have more socially acceptable behavior is to have people meet you with their dog-friendly dogs to allow the dogs to have positive experiences. If your dog is not social, please read "[Managing a Dog Willing to Bite](#)." Some dogs require more management than others, but with our help they can go out safely and enjoy a bigger life than the house and yard offers.

**Providing medical and dental care.** All dogs need regular medical and dental care. They need a family doctor just like us — one we trust to oversee their general health. Routine visits allow your doctor to see changes through examinations, blood tests and x-rays. Different parts of the country have different parasites, for example; your veterinarian will be able to keep your dog safe in your area. Please report any change in behavior to your family veterinarian. Often, changes in behavior are related to changes in the dog's physical health.

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## Crate Training: The Benefits for You and Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

### Why should I use a crate?

Dogs are hard-wired by their genetic history to be den animals. A den is a small, safe, well-defined space. It is a place in which dogs feel instinctively safe. It is also a place that they instinctively avoid soiling. The combination of these two native traits are what make crate training, done in the right way, a kind and effective component in house-training your new puppy or dog.



A crate can also be a place for your dog to rest or have “down time.” If you have just acquired a dog, a crate can limit access to the entire house until your new dog knows the house rules. A crate can help with house-training by setting up a routine. For example, you can feed the puppy in the crate and, afterwards, carry him or walk him on a lead straight out to an elimination site where you can use a word or phrase to remind the dog what the trip outside is for.

There are other benefits of crate training. At some point in your dog’s life, it may be necessary to use a crate when you are traveling with your pet or when your dog is recuperating from an injury. Such potentially traumatic situations will be much less stressful if your dog is already familiar with and comfortable in a crate. Crates are also useful for keeping destructive dogs out of mischief when you’re not home to keep an eye on them.

### Where do I purchase a crate and how do I know which one to buy?

Most pet-supply stores carry dog crates; pet catalogs sell them as well. Considerations when buying your crate: Make sure the crate is big enough so that the dog can stand up, turn around and lay flat on his side in comfort, but small enough that there isn’t enough room for the dog to sleep and eat at one end and eliminate at the other. If you are training a growing puppy, you can buy a larger crate with a divider for adjusting the crate as he grows.

### How do I introduce the crate?

You can prevent problems with crate training by setting your dog up for success. Your dog should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encouraging him to go in. Some dogs may need to warm up to the crate slowly. If your dog is afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as he is willing

to go. After he takes the treat, place another treat a little further back in the crate. Keep going until he is eating treats at the very back, then feed him his next meal in the crate with the door open, so that he can walk in and out at will. Crate training a fearful dog can take days, so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced and used, your dog will happily enter and settle down.

### **Should the crate be used at night?**

Sure, you can use the crate at night. Put the dog in with a treat and a cue like “kennel” or “kennel up” delivered in a cheery tone of voice. The crate should be situated close to you so that you can hear the dog whine or whimper if he needs to eliminate during the night. (Dogs will usually make some kind of noise rather than make a mess where they sleep.)

If you are training a puppy, be prepared for one or two trips outside at night to eliminate. If the puppy goes outside and doesn't produce, do not allow any extra time for play or long drinks of water when you come back inside. Instead, encourage the pup to return to the crate. He may whine a bit, but if you have given him ample opportunity to eliminate, try to ignore the protest and the puppy should settle down quickly.

### **How much time in the crate is OK?**

No dog, young or old, should be living in a crate full-time. Dogs are social animals, so for a dog to have a good quality of life, social isolation should be kept to a minimum. All dogs need daily exercise and some interaction with others. Even four hours in a crate without a break during the day is a long time for many adult dogs. If you must crate your dog when you're not home, arrange to have someone stop in and let her out for a potty break and to stretch her legs. Except for nighttime, crating a dog for long periods of time is not advised.

Puppies, especially, should not be left in a crate for long periods of time (more than two hours). It is important that puppies not be neglected and forced to break their instinctive aversion to soiling their sleeping area. Unfortunately, this is what happens to many pet-store puppies and it can lead to serious house-training difficulties. Also, since they are still developing, puppies have even more need for social interaction than adult dogs. If they aren't socialized to the world while they are young, they can develop fears and aberrant behaviors of many kinds.

Most adult dogs can stay in a crate for the entire night without a trip outside. However, young puppies and some old dogs cannot physically hold their bladders and bowels through the night.

### **When should a crate not be used?**

A crate should not be used as a form of punishment. As mentioned earlier, your dog should have only warm, fuzzy feelings about her crate. Even though a dog can come to see her crate as a safe place, it is not the solution for a dog with separation anxiety, since she could injure herself trying to get out.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## House-Training Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

When you get a new puppy or dog, you'll need to show him or her what is acceptable in your home. Different people may have different rules: Some want to train their dogs to eliminate in litter trays or on paper, while others want all "bathroom" business to occur outdoors. For your dog to know what you want, you have to establish a predictable routine.



### How do I house-train my dog?

For at least the first couple of weeks, a new dog of any age should be supervised when he or she has the full (or even partial) run of the house. During those times when you cannot supervise him, it is wise to restrict the movement of a new animal during the house-training phase. You can house-train your dog by using a crate. Or, for limited periods of time, you can confine the dog to a small, easy-to-clean room, like the bathroom, equipped with a child gate.

Your dog should consider this space a safe place, so add the dog's bed, water and things to chew on to create a comfortable den. The dog should be fed in this space as well. To keep this space safe, make sure that nothing that would cause her discomfort happens here and keep children out of this area.

Set up a daily schedule where you walk your dog on lead (or carry her) to the desired elimination spot after meals, after naps, and every couple of hours in between. To reinforce that the trip has a purpose, you should not play with the dog during trips to eliminate. Use a word or phrase (like "do your business") to remind the dog of her duty. As soon as she has produced, praise her lavishly and give her a treat.

### What do I need to know about house-training a puppy?

Puppies cannot hold their bladders and bowels for more than a few hours. Even the most intelligent and well-intentioned puppy has to wait until his muscles develop before he can exercise appropriate bladder and bowel control, just like a human infant. If you must be away for more than two or three hours, and you are training the puppy to eliminate outdoors, you will need someone to help by walking the puppy for you.

If you are training a puppy to eliminate on paper or in a litter box, the space the puppy is contained in will need to be large enough for a sleeping area away from an elimination spot. (Dogs don't like to eliminate where they sleep.) Keep in mind that a puppy, if

trained to eliminate on paper or in a litter box, may have a lifelong surface preference; that is, even as an adult, he may eliminate on paper if it is lying around the house. Having a puppy eliminate in the house will prolong the process of teaching him to eliminate outdoors.

### **How long does house-training take?**

After a week or so of no accidents, you can begin allowing the dog freedom in the house after each successful trip outdoors. Supervision will still be needed, however, as well as praise and an occasional reward. Supervise the dog anytime he is given free run of the house, watching for signs such as circling and sniffing corners.

### **How do I deal with “accidents”?**

If an “accident” happens and you catch the dog in the act, stop him and escort him to the correct spot. Praise him if he stops eliminating when you ask him to. Be sure not to yell when you catch him in the act because this can cause him to discontinue eliminating in front of you, thus prolonging the potty-training process. If you find the results of an accident after it’s happened, again, do not punish the dog, since punishment could make him afraid to eliminate in your presence. It’s more effective to clean up the mess and put it in the designated elimination spot, so the smell will help your dog recognize that this is where to go.

To clean up accidents, use an enzymatic cleaner. Urine contains pheromones, chemical markers that say essentially, “Go potty here.” Only enzymatic cleaners break down the pheromones, which keeps dogs from sniffing out and using the inappropriate potty area.

If you’re training a puppy, keep in mind that a puppy’s muscles are still developing, so he may not be able to control himself when he eliminates in an inappropriate spot. Puppies mature at different rates, and some will take longer to develop bladder and bowel control.

Finally, there’s a difference between a dog who “marks” his territory and a dog who isn’t house-trained. Early neutering will reduce a dog’s inclination to mark surfaces with his scent. But, if a dog who is already house-trained starts having accidents, check with your veterinarian because there may be a medical cause.

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## How to Find a Good Veterinarian

Below are some guidelines for selecting a veterinarian for your pet. It's by no means an exhaustive list, but we hope it will help you to pinpoint the right person for you and for your animal. Our pets give us so much that the least we can do for them is to find the best doctor around.



Here are some qualities to look for in a veterinarian:

- **Kindness and patience.** If you are a new to having a pet, you are probably going to have a lot of questions. Your vet should be a kind person who will answer your questions patiently.
- **Good communicator.** Does the vet communicate clearly and in non-technical language? You'll want her to give you just the right amount of information to help you care for your pet.
- **Excellent professional skills.** Does the vet seem to keep up with the latest developments in the veterinary field? Does the vet and her staff act in a professional manner?
- **Accessibility.** Are the hours that the vet office is open compatible with your own? What happens if your pet has an emergency after hours?
- **Generous nature.** Veterinary care can be costly, but sometimes there's a range of care options. You want to feel as if the vet and his staff are taking into account your costs, suggesting less expensive alternatives if available.
- **Love of animals.** You'll definitely want a vet who loves animals as much as you do, and doesn't make you feel as though it's just a business. How does the vet interact with your pets? Is he warm, comfortable and caring around your pets when you bring them to the clinic?

A referral from a friend can be a good way to find a good vet, but just because the referral came from a friend does not mean that the friend has done his research. If something does not feel right, find a vet on your own.

For some additional tips, read the article "[Finding a Veterinarian](#)" on the website for the American Veterinary Medical Association.



## Staying Safe Around Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

Well-socialized and happy dogs can add so much to our lives and to our families. Dogs give us companionship, provide fun and physical exercise, and help us to teach our children about caring for others and about responsibility. Most dogs are the happy family pets that we enjoy being with.



There are situations, however, that can frighten or anger even the nicest of dogs, and their natural defense is to bite. There are also dogs who, due to the circumstances of their lives, may not behave like the typical family dog.

You, your family and your community can take simple steps to reduce the number of dog bites that occur. Here are some ways to keep the families and family pets in your community safe.

### Safety around dogs

- Always ask permission before petting or touching someone else's dog.
- Most of the time, we encounter friendly, wiggly dogs in public. But you should be cautious if a dog goes still, becomes stiff, and/or is not wagging in a loose and friendly way.
- Don't corner a dog. All dogs have a sense of personal space, so watch their body language as you get closer (or the dog gets closer to you).
- When approached by a strange dog, stand quietly, hands at your sides and avoid eye contact. A dog's natural instinct is to chase, so if you run, a dog may chase. Watch the dog out of the corner of your eye and don't turn your back.
- Do not approach dogs in cars or on chains or ropes. Dogs can be protective about their territory and may feel a bit more vulnerable or defensive than usual. When dogs are tied up, they know they can't run away so their only defense will be to fight.
- To avoid startling dogs, don't approach or touch them while they're sleeping, fixated on something, or with their puppies.
- Never get between dogs who are fighting and keep your hands away from their heads.
- Leave dogs alone when they are eating, whether the dog is eating from a bowl or chewing a treat or any other high-value item. Like people, dogs don't like it when people get between them and their food.

- Don't reach over or through fences or barriers to pet or touch a dog.
- Never tease, chase or harass a dog.
- Don't enter a property containing a dog if you're not accompanied by the dog's person. Dogs can be protective of their family and territory and think it's their job to protect them.

## **The dog-safe family**

- Children should always be accompanied around dogs, even the family dog.
- Supervising children around dogs not only protects the children from accidents but also protects the dog from harm by children who don't always know that touching animals in a certain way can hurt them.
- Don't leave babies unattended around dogs. Dogs may not realize that babies aren't as strong as adults or even know what a baby is.
- If you're expecting a baby, start early to get your dog used to the changes a baby will make in your dog's and your lives.
- Don't attempt or allow your children to attempt to remove anything (toys, food or other objects) from your dog's mouth. Instead, find something of equal or greater value to offer your dog as a trade.
- Teach your children about dog safety early and promote dog-safe practices.
- If you are considering bringing a new dog into your family, write down what your family is like and then consult your local shelter staff or do research on the Internet to learn about what kind of dog would be best for you.
- For more information about establishing a healthy relationship between your dog and your children, visit [familypaws.com](http://familypaws.com).

## **Good dog habits**

- Socialize your dog and make him a part of your family activities early on. Dogs also need to be socialized beyond your family and home; they need to be comfortable in the world.
- Read up on positive reinforcement training techniques and get your whole family involved.
- Take your dog to a certified trainer who can help you teach your dog appropriate behaviors in a humane, effective, and ethical way.
- Make a game for the whole family of spotting and reinforcing desirable behavior in your dog.
- Don't allow children to play rough with your dog, as they can accidentally hurt the dog or encourage him to become mouthy. That doesn't mean you shouldn't play games like tug, though; teaching your dog to play games using healthy rules will help the dog to learn self-control.
- Avoid hitting your dog or using other forms of physical punishment because it can make the dog fearful, resentful, or aggressive.



- Provide lots of exercise for your dog through constructive play like fetch and/ or frequent walks. Walks or hikes provide great exercise for you and your canine companion. Regular activity not only gets rid of excess energy but reduces frustration levels in your pet. Interactive play also increases the bond between you and your pet.
- Spay or neuter your dog. Over a six-year period, 92 percent of all fatal attacks by dogs were by intact (unneutered) dogs. Spay/neuter also reduces the likelihood of costly medical conditions and reduces the number of unwanted pets who end up in shelters.
- Make sure that your dog has lots of human interaction every day. A happy dog is a good dog. As social animals, dogs thrive on social interaction and love to be a part of the family.
- Avoid tethering (chaining or tying to a rope) your dog. Tethering removes a dog's ability to flee and makes him/her feel vulnerable. If he/she can't escape a perceived threat, the only option is to attack. According to a study by the CDC, tethered dogs are 2.8 times more likely to bite.
- Never let your dog roam free. Letting your dog roam free greatly increases his/her chance of injury or death from cars or attacks by people or other animals. A roaming dog may become confused or frightened, leading to aggressive behavior.
- Use caution when introducing your dog to new people, new dogs or new situations. Your goal is to provide the dog with a succession of happy experiences so his/her social skills will continually improve.
- If your dog's behavior changes (e.g., he becomes irritable), take him to your vet for a checkup. Behavior changes can sometimes be a symptom of a medical problem.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

*Rev. 11/15*



## Preventing Dog Bites on Children

By Sherry Woodard

Children can have the most amazing relationships with dogs if both are taught how to properly interact and respect each other. Proper training and management of both children and dogs can prevent tragedies from ever happening.



When a child is bitten, both the child and the dog pay a high price. Even if the child is not physically damaged, he or she is still emotionally affected. The dog may end up homeless (and a poor adoption prospect) in a shelter or be destroyed as a future safety precaution.

### What does my child need to know to prevent dog bites?

- Teach your children that they should never tease or throw things at a dog. Teach them to be especially gentle and calm around dogs that they don't know.
- Teach your children the proper ways to pet a dog and tell them not to pet strange dogs without asking permission. Tugging on a dog's ears or tail can be painful, and the dog might feel the need to bite. It is also important to teach your children not to hug dogs, especially dogs you don't know. That type of "confinement" can be scary to a dog and it brings the child's face close to the dog's face, which can make the dog uncomfortable.
- Tell your children not to run, jump or scream around an unfamiliar dog, since you are unaware of what actions may cause fear or predatory behavior in that animal.
- Remind your children not to stare at a dog when interacting with the animal. Children are often the same size as dogs and may stare into a dog's eyes without meaning to or without understanding that the dog may feel threatened.
- Tell your children not to wake up a sleeping dog. The dog may be startled and react defensively.
- Tell your children not to climb on any dog, even the family dog. It may be perfectly safe with your own dog, but children may try this with another dog and get bitten.
- Tell your children not to take things out of a dog's mouth and to leave an eating

dog alone. Even though your own dog may not guard toys or food, another dog may. Therefore, it is safer to teach a child to leave all dogs alone during mealtime or while they're eating treats. In addition, when around a strange dog, your child should not take away the dog's toys.

### **What does my dog need to know?**

- Socialize your puppy or dog to children. Watch your puppy or dog as she plays with children; stop the play if the child or the dog gets too rough.
- First, handle all of his body parts. If your dog objects to any part of his body being handled, go to an area of his body that he likes to have touched. As you talk soothingly to him, begin touching him there and then move over to the area that he does not like. Praise him if he does not react, and do this over and over until the dog is fine with touch everywhere. Use treats in addition to praise if necessary.

### **What do I need to know?**

- Have your whole family go to training classes with the dog. Everyone in your family should have some understanding of acceptable dog behavior
- Don't stare into a dog's eyes, since this can be threatening to him.
- Watch your dog carefully around other people's children, since he or she does not know those children, and you can't be certain of how your dog will react.
- Get your dog checked out by a vet if your dog's behavior suddenly changes (i.e., she becomes more irritable). Sudden negative behavior change may mean your dog is in pain and needs medical attention.

Finally, if you have a dog that is not okay around children, it is your responsibility to protect your dog from her tendencies. Never allow her to be in a situation where she might bite a child. If you teach both children and dogs how to properly interact, they will enjoy a wonderful, safe, fun relationship.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Pets and a New Baby

By Sherry Woodard

### What can I do to prepare my pets for the new baby?

Getting ready for a new family member is a busy, exciting time. In addition to all that you need to do to prepare for the new baby, there are a few things you can do to make the transition easier for your pets. Most pets accept a new baby with no problem. But, if you want to be extra careful, you can begin to prepare them ahead of time for the big event.

First, make sure your pets are up-to-date with veterinary checkups and vaccinations, since you may not have time for such things in the first few months after the baby's birth. Give your pets plenty of special attention. Play with your cats and dogs on a regular basis; exercise helps them to relax, and it relieves stress for the whole family.



If you have a dog, consider taking him or her in for a training refresher course. Find a trainer who uses positive reinforcement. A trainer who has experience with babies and children is ideal, since he or she can design a training, exercise, and safety plan for your family. It will save you a lot of time and frustration when you are busy with the baby if your dog knows key cues, such as “drop it,” “leave it,” “wait” and “down.” Make sure you practice the cues daily with your dog.

Both cats and dogs can benefit from familiarity with babies before you bring your new one home. Invite friends over who have babies and small children. Watch your animals closely to see how they react. If your pets seem unduly frightened, you might want to seek help from a behaviorist; your veterinarian may be able to refer you to someone. Never, ever leave a baby or child unsupervised with the animals.

Start using baby products such as lotion, bath soap, powder, and laundry soap. If you and the rest of the family smell like baby products, the baby will have a familiar smell when he or she arrives.

Set up the baby's room as soon as possible, so your animals will accept the new arrangement long before the baby comes home. A screen door can be very helpful to keep cats and dogs away from the sleeping baby. You can practice going into the room and reading aloud or talking in tones you will use with the baby. The animals will learn to wait (probably at the door) for your return.

## **How should I introduce the baby on the big day?**

Mom should greet the animals while another person holds the baby, since a normal greeting from mom will help the animals feel that everything is okay. Mom can then hold out one of the baby's blankets for the animals to smell. Your dog should be held on a loose lead.

When you enter the house, stay standing until the animals have had a chance to smell and listen to the baby. Ask your dog to sit or lie down before the person holding the baby sits down. Watch the animals closely. If your dog is curious, allow him to view the baby from about six feet away. Hold the lead loose, but short enough so that the dog can't reach the baby. Reward the dog with praise if he shows no fear or aggression. If your dog has been fine with other babies, you can allow him to go closer, but use caution.

## **What do I need to be aware of as we start life with a baby?**

Your animals may need reassurance that life hasn't changed all that much, so make sure you continue to give them special attention. Watch for signs of stress. Your dog may bark more; chase her tail, circle or pace; eliminate inappropriately; sulk or look depressed; start licking herself or chewing on herself incessantly; lose her appetite; or have diarrhea.

Your cat may hide or seem shy; become grumpy, smacking people and other animals; eliminate inappropriately; sulk or look depressed; groom excessively, to the point of making bald spots or sores; lose his appetite; or have diarrhea. Any change in behavior can be a warning that your animal may need help adjusting. Consult with your veterinarian if you notice changes in your pet's behavior.

When you start using a high chair to feed the baby, your cat or dog may try to share meals with the baby. Teach the animals that when the baby is eating, they don't get any tidbits. They will soon stop begging.

Never give your dog a doll that looks like a real baby to play with. Young dogs that play rough need to practice being calm and gentle. You can help by giving your puppy a massage; sit on the floor with her and slowly rub her all over until she is so relaxed that she falls asleep. Try to restrict vigorous play to places the baby will not be crawling around in later (outside or in the garage).

If you need to leave your baby with a sitter, tell the sitter to keep the animals and the baby apart in your absence. Don't take unnecessary risks with any of your family members — human or otherwise.

There will be new challenges when the baby starts to crawl and then walk. You will soon have a very short person walking around the house with toys and food that may be very tempting (and accessible) to a dog. Once you have a toddler, it's even more important to practice your dog's cues every day. Your pets can sometimes be a big help. If your child isn't ready to calm down for a nap, try reading out loud to your dog or cat to create the appropriate restful atmosphere.

Even if your animals are extremely tolerant, children need to be taught to be gentle with animals, since eventually they will be around someone else's pets who may not be so tolerant. Teaching kindness and respect for animals will bring greater benefit than simply avoiding getting bitten or scratched. It builds a better world for all of us. Remember, never leave a baby or child unattended around animals.

If you want more information about dogs and babies, read *And Baby Makes Four: A Trimester-by-Trimester Guide to a Baby-Friendly Dog* by Penny Scott-Fox.

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## Introducing Dogs to Each Other

By Sherry Woodard

If you have a dog and a new one will be entering or visiting your home, there are things you can do to ensure that the meeting goes off without a hitch. A new dog can mean you are bringing home a foster or a new family member, someone who has a dog is moving into your house, or someone is visiting with a dog.



If you know that both dogs are very social with a variety of other dogs, the meeting should be easy. However, some dogs don't get out and mix with other dogs that much, or may have only had one or two dog friends in their lives. These dogs may seem to have better social skills than they actually do, so introducing them to new dogs may require more care and effort. Another factor to consider is whether or not the dogs have been spayed or neutered; if not, the meeting may be more difficult.

If you are uncertain how one (or both) of the dogs will react, be cautious. First, plan to have the dogs meet on neutral ground. Choose a place where neither dog is likely to feel territorial. Even your dog's favorite park is not a good spot, unless it is a dog park (since dogs are often used to meeting other dogs there). If you are adopting a dog from a shelter, ask the staff if they can help to introduce the dogs. If your dog is accustomed to meeting dogs at a pet supply store like PetSmart or Petco, you can ask the store's trainer to help with the introduction. The dogs could casually meet while you are on a shopping trip. If either dog has a history of difficulty getting along with other dogs, the best strategy would be to hire a certified professional behavior consultant to help you gradually introduce the two dogs to each other.

When the meeting occurs, have each dog on lead, each with a calm, relaxed adult handler. Keep the leads loose, since tension on the leash might communicate to the dogs that you are fearful or anxious about their meeting, which will in turn make them more fearful and anxious. Walk the dogs side by side with a safe distance between the dogs. Then, cross paths (still maintaining that distance) and allow the dogs to smell where the other has walked. If either of the dogs barks, snaps and lunges toward the other, consider hiring a certified professional dog trainer or behavior consultant to teach you how to do the Look at That game to help the dogs feel calm and happy around each other before proceeding to the next stage of introduction.

Next, let the dogs meet. As the dogs approach each other, watch their body language closely, paying attention to the entire body. The dogs may need to do a little posturing or make a little noise, but if you don't know how to tell the difference between dogs getting to know each other and dogs who don't like each other, have someone there who does.

If the dogs have shown no signs of hostility toward each other up to this point, take them to an enclosed area, drop their leashes, step back and give them space to get to know each other. We have a tendency to micro-manage these interactions, but in general it's best if we allow the dogs to work it out with minimal interference. Humans hovering and getting too involved can be frustrating to the dogs, which can make them tense and spoil the interaction.

For the most part, dogs in this situation respond well to verbal feedback from humans. For example, if the dogs are getting too tense around each other, saying something in a soothing tone of voice (such as "It's OK, guys, cool your jets") can help them to take it down a notch, shake off and start fresh. If one dog is getting too overbearing and the other isn't correcting her, we can often help out by saying something like "Hey, knock it off!" If the dogs do shake off their tension and engage with each other in polite, appropriate ways, we can reward them for those behaviors and encourage more of them by speaking in a happy tone ("Good dogs! Well done!"). In most cases, that kind of verbal guidance is all the interference they need from us. We must only step in and physically separate them when they are becoming too excited and cannot give themselves a break, or when it becomes clear that their relationship is headed for conflict.

Here are some general body language signs to look for to get a general idea of where the interaction is headed:

- If they stiffen their bodies and stare into each other's eyes with their hair up and their teeth bared, they probably aren't going to become fast friends. If they lunge at each other and try to fight, separate them and don't try further introductions without help from a certified professional behavior consultant. Some dogs cannot safely interact with other animals and therefore should be the only pet in the home. Most of these dogs can be taught to ignore other animals while out in public, but they may never be able to safely interact with them.
- Be wary of nose-to-nose greetings. This type of greeting is very stressful for many dogs, particularly those who are fearful or feel threatened by eye contact. For these dogs, nose-to-nose greetings may cause them to make a bad decision and bite out of fear and defensiveness. When dogs first look into each other's eyes, the appropriate behavior is to give a glance and then look away. A hard stare into another dog's eyes is a challenge — not a friendly way to greet. If the dogs practice inappropriate behavior like stiffening or staring, try to get the dogs to calm down by offering verbal feedback. If that doesn't work, you can pick up their leashes and walk them around until they shake off and loosen up, then try again.
- If the dogs rush up to each other — with or without the hair raised at their shoulders and at the base of the tail — and engage in loud, raucous play, stay alert. This type of play can often escalate to fighting if the dogs do not know how to calm themselves down.
- If one dog pursues the other continually and ignores the other dog's corrections (e.g., lip curls, growls or air snaps) or requests to take a break, it can turn from play into bullying. These kinds of corrections are frequently mistaken for aggression, but



they are actually part of healthy, normal dog communication. Dogs should be able to correct each other when one is being inappropriate; likewise, they should be able to pay attention to another dog's corrections. It is also important for dogs to take turns being the chaser and the one being chased, and to take breaks when they get too amped up. If they are not able to do that for themselves, pick up their leashes and walk them around until they shake off and loosen up, then try again.

- If the dogs try to play by pawing or play-bowing with their legs stretched out in front of them, they may want to be best buddies. Allow them to get to know each other, and give praise for each nice interaction.

If the dogs seem fine with each other, drive them home, preferably in separate crates or cars so that the close quarters of a vehicle won't create unnecessary tension between them. At home, let them settle in, but make sure you've put away your dog's toys, bones and food bowls first, since these items may be sources of conflict. Whenever you feed the dogs, and certainly if you're going to offer high-value items like Kongs or chews, it may be best to separate them while they eat. Once the dogs are good friends, they may be more willing to chomp side by side on food and high-value items.

To introduce a puppy to a dog, use the same procedure as above. If the puppy is under six months old, both the dog and the puppy may need frequent breaks from each other. Some adult dogs will quickly lose patience with puppy energy. If the dog does not like the puppy, do not leave them alone together.

Finally, if you are not confident or comfortable at any point, please seek help from a relationship-based trainer who has ample experience with dog to dog interactions.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Small Dogs, Big Dogs: What's Safe?

By Sherry Woodard

The dogs of today have been bred by people into hundreds of different breeds that come in a wide range of sizes, from toy dogs that weigh a few pounds to large dogs who top the scales at over 100 pounds. This disparity in dog sizes is very different from what nature would have created — that is, extra small sizes are not found in the wild.



The result is that people with pet dogs need to be aware of some safety issues. You may not see your friendly 50-pound dog as large or dangerous, but a mid-size dog with an easygoing temperament can cause injury to a tiny toy dog even when trying to play. Some dogs have a strong chase drive (which is normal behavior) that instinctively causes them to want to chase and catch moving objects. Even if they're not bent on killing, they can hurt or even kill much smaller dogs if they catch them. Other dogs have a strong prey drive that motivates them to shake, kill and eat small animals. Like the chase drive, this instinct is a natural behavior inherited from the need to hunt to survive.

On the other end of the size spectrum, some toy dogs try to play with much larger animals, or they may be aggressive toward them. We find it amusing when a small dog stands up ferociously to a big dog, but it's actually an inappropriate greeting that could endanger the small dog. Little dogs often lack proper social skills with other animals and people because of our human tendency to act as their protectors. Our instinct is to protect small dogs, so we hold them in our arms above the other dogs, and pick them up all the time, so they never learn proper greetings.

Of course, we *do* need to protect them. Whenever dogs are off lead, we should supervise them closely. For safety, small dogs can be kept on a loose lead and be picked up only when necessary. If you see a bigger dog (more than 50 percent larger than another dog) who is staring, stalking or charging, use your voice to slow or stop the dog. Some dogs are fine with all dogs of a similar size, but they will react negatively if a small dog passes by. Know your own dog's tendencies. Some triggers for dogs with strong chase or prey drive are:

- Small dog showing fear and running away
- Small dog running off lead, even if he appears confident or is playing
- Small dog yelping or barking

No matter what size dogs we live with, let's try to be aware that size matters, so all dogs can be kept safe and trouble-free.

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## How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat

By Sherry Woodard

Some dogs do fine living with cats; others simply cannot live safely with felines. Sometimes, a dog can live with certain cats (depending on their age, temperament and activity level), but not others. Even if your dog has successfully lived with cats in the past, it is important to remember that each dog and each cat is an individual and therefore each introduction is different.



When introducing your dog to a cat, pay attention to the body language of both animals. If the cat's ears are pinned back or his tail is swishing back and forth, this is a good indicator that he is displeased. You particularly want to be aware of dog body language that could be potential warning signs. If your dog has a strong prey drive (the inclination to seek out, chase and potentially capture animals seen as prey — usually smaller animals such as cats or rabbits), she might become very focused on the cat. She'll stiffen, stare, and may start barking or whining. If you see these signs, do not let her near the cat. Ideally, her body language will be loose and relaxed around the cat. It's OK if she pays attention to the cat, but you don't want to see her fixated on him.

In addition, a dog's interaction with a cat can change depending on the environment. Just because your dog is OK with the cat inside the house doesn't mean she'll exhibit that same behavior outdoors. She might fixate on the cat and start stalking him when they are outside together. So, be aware of her body language around the cat in each new situation, until you know how she is going to respond toward him.

There are many different ways to introduce a dog to a cat. If the first method of introduction you try doesn't work or you don't feel comfortable with it, try a different option. Even if the dog has had experience with cats and the cat has lived with a dog before, proceed cautiously during the introduction. It's best to have two people present — one to intervene with each animal, if necessary. If you have more than one dog, introduce each dog separately to the cat.

### Option 1: Slow and steady desensitization

If your dog is too fixated on the cat, you can try desensitization, the goal of which is to reduce your dog's reaction to the cat by gradually increasing her exposure to him. Put the cat in a room (e.g., a bedroom, a bathroom or a spare room) with a tall baby gate across the door. The room you choose should be one the dog cannot access and doesn't need to access. For example, if the dog sleeps in the bedroom with you at night,

don't pick that room for the cat. The idea is to separate them and only allow them to view each other during specific times.

In his room, give the cat all needed supplies: litter box, toys, food and water. Keep in mind that cats are good at squeezing through small gaps and are also good climbers and jumpers. So, make sure your cat can't get past the gate you put up. The gate needs to be a barrier that allows the cat and dog to see one another, but does not allow them to access each other.

To begin desensitization, let the dog view the cat briefly through the gate, and then get the dog to focus on something else, such as playing with a toy or practicing cues. Sometimes it helps to keep the dog on leash so that you can move her away from the cat when you try to refocus her attention. Praise and reward the dog for being able to focus elsewhere. Continue to give the dog short viewings of the cat throughout the day.

Sometimes, even seeing the cat at first is too exciting for the dog. If this is the case, close the door and begin feeding each animal on his or her side of the door: The cat eats his food in his room, right next to the door, and the dog eats her meal on the other side of the door. This allows each animal to associate the smells of the other with something good: food. You can also swap out the blankets and bedding of each animal, giving it to the other. That way, the dog can get used to the cat's smell and the cat can get used to the dog's smell, without overstimulating either of them.

Hopefully, through this process of slowly letting the dog see the cat and get accustomed to the cat's presence, the dog will eventually become desensitized and lose interest in the cat. In some cases, the dog will lose interest in the cat within a couple of hours, but it can take days, weeks or even months. Each dog (and each cat) is an individual and will learn at his or her own pace.

With that said, though, it is possible that your dog may not ever be able to safely share space with a cat. If you don't feel you can trust your dog around your cat, you should keep them apart. Many dogs can injure or kill a cat very quickly, and your dog can also be injured by the cat. Your first priority should be ensuring that everyone stays safe.

## **Option 2: Face-to-face introduction**

This is a more fast-paced introduction. One person should hold the dog on a loose lead and watch the dog's body language. Someone else should watch the cat's body language. If the cat is not raising his back or hissing around the dog, he can be allowed to move around freely. A cat is rarely a threat to a dog, but some cats will be on the offensive when meeting dogs.

If the dog is calm around the cat, you can ask the dog to sit, or lie down and stay, if she has been taught those cues, while the cat moves about freely, sniffing the dog if he wishes. The dog should be praised and rewarded if she ignores the cat. If the dog is too fixated on the cat (e.g., staring at the cat, has stiff body language, will not listen to you when you call her name) or if she lunges and tries to chase the cat, you should try a different strategy for getting them to share space, such as Option 1 or Option 3.

## Option 3: Look at That

If the quick introduction did not work and your dog is not becoming desensitized to the cat, you might need to try some more structured training. By playing Look at That (LAT) with your dog, you can help to teach her not to fixate on the cat. You'll be teaching her to look at the cat and then look back at you for a treat. Essentially, she'll learn that it is more rewarding to not pay attention to the cat.

To start working on LAT, you need to figure out the dog's threshold while on leash: At what point does she notice the cat, but still respond to you when you say her name? That is her threshold. Each dog has a different threshold. For one dog, five feet away from the cat might be her threshold; for another dog, it might be 25 feet. You'll know you have gone past the threshold when she starts barking or lunging at the cat. Another sign that you're getting too close to the cat is if she starts moving more slowly, staring and stiffening her body. If you call her name and she doesn't respond to you, move a few feet away from the cat.

Once you've figured out the dog's threshold, grab a clicker and some really delicious, pea-sized treats. If you don't have a clicker, a verbal marker (a word like "yes" or "good") will work just fine. Put 10 treats in your hand and keep the bag close by for later.

When you see the dog looking at the cat, click the clicker or use your verbal marker and give her a treat. The first few times, you might have to put the treat right in front of her nose, but fairly soon she should start looking expectantly at you as soon as she hears the marker. That's because the marker (either a clicker or a word like "yes") always means a treat is coming. Use up the 10 treats, clicking as soon as she looks at the cat.

The 11th time, before using the marker, wait and see if she will look at the cat and then look right back at you. If she does that, either click or use the verbal marker when she looks at you and then give her a treat. If that doesn't happen, go back a step. Mark her 10 more times for looking at the cat and then try again. Once she is reliably looking at the cat and then looking back at you, you can slowly start moving closer and closer to the cat. If the dog becomes fixated on the cat when you move closer, you've gone past the threshold and need to move back.

As you train, her threshold decreases, which means that the two of you will be able to move closer and closer to the cat. Continue practicing LAT with your dog until she can be right next to the cat without an issue. How quickly your dog's threshold decreases will depend on you (how much you practice and the types of treats you use), your dog (since every dog learns at a different pace) and your cat's comfort level.

## Introducing kittens and puppies

If you are introducing a kitten to a dog, keep in mind that kittens may not have any fear of dogs, so you must watch the dog carefully. Because kittens are small and want to run and play, dogs with a strong prey drive may be very excited by a kitten's movements. Even if your dog is OK with your adult cats, it is important to watch her closely when she's with a kitten. If your dog is young and high-energy, she could hurt or kill the kitten

simply by trying to play. So, for safety's sake, keep kittens and dogs apart any time you are not watching them.

Introducing adult cats to puppies can sometimes be easy, since a well-socialized adult cat might be fine with a puppy acting like a puppy. However, if your rambunctious puppy is chasing your shy cat, it is up to you to intervene. Until the puppy is old enough to have more self-control and has had some training, you will want to manage their interactions. You don't want your puppy to learn that chasing the cat is a fun game. Baby gates can be used to keep the animals safely and comfortably apart. To help you keep an eye on your puppy, you can also put her on a leash. That way, if she begins to chase the cat, you will be able to easily direct her away from that behavior.

## **Seeking help from a professional**

Animals with good past experience often adjust well and quickly to a new pet in the house. But if introductions don't go well, seek help from a professional dog trainer or behavior consultant. Don't ever use punishment: It will not help and it could make matters much worse.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Preventing Your Dog from Chasing Cats

By Sherry Woodard

Chasing is a natural instinct for a dog, but it is not appropriate behavior in your home when directed toward your cat. The following guidelines can help you deal with this behavior through management (preventing the problem) and training (motivating the dog to change his behavior).



Management means arranging the environment to prevent the behavior. Ideally, this happens right from the start, so your dog never has the opportunity to act inappropriately, and your cat doesn't have to endure it! Prevention of the inappropriate behavior is very important, since cat-chasing is a self-reinforcing behavior (i.e., the more the dog chases, the more he wants to repeat it). So, if you're introducing a new dog or cat to your household, please read the resource called "How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat."

If at any time during the introduction process, the dog barks, fixates on the cat or tries to chase the cat, remove the dog from the situation so he cannot continue practicing inappropriate behavior. This also works with a dog who already has a tendency to chase the cat. Have a quiet area (a crate or a bathroom, for instance), a place that your dog already associates with good things, where you can take him.

The instant your dog starts to behave inappropriately toward your cat (chasing the cat, whining or simply becoming fixated), calmly lead or lure him away from the cat to the pre-designated area. You should act calmly to avoid arousing the dog even more and you should avoid speaking to your dog. After a minute or two, release your dog in an equally low-key manner. If the dog comes back and repeats the inappropriate behavior toward the cat, he should immediately go back to the "time-out" area.

To increase the chances of success, reward your dog for desired behavior. Reinforcing appropriate behavior teaches your dog what you want him to do (i.e., behave appropriately around your cat). Prepare a ready supply of great tasting training treats — small bits of whatever food your dog finds most enticing. As soon as your dog looks away from the cat, praise him profusely and give him a treat. Repeat every time your dog ignores the cat. Your dog will learn that whenever he sees your cat, rewards are forthcoming from you if he looks away from the cat.

You are training your dog to perform a certain behavior (looking away from the cat) upon seeing the cue (the cat). Just make sure the treats you are giving are more desirable to

your dog than the fun of chasing the cat! Once you've established what you want your dog to do (ignore the cat) and you've reinforced that behavior many times, you may choose to allow the dog more freedom around the cat.

At some point, you may need to help your cat change her association with your dog by feeding her tasty kitty treats while she's in the dog's presence. (During this exercise, make sure the dog can't chase the cat.) Also, modify the environment so that your cat has a safety zone, a place that is inaccessible to your dog. Set up baby gates to create safe rooms, provide lots of high perches for your cat, and always supervise your dog when the cat is around.

If the chasing persists, the motivation for your dog could be boredom or he could need more exercise. So, give your dog appropriate outlets. For instance, make sure he gets plenty of exercise. This can be physical exercise (e.g., running off-leash, playing with another dog friend, playing fetch with you, swimming) or mental exercise (e.g., learning basic cues and fun tricks, using food puzzles, learning nose work). A tired dog is a good dog, and tired dogs do much less chasing. Also, provide a variety of appropriate chew toys. Some ideas for appealing chews are stuffed Kongs, pressed rawhide and frozen broth. When you give your dog chew toys, make sure you give them to him in a room away from the cat, to prevent resource guarding.

A reward-based training program such as this will teach your dog to listen to you, provide him with alternative behaviors to perform, and exercise his brain. In summary, be consistent in training and reward appropriate behavior; be persistent with removing your dog from the situation if he's behaving inappropriately; and make sure your dog's social, physical and mental needs are being met. Finally, never leave your dog alone with the cat unsupervised, since behavior can never be guaranteed.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Routine Veterinary Care for Your Dog

All dogs need routine veterinary care to help them stay healthy throughout their lives. Puppies should be seen by a veterinarian at approximately three weeks of age for a physical and a fecal test for intestinal parasites. While you're there, you can talk about what vaccines will be needed in the future, how to prevent disease, when to have spay/neuter surgery done, and how to handle the diet change from mom to meals.



At six to eight weeks, puppies start getting vaccinations. The vaccines can be given every three to four weeks, depending on when the vaccines are started and the perceived risk to the animal. If heartworm preventive medication is needed in your area, you should start that, too. To keep your puppy safe from possible diseases, carry the puppy in your arms when you go in to see the veterinarian. Spay/neuter can be done as early as eight weeks; the puppy must weigh at least two pounds.

At 12 weeks, your puppy should get a parasite test. A rabies vaccine should be given between 12-16 weeks of age, depending on the state in which you live and local laws. Continue to keep your puppy up off the floor during visits to the veterinarian. If spay/neuter has not happened yet, it can be scheduled around this time. At 16 weeks, the veterinarian will administer the third and final set of shots. Some dogs (mostly black and tan dogs like Rottweilers and Dobermans) require an additional vaccine at 20 weeks of age.

After the four-month visit, your dog should be seen annually by your vet for a physical examination, vaccines, parasite test, dental check, and any needed blood work or other tests that your veterinarian recommends. Older dogs may need to be seen more often.

Besides taking your dog in for annual checkups, you should also take him or her to see the veterinarian if:

- He is a puppy and is not gaining weight
- She is lethargic, or she is losing or gaining weight
- She seems to be having some discomfort
- You notice a change in his behavior
- You notice a change in her general health — for example, her eyes have lost their brightness or her coat has lost its luster

Remember, regular veterinary care is an essential component of your pet's good health.



## Pet Vaccinations

Whether or not to vaccinate pets and how often to vaccinate are among the most debated questions in veterinary medicine in recent years. It used to be so easy: You took your dog or cat to your veterinarian once a year, your pet received the recommended vaccinations and whatever other things he or she might need, and you went on your way. Now, the standard of care in veterinary medicine has changed. No longer are we vaccinating every animal every year with every vaccine available.



Vaccines have been divided by the veterinary community into “core” and “non-core” vaccinations. Core vaccines are those that every animal should get at some point during their lifetimes (e.g., rabies, distemper, parvovirus). Non-core vaccines are those that should be given based on the risk factors of a particular animal, such as feline leukemia virus (FeLV) vaccine for cats who are allowed outside, or bordetella (kennel cough) vaccine for dogs who are regularly boarded in a kennel.

### The debate about pet vaccines

Some veterinarians have argued that vaccines can lead to immune-mediated conditions, cancers and organ-related illnesses. The most studied and well-documented example of this is vaccine-induced fibrosarcoma (a type of cancer) in cats due to the FeLV vaccine. The result has been changes in vaccine recommendations for cats, including how often and where to give the vaccines. Other concerns are not as well documented, but significant correlations have been made between vaccines and other illnesses.

The flip side of the argument is that vaccines have greatly decreased the amount of infectious diseases in animals. Before vaccines became routine, veterinarians spent a lot of time working with horrific infectious diseases, such as distemper, rabies, panleukopenia and parvovirus. We certainly still see those diseases, but much less frequently. Overall, vaccines have greatly improved the health of our pet population.

So, vaccines are very important for the overall health of our pets, but they need to be used judiciously. There is also a difference in the need to vaccinate pets living in homes and the need to vaccinate those who are in shelters or sanctuaries. For animals who do not yet have homes and are living in group or high-density situations (many of which can be quite stressful as well), vaccines are crucial to maintaining their health and the health of any new arrivals. There are very good reasons to vaccinate and administer appropriate booster vaccines to this population of animals.

### Vaccines, the law and your pets' lifestyle

The most straightforward reason to vaccinate your pets is to comply with local law. For instance, in general, every community requires that dogs (and in some communities,

cats) be vaccinated for rabies. This is a public health issue because rabies is zoonotic (which means it's a disease that can spread from animals to people) and it is not a curable disease. The only time it is acceptable not to vaccinate for rabies is if your pet has a disease that could be worsened by administration of the vaccine. Talk to your veterinarian about whether your pet has a condition that makes rabies vaccination inappropriate or damaging to your pet's condition. Unfortunately, your un-vaccinated pet will not be exempt from rabies quarantine laws if he or she bites someone.

Do your pets go to day care, dog parks or kennels? If so, they will be exposed to more diseases, so it is important to maintain a regular vaccination schedule. Some of these businesses may require verification that your pet is protected. They certainly care about your pet, but they also require vaccines because they don't want other animals to contract diseases at their place of business.

Another important variable is your pets' lifestyle. Does your dog encounter wildlife or play in areas where wildlife is frequently spotted? If the answer is yes, vaccinating for leptospirosis may be important. Does your cat spend time outdoors? Cats who roam around outdoors can come across diseases such as feline leukemia, and therefore should be protected against them. On the other hand, if your cat never goes outside, the rabies vaccine may be all that is needed. (Rabies vaccination is important for both legal reasons and because bats, which can get into most building structures, are a common carrier of rabies.) Discuss with your veterinarian the particulars of your pets' lifestyle, and he/she will tailor a vaccine schedule appropriate for your pets.

### **Frequency of pet vaccinations**

Most animals living in homes do not need vaccines every year. (There are exceptions to this, of course, but they are not that common.) We recommend doing the puppy and kitten series, and a booster vaccine in one year, and then every three years for the majority of core vaccines — or possibly only rabies for indoor-only animals. Studies have shown that most animals have immunity from the diseases they are vaccinated against for at least three years after their first booster. This immunity may last even longer, but at this time, the recommendation is to administer most vaccines every three years. (Some vaccinations, however, like leptospirosis, need to be administered annually.) And when pets become elderly, most vaccines (except rabies) can be stopped, unless there are factors that make vaccinating necessary.

Some veterinarians and people who are concerned about over-vaccinating will run titers to the diseases for which we vaccinate. A titer measures the level of antibodies (protective proteins) that are present in the body to fight against specific diseases. Having a lot of these antibodies does not mean pets are 100 percent protected, but they typically are not going to become ill if exposed to the disease. Titers can be expensive and it can take several days to get the results. If you have concerns about over-vaccination, you should discuss the option of running a titer with your veterinarian.

In summary, vaccines are an important consideration for our pets' general health care and should be a cornerstone of appropriate wellness care for your pets. Whether a particular vaccine is right for your individual pet is a discussion you should have with your veterinarian.



## Signs of Health and Sickness in Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

Your dog may not be able to communicate with you in words, but he can give you signs to indicate whether he is healthy or sick. Here are some signs of a healthy dog:

- Skin is smooth and supple, and free of scabs, growths and rashes.
- Coat is glossy, without dandruff or any areas of baldness, and with no signs of parasites.
- Eyes are bright, not watering, and free of discharge.
- Ears on the inside should be light pink (though dark-skinned dogs may have black pigment), clean or with just a trace of wax, not swollen, and free of discharge.
- Nose should be moist — not necessarily wet, but not dry or cracked.
- Temperature should be 100 to 102.5 degrees (101.5 is the average).
- Gums are normally pink, but they can have black or gray pigment.
- Stools should be firm and free of parasites.



One of your responsibilities as a dog person is to bring her to a veterinarian if you think she may be ill. Here are some signs that your dog could be sick:

- A significant change in behavior (such as increased irritability)
- Perceived pain or lethargy
- Visible pain (such as limping or chewing on a joint)
- Persistent vomiting
- Persistent diarrhea
- Persistent coughing
- Lack of appetite
- Excessive drinking
- Excessive urination

If any of these symptoms last more than 24 hours, you should bring your dog to your veterinarian. You should also bring her in for routine checkups and dental care.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

## Spaying or Neutering Your Dog

Spaying or neutering is one of the greatest gifts you can provide your pets. These routine medical procedures not only help control pet overpopulation, but they may also allow your dog to lead a longer, healthier and happier life.



### What is spaying? What is neutering?

Spaying is the surgical removal of a female dog's ovaries and uterus, while neutering is the removal of a male dog's testicles. While both operations are conducted routinely with few complications, only licensed veterinarians are allowed to perform them.

Before surgery, your veterinarian may do a complete physical examination of your dog or draw a sample of his blood for analysis. To minimize pain and discomfort, both spaying and neutering are conducted while your dog is under general anesthesia. Following surgery, your veterinarian will instruct you on how to care for your dog while he is recovering. Most dogs are back to normal within a few days. The surgery site usually heals within two weeks and any skin stitches are removed at a follow-up appointment with your vet.

### Why should I spay or neuter my dog?

Spaying or neutering your dog prevents unwanted births and reduces the influence of sex hormones on your pet's behavior. Millions of unwanted animals end up in shelters or on the streets each year. Only a lucky few are adopted; the rest are either euthanized or die from trauma, exposure, starvation or disease. By spaying or neutering your dog, you do your part to prevent this tragedy.

Spay/neuter can have a positive effect on some behavioral issues. Sexual behavior in both male and female dogs is reduced. Neutering male dogs reduces mounting and the urge to roam. In female dogs, the inconvenient "heat" cycle, with its messy, bloody discharge, is eliminated. Spaying or neutering eliminates or greatly reduces the development of mammary tumors in females and reproductive organ tumors in both sexes.

### Will my dog's personality change?

Spaying or neutering your dog is unlikely to change his or her basic personality. A dog's playfulness, and general levels of activity and excitement, do not typically change. Your dog will continue to interact with your family in the same manner as he/she did before surgery. It's possible that your pet will gain weight, but weight gain can be prevented by proper diet and sufficient exercise.

### When should I spay or neuter my dog?

Dogs as young as eight weeks of age can be spayed or neutered safely. Studies have recommended that male dogs be neutered before six to eight months of age. For female dogs, the surgery should ideally be performed before their first heat cycle. If you have questions, talk to a veterinarian.

## Your Dog's Diet

By Sherry Woodard

### What should I feed my dog?

There are many good-quality dog foods for sale; read the labels and talk with your veterinarian if you need help deciding what to feed your dog. Many people only feed their dog dry food, since it's more convenient to serve, has less odor, is less likely to spoil in the bowl, and can reduce the build-up of tartar on the dog's teeth.

There are also many nutritionally complete wet dog foods for sale. Many people use wet food as a treat, as a way to hide daily medications, or as a way to increase water intake (sometimes this is medically indicated). Any wet food remaining uneaten after 20 minutes should be thrown away. If you are committed to vegetarianism, dogs can do fine on a vegetarian diet, either homemade or commercial. Remember to have fresh, cool water available for your dog at all times.



### What else do I need to know about feeding my dog?

To know whether your dog's appetite is normal, supervise your dog while she's eating. If you have more than one dog, supervising their mealtimes will ensure that the dogs do not eat each other's portions or the wrong food.

You can use mealtime to reinforce your role as the leader. By doling out food at mealtimes, you are seen as the hunter, an important and powerful figure. Asking the dogs to sit before their bowls are given to them helps to reinforce the idea that living in a human home has behavior requirements.

If a dog eats too much or too fast, or exercises too soon after a meal, he can get bloating or GDV (gastric dilatation and volvulus). Deep-chested breeds are at higher risk, but if any dog shows discomfort after eating or has a visibly bloated abdomen, seek medical attention right away. GDV is very painful and will be fatal if left untreated.

### Should I change my dog's diet over the course of his or her life?

You should change your dog's diet according to age and special-needs requirements. Most puppies are eating dry puppy food by six weeks of age; they need three or four small fresh meals offered throughout the day. At six months, puppies can go down to two meals per day. If your puppy is going to grow to be a large dog, he may benefit from an attempt to slow his growth through diet change. Ask your veterinarian when you should transition from puppy to adult food.

Know what a good weight is for your dog and watch his weight as he gets older. If your dog does not have a visible waistline, have your veterinarian take a look at him. There may be a medical cause for his weight gain, or you may need to give him more exercise and switch to a different dog food.

Here are some special circumstances that may mean a change in your dog's diet:

- Sometimes, skin problems, ear infections and digestive problems are signs of food allergies. Discuss with your veterinarian whether a diet change is indicated.
- Some medical conditions, such kidney disease or diabetes, require special diets.
- Most older dogs need to be fed "senior" dog food. Extra-large breeds and some mixes age faster than other breeds. Ask your veterinarian when your dog should begin eating a senior diet.

If you have any questions or concerns, discuss your dog's diet with your veterinarian during regular checkups. If you plan to change your dog's diet, do it gradually. Start by mixing 25 percent of the new food with 75 percent of the old food. Slowly increase the amount of new food over the course of three days until you are feeding her all new food. Some dogs try to pick out just the old familiar food to eat, but don't worry; one small or missed meal will not hurt a healthy dog. While you're making the change, don't offer your dog other foods, treats or table scraps, or you may be promoting finicky eating behavior.

### **What should I avoid feeding my dog?**

You should avoid the following:

- Alcoholic beverages (they can cause coma and even death)
- Cat food (it's generally too high in protein and fats)
- Caffeine (it can be toxic, and adversely affect the heart and nervous system)
- Chocolate (in large amounts, chocolate can also be toxic)
- Fat trimmings (they can cause pancreatitis)
- Raisins and grapes (they can damage the kidneys)
- Nicotine (it affects the digestive and nervous systems, and can result in rapid heartbeat, collapse, coma and death)
- Table scraps (they are not nutritionally balanced)

Excess salt, sugar and fats can cause obesity, dental problems and finicky eating in your dog. For a happy dog, feed him a healthy diet and get plenty of exercise together.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## Obesity in Pets

Is your pooch pudgy? Is your feline fat? When you try to feel ribs, do you feel folds of fat instead? Obesity is an increasing health risk to our companion animals, specifically for our dogs and cats, and one that is rarely recognized by their people as a real problem. In fact, some find it cute — but it's a real health risk.

You might not notice that your pet is gaining weight, since it generally happens slowly over time. Among people who have pets, the ideal weight of their pets is subjective and it's difficult to define when a pet is slightly overweight or underweight. However, I think most people recognize when a pet is severely overweight. Veterinarians define obesity as a dog or cat who has large fat deposits over the chest, spine, neck and base of the tail; an obvious distended belly; and loss of a "waist." When viewed from above, the animal has a rounded pear shape.



Just as in the human world, obesity can lead to secondary medical and orthopedic problems in our pets. Diabetes is a serious complication that can be secondary to obesity. The pancreas secretes insulin in response to an increase in blood sugar (eating a meal). In an obese animal, the pancreas is chronically over-stimulated and basically gets worn out; it cannot produce the insulin necessary to maintain a normal blood sugar. Though diabetes can be treated and controlled, it is a stress on your pet's body and often leads to blindness in dogs and significant muscle weakness in cats.

Pancreatitis is another condition that occurs frequently in the obese dog or cat. The pancreas secretes not only insulin but also other enzymes to help with digestion. This condition causes the pancreas to secrete enzymes to such a degree that it actually starts digesting itself. Cats and dogs with pancreatitis will vomit and develop diarrhea and a very painful belly. If not treated, a pet can die from this condition.

Finally, obesity can lead to degenerative joint disease or arthritis. Simply put, the more weight the joints and tendons have to support, the more they begin to break down — causing chronic and often severe pain.

So how do you avoid obesity in your pets? First, be aware that obesity exists and is a problem for companion animals. Recognize that, just as in people, certain animals will have a fast metabolism and some will burn calories more slowly. Similarly, some pets will keep themselves at a good weight without much intervention from their people, while others need a pretty stern gatekeeper at the food bin.



Second, maintain a good relationship with your veterinarian. He/she can help you determine an ideal weight for your dog or cat, provide diet options and help you recognize early on when your pet is tipping the scales in the wrong direction. Regarding feeding: Both dogs and cats should be fed a measured amount of food daily (i.e., don't keep filling the bowl). This not only helps to prevent your pet from overeating, but also allows you to monitor his intake more closely and notice appetite changes, an important sign of illness. Your veterinarian can help you determine just how much food your pet should eat daily.

This type of feeding is really important in a multiple-cat household. It takes some time, but you can learn the routines of your cats and their dietary needs. Because cats can develop severe liver disease if they do not ingest enough calories, you could give your highly active cats some extra feedings away from your lower-energy kitties. Or you can try and separate your cats at feeding time so you can individualize their meals.

Third, avoid giving people food to your pets and give treats judiciously. It's nice to add some variety to your pets' food or reward them for good behavior, but don't overdo it. Remember, food does not equal love. Walks, play time, petting and quiet time alone with your pet all say "I love you" just as effectively as giving treats.

If you have an animal who is already overweight, diet and exercise are the best ways for your pet to drop those extra pounds and ounces. With severely overweight pets, you need to start slowly with an exercise routine to avoid injury. Slow, steady weight loss is the healthy way to go. Work closely with your vet to determine what type and amount of food and exercise are right for your pet, and get his/her advice before putting your pet (especially a cat) on a weight loss diet. Losing weight safely is just as important for our pets as not becoming obese to begin with.



## Hazardous to Your Pet's Health

By Sherry Woodard

Your pets rely on you to protect them from harm. In general, you should only feed your pets food and treats specially formulated for the type of pet that you have. Some human food and drink can make animals sick, so keep them out of your pets' reach. Here are some examples:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Substances containing caffeine, such as coffee
- Chocolate
- Fatty foods, especially drippings and grease from cooking
- Chicken and turkey bones
- Grapes and raisins
- Onions
- Macadamia nuts
- Salt and sugar
- Yeast dough
- All medications (aspirin is especially harmful to cats)



Many other things in or around your home can cause serious illness or even death in your pet. Here are some examples:

- Antifreeze
- Bait for rodents
- Batteries (they can contain corrosive fluid)
- Car care products, such as cleaners or oils
- Fertilizer
- Gorilla Glue (or similar products)
- Household cleaners
- Ice-melting products
- Nicotine products
- Pesticides for insects
- Plants that are toxic to pets
- Pool or pond products
- Poisonous snakes
- Utensils with food on them (such as steak knives)

Other potential dangers in your home include burning candles that may be knocked over, electrical cords that can be chewed, and loose cords or wires that animals may become tangled in. Take a look around your house and make it pet-safe.

For more information on what to do for a poisoned animal, what plants and people foods are poisonous, and how to poison-proof your home, visit the [ASPCA website](#) and search for “animal poison control.” If you suspect your pet has been poisoned and you need immediate assistance, you can call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435. The nonprofit hotline is staffed 24/7; the consultation fee is \$65.

Here are some things to avoid when traveling with your pet:

- Don't let your pet ride in the back of an open truck. He can be injured if you need to brake suddenly or take a sharp turn. Tying the animal to the truck doesn't solve the problem; he can still be seriously hurt or killed. If you must use the back of a truck to transport a pet, put the animal in a secure crate that is anchored so it doesn't move around in the bed of the truck.
- Never leave your pet in a vehicle in hot weather, even for a few minutes. Even with the windows wide open, the car can quickly become hot enough to cause heat stroke, brain damage, and even death.

Finally, don't let your pet roam. He or she can suffer injury or death from running at large. Your pet doesn't understand the danger of speeding cars, poisoned bait or trespassing on someone else's property.

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## Parasites in Pets: Fleas, Ticks and Worms

Parasites can present a big challenge when it comes to your dog's or cat's overall health. They can affect your animal's skin, digestive tract, heart — almost any organ, for that matter.

### Pet parasites

Which parasites you have to worry about depends greatly on your pet's lifestyle and where you live. For instance, a Persian cat in a New York City apartment has much less parasite concern than an adventurous, ever-hungry Labrador in Louisiana. Ultimately, what type of parasite control you do for your pet should be discussed with your veterinarian, who can tailor a program that fits your pet's needs, your personal belief system and the particular parasites present in your area or places where you travel with your pet.



The following are some broad guidelines to keep in mind when thinking about parasite control. While this discussion is broken down into three major categories of parasites — ectoparasites, intestinal parasites and heartworm — there are certainly other categories. However, those tend to be less common or specific to certain geographic regions.

### Ectoparasites

Ectoparasites are the ones you can see, such as fleas, ticks and mosquitoes, so they can have a significant “ick” factor. These types of parasites not only cause discomfort in the form of itchiness and pain, they can also transmit some very serious diseases, like mycoplasma haemophilus (from fleas), Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (from ticks), and heartworm disease (from mosquitoes).

Twenty years ago, these parasites were very difficult to control. Over the last 10–15 years, though, very good products have been developed that can prevent infestation by these parasites. Most of them are topical applications that are done once a month and have minimal toxicity to animals. The one exception: Some of the products (mostly over-the-counter ones, which tend to contain permethrins) can be very toxic to cats. With that said, any animal can have a toxic reaction to any product. If you are worried that your pet has had a bad reaction, let your veterinarian know, and you may want to stay away from that product in the future.

People often say they do not like putting these “poisons” on their pets. While they are technically poisons, they are poisonous to the insects. What often has to be weighed against the concern of toxicity is the discomfort and disease status of your pet. If your dog or cat has a very bad flea allergy, and no known reaction to the topical flea products, it is almost cruel to not try and relieve your pet of the discomfort of being constantly bitten by fleas.

## **Intestinal parasites**

Intestinal parasites can cause diarrhea, a poor hair coat (due to not absorbing nutrients), weight loss, vomiting and loss of appetite. The most common intestinal parasites are roundworms, hookworms and whipworms. Tapeworms are also very common — not to mention very gross — but they tend not to cause problems in dogs and cats.

Most veterinarians will recommend a pretty aggressive deworming protocol for young dogs and cats, as they are very prone to picking up these infections. They normally pick them up from the soil where other animals have defecated. Most of these deworming protocols involve using a dewormer such as pyrantel every two weeks from age 4 weeks to 16 weeks. In some areas of the country, it is recommended that you continue to deworm your dog or cat every month for the rest of his/her life. Indoor cats are not likely to pick up worms, so this protocol applies more to cats allowed outdoors.

Being diligent with a deworming program benefits not only the health of pets, but the health of people as well. Many of these intestinal parasites are zoonotic, which means they are transmissible from animals to people. For most healthy adults, this is not a big problem, but young people, elderly people or anyone with a weak immune system (such as those with cancer or HIV) can get serious infections from some of these parasites. In fact, infants infected with roundworms can go blind. The best defense against picking up these infections is to maintain a deworming protocol for your pets (if appropriate for their lifestyle) and to wash your hands after you have touched animal feces or the fur on the hind end of your pet.

## **Heartworm**

Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. And yes, when the heartworms are allowed to mature in your pet, they do reside in the heart (actually, the pulmonary artery that leaves the heart). The mosquitoes transmit an immature larval stage of the heartworm and then these larvae go through four more stages to become adults. If they become adults, the result can be heart failure and severe lung disease. Heartworms can infect both dogs and cats, but cats tend to have a lower incidence than dogs.

The good news is that there are a lot of options for prevention of heartworm disease. The preventatives work by killing the larval stages that have already been injected into the dog or cat. So a dose of preventative works retroactively, killing the larval stages of heartworms for 45 days. For that reason, you can get away with only giving most preventatives every 45 days. Veterinarians recommend dosing every 30 days because it's easier to remember to give preventatives at the same time every month. The other benefit of most heartworm preventatives is that they also contain an intestinal dewormer.

There is also a topical product that acts as a heartworm preventative, but some veterinarians don't like using it for this purpose because it is harder to verify that the animal has absorbed the appropriate dose. You can tell when the topical products work for fleas and ticks because you no longer see the fleas and ticks. However, there is no way to know if the topical heartworm preventative was absorbed without doing heartworm testing — and by then, it is too late. (A treatment for heartworm disease exists, but it has a lot of side effects, is expensive, and is not always available.) To be fair, without doing testing, it is also hard to know if the oral medication worked, but you at least know your pet received it.

## **Heartworm disease testing**

On the topic of testing for heartworm disease, different veterinarians have different philosophies about whether to test yearly or every other year. There is no hard and fast rule on this. Some veterinarians are willing to put a dog on preventative without testing if you need to, but it is just not ideal. You will want to know if your animal has heartworms. Also, in some areas, such as the southeastern U.S., you will want to keep your animal on heartworm prevention all year. In other areas, such as the most northern states, it is not necessary to keep pets on preventative in the middle of winter (unless you travel with your pets), since there aren't any mosquitoes buzzing around during a Wisconsin January.

## **Anti-parasitic plan for dogs and cats**

To maintain the health of your pet, it is very important to have an anti-parasitic plan in place. This plan should be worked out with your veterinarian, who can give you the pros and cons of different medications and let you know what types of risks you might face if you choose not to use a preventative.

## The Itchy Dog

Do you have a dog who's constantly scratching? The itchy dog is one of the most difficult problems to assess in veterinary medicine. It is often hard to find the underlying cause and even when found, it often involves lifelong therapy for the dog.

### First things first

Decades ago, the most common cause of itchiness in dogs was fleas. This is less of a concern nowadays with improved flea control products, but if you are not using a flea control product, start with that. Even if you don't see fleas, it doesn't mean they are not there. The best flea control products are safe and can provide substantial benefits. Consult with your veterinarian about which product is best for your dog.



Today, the most common cause of itchiness is allergies. But the challenge is this: What is your dog allergic to? And, once that substance has been identified, what is the best way to treat her? It is common to start with an allergy pill such as an antihistamine (like cetirizine or hydroxyzine), prednisone (the steroid) and shampoos. Sometimes, one of these solutions is the magic tonic. If the itching isn't resolved by these methods, more intensive work needs to be done.

### Further steps

The following are the steps that Best Friends' vets recommend. The order is variable, based on the signs the dog might be showing and what has or has not worked.

Some standard diagnostic tests can be done. A CBC (complete blood count) and chemistry profile can detect systemic disease and infections. It can also give clues to endocrine diseases that can cause skin disease, such as hyperadrenocorticism, overactive adrenal gland, and may point to further testing. A thyroid level test can tell if a dog has a low thyroid (hypothyroidism), which is a relatively common cause of skin disease in dogs. Doing skin scrapings to look for mites is important, as is testing for ringworm in suspicious cases.

### The diet trial

If initial treatment does not work and standard diagnostic tests don't reveal an answer, a diet trial is a possible next step. The diet trial, which should be done for at least six weeks, is based on the fact that many dogs are allergic to the protein or grain sources used in many standard dog foods. During the trial, the dog is fed a novel food with unique protein (such as salmon or duck) and carbohydrate (such as sweet potatoes or peas) sources. It is vital that only this food be fed to the dog. Even a small treat of a non-novel food can cause allergies to flare up.

To stop the self-perpetuating itch and scratch cycle, the dog is generally kept on the prednisone or antihistamine at the start of the diet trial. The reason for this is that once a dog starts itching, the scratching can initiate its own inflammation, which causes the dog to itch even more. So, even if the offending allergen is gone, the dog will continue to itch.

### **What next?**

Dogs with allergies commonly get secondary skin infections — either bacterial or yeast in origin. It is quite likely that the dog will need to be on antibiotics, antifungals (for the yeast) or special shampoos for up to six weeks. If these infections are not treated, the itchiness will persist even if the cause of the itchiness is removed.

If routine lab work is normal, and medications, flea control and diet do not fix the problem, one of two things can be done. If there are persistent skin lesions, they can be biopsied and cultured. In doing this, your veterinarian will look for autoimmune diseases, resistant infections or atypical forms of standard diseases. In some cases, if the vet is suspicious of something abnormal, he/she may do these biopsies even before trying the above.

The other thing that your vet might do at this point is an allergy test. Dogs can be allergic to food, but they can also be allergic to things outside, such as pollen, grasses, mites, trees and more. There are two ways to go about testing for what a dog might be allergic to. The first is a blood test that checks for antigen levels to common allergens. This is fairly simple and most veterinarians can do this.

The other way is to do intradermal skin testing, which is done by giving injections of allergens under the skin and measuring the response. Most veterinarians can't do this test; it is mostly done by veterinary dermatologists. If causative allergens are identified, the treatment is administering hyposensitization injections (allergy shots), which are normally given for the rest of the animal's life. However, they can be expensive and difficult for some people to give.

### **Other considerations**

Sometimes the dog can be given a more potent immunosuppressive drug, such as cyclosporine. The drug can dampen the immune response so that the animal is not as reactive to an allergen. There is also a new medication called Apoquel that is intended to help with allergies and may have fewer side effects. Some supplements, such as fish oils or other fatty acids, can be extremely beneficial, and a wide array of other nutritional supplements and herbal remedies are available.

When it comes to treating an itchy dog, the gold standard is to go to a veterinary dermatologist. These specialists can pinpoint treatment and do the intradermal skin testing if they think it is indicated. At Best Friends, we often recommend referral in refractory cases or in cases when people are at their wits' end. Many of these cases require lifelong therapy and the condition may never be cured, but many times it can be managed so that the animal enjoys a good quality of life.



## Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease, which can occur in both cats and dogs, is caused by a parasitic worm that inhabits the heart, lungs and associated major vessels. The worms cause damage to the heart, lungs, and other organs. If left untreated, heartworm disease is likely to be fatal.

Dogs are considered a primary host, which means that heartworms can grow and reproduce in an infected animal. In fact, hundreds of worms can inhabit the heart and lungs of a single dog. Cats are what is called a “dead-end” host; the worms cannot reproduce in infected cats. Most cats are infected with only a few worms and they may not be fully mature, though the disease can be just as deadly for cats as it is for dogs.



### How is heartworm spread to dogs and cats?

Heartworm disease is spread by mosquitoes; the baby heartworms, called microfilaria, are found in the bloodstream of infected dogs. Mosquitoes pick up the larvae of the heartworms when feeding and then transfer them to other animals. The larvae then grow and mature into adult worms.

### What types of heartworm prevention are available?

Several types of prevention are available for both dogs and cats, including monthly oral preventive, monthly topical preventive and, for dogs, a long-acting injection given every six months. Prevention works by killing the immature worms, but is only effective against worms of a specific stage in their life cycle. After about 51 days, the worm larvae have matured so much that prevention is no longer effective, and those worms then mature into adults that cause heartworm disease. That’s why it is so important to administer prevention on time every month (or every six months for dogs who are given the long-acting injection).

### Where is heartworm disease found in the United States?

Heartworms have been found in every state in the country. Even if you live in a northern area or a dry area, there are numerous factors involved in heartworm transmission, so your pet may still be at risk. Prevention is recommended — regardless of where you live.

### What are the signs and symptoms of heartworm disease in pets?

The most common signs in dogs are coughing, exercise intolerance (or getting tired easily with exertion), collapse or fainting episodes, decreased appetite and weight loss. Many dogs, however, show no signs at all early on. Later in the infection process, heart failure can occur, and this is often seen as a very distended abdomen full of fluid. If a dog has large numbers of worms late in the disease, it can cause complete blockage of main arteries and result in severe signs (pale gums, labored breathing, dark brown

urine). This condition, called caval syndrome, is usually fatal unless emergency surgery is performed to physically remove the worms.

### **What's involved in testing for heartworm disease?**

Early detection is key to treating the disease successfully. Because many dogs show no signs during early infection, a positive test can guide early treatment and help to avoid potentially fatal complications. The test involves collecting a small blood sample, which can either be analyzed at the veterinarian's office or sent out to a diagnostic lab. The results are usually acquired rapidly, within a few minutes if run in-house or in a couple of days if sent out.

Because of the worm life stage that the test detects, it will take a dog about six months to show up positive on a test from the day he was infected by the mosquito. For this reason, for dogs not previously on prevention, it is recommended that the test be done immediately, and then again in six months.

Puppies younger than about seven months do not need to be tested; even if they were bitten by an infected mosquito at only a week or two of age, their test will not yet be positive. They should, however, be started on prevention prior to this test.

For adult dogs who are kept current on prevention, your veterinarian can make a recommendation, but typically these dogs will be retested at their annual exams. Anytime there is a lapse in prevention, a dog should be tested immediately, and then again in six months.

### **How is heartworm disease treated and with what medications?**

If your dog tests positive for heartworm disease, there are several steps to treatment. Your veterinarian may want to perform additional testing to confirm the diagnosis and to look for evidence of infection on blood work or X-rays. This can help to determine the likelihood of complications occurring with treatment. (Despite potential treatment risks, however, heartworm disease will most certainly prove to be fatal if left untreated. That's why early detection is so important.)

During treatment, it is imperative that your dog's activity be restricted. Increased activity before and during treatment (and for up to six weeks afterward) has been associated with increased risk of complications (difficulty breathing or death). What this means is that the dog should go on leash walks only, with kennel confinement at all other times. Sedatives can be used to keep a dog calm while undergoing treatment; your veterinarian can help determine if this is necessary.

The American Heartworm Society has an established protocol for treatment that includes starting heartworm prevention (but only certain types, since some types can actually lead to severe or fatal complications), a course of an antibiotic called doxycycline, and then multiple injections with melarsomine, an agent that will kill the adult heartworms.

Dogs who have been treated should then be tested six months after treatment. They should also remain on prevention for the rest of their lives. It is possible (though uncommon) that the treatment protocol will not eliminate all of the adult worms, or the

test can be a false positive with no active infection present. Your veterinarian will help guide you if your dog is one of these rare cases.

### **What's the prognosis for heartworm disease?**

With treatment, dogs with mild or no clinical signs of the disease have a very good prognosis; even dogs with severe disease or heart failure do well in most cases. The main factor in how dogs fare during treatment is whether their activity is adequately restricted. If heartworm disease is untreated, the dog will continue to experience damage to his heart and lungs, and ultimately it will prove to be fatal.

### **How likely are my pets to become infected?**

Different parts of the country have different levels of risk for heartworm infection. However, heartworms have been found in all 50 states. The areas at highest risk are those near the Gulf Coast and the Atlantic Coast, and near rivers. Factors that contribute to risk are the climate (temperature and humidity), species of mosquito, and presence of reservoir animals (dogs or other species that carry heartworms and can be a source of infection for mosquitoes and then other animals).



## Giving Pills to Dogs

There is a time in every person and dog relationship when the human has to give his or her dog some medication. This may be a preventive medication, like heartworm prevention, that you have to give as soon as you get a dog. Or it could be something to make an animal more comfortable in her elder years and prolong her life.



Thankfully, in most circumstances, dogs will consume their medication if it's put in their food. Or they may even eat the medication on its own, as most dogs will do with heartworm preventives. However, there are plenty of times when medicating a dog is not so easy. So what are you to do when your beloved dog refuses to cooperate but requires medication to live a healthy life? There are a number of options.

### Hiding pills in treats

As mentioned above, the easiest and first choice is to hide the medication in some food. You can hide it in canned food that's part of the animal's regular meals, you can use a commercial product such as Pill Pockets to contain the pills, or you can create a special meatball to hide the pill and give it as a special treat. If you decide to try meatball treats, be choosy about what you put in the meatball. For instance, if your dog has food allergies, the meatball should not contain ingredients that the animal is allergic to. The meatball should be made up of food from the animal's existing diet (which, let's face it, is not always enticing).

Also, avoid incorporating foods that are toxic to animals, such as chocolate, macadamia nuts, grapes, raisins, onions or garlic, to name a few. Many other foods can be toxic to dogs, so do a Web search or ask your veterinarian if you're unsure about using a particular food as a treat.

In addition, some foods are not good for certain disease conditions. For example, salty foods should not be used to give an animal his heart medications. Fatty foods should not be given to an animal with pancreatitis. And really hard foods should not be given to an animal with dental disease. Again, please check with your veterinarian before using a food as a treat vehicle.

Common foods that work well for hiding medications include peanut butter, cheese, chicken or meat-flavored baby food. As many of you know, though, some crafty dogs manage somehow to eat the treat and spit out the medications. If the medication can be crushed up, try doing that and then hiding it in mushy food (e.g., baby food). Because some pills can't be crushed, however, consult your veterinarian before doing so.

## **Challenges of medicating a dog if you have multiple pets**

If you have multiple pets, try giving the pills as a special treat to the animal who needs medication. In other words, don't give the medication around mealtime, but at a different time, so the animal feels singled out for special treats and therefore is more likely to eat the pill hidden in the treat. This strategy works well when giving short-term meds because, over time, the animal often gets wise to what is going on.

Conversely, you can give treats to all the animals and just have the one treat "doctored" with the medication for the appropriate animal. If there is competition for treats, the medicated animal will feel like he needs to hurry up and eat his treat before someone else gets it. You'll need to proceed with caution, though, to make sure this strategy does not result in fights and also to ensure that the other animals do not accidentally get the medicated treat. It works best if the animal needing the medication tends to be the treat-stealing one and not the one who lets his treats get stolen.

## **Using caution when pilling a dog**

Another option is to try and force the pill down a dog's throat. This can be done with your fingers if the animal is amenable to that, but many are not.

If you're afraid of being bitten when trying this method, talk to your veterinarian or veterinary technician. There are also many tutorials online that give great demonstrations on how to pill a dog. This method can work very well, but it can also result in the animal running away and hiding for several days. It is best not to use this forceful method on shy and nervous animals.

## **Topical, liquid or other preparations**

If the above ideas don't work, it might be worth trying to get the medication made into a different formula. Many pills may also come in, or can be made into, a liquid form, which can be squirted into an animal's mouth. Be prepared, though: Your dog might spit it out and make a huge mess.

Some medications can be made into a transdermal form, which means that it absorbs through the skin. This form can work very well for some medications, but it needs to be specially made so may cost a little more. It is important to remember to apply these meds wearing gloves because they can absorb through human skin as well. Similarly, some medications, like heartworm preventatives, may already come in a form that is applied on the skin. These can be very handy for pill-avoiding animals, but they must be applied appropriately, so follow instructions carefully.

If the above suggestions do not work, please consult with your veterinarian on other options for your dog. Perhaps there is a different medication you can try, a surgery or injections that can be done to avoid medicating, or other solutions. Medicating a beloved dog can be a trying experience for both you and your dog. However, it can be a matter of life and death, and the short-term pain is most often worth the long-term gains.



## Veterinary Specialists

Veterinary practice has evolved a lot in the last few decades, and it is becoming increasingly rare for veterinarians to be a Jack (or Jill) of all trades. It's still possible to find such veterinarians, but what was once the mainstay of the profession has become the exception.



Veterinary medicine is now more and more specialized, with specialties in veterinary surgery, dermatology, oncology, ophthalmology, behavioral issues, internal medicine, emergency medicine, avian and exotic animal medicine, equine medicine, equine surgery, holistic medicine, and so on. It's analogous to human medicine: You see your general practitioner first and then get referred to a specialist if necessary. In the veterinary world, general practitioners are the veterinarians that are normally referred to by people as "our vet."

### When and why to consult veterinary specialists

Why seek out a specialist? The easiest answer to this question is that your regular veterinarian would suggest it. There are several reasons why your veterinarian might suggest a referral to a specialist. Your pet may have a problem that is more complicated than your vet has handled before or has the capability to handle. For example, it is common to refer an animal to a neurologist for an MRI. Most general veterinarians do not have such equipment or the expertise to precisely interpret the results from such tests.

Another reason is that your pet may need a surgery that your veterinarian has never done or that he/she does not have the equipment to do. For instance, many of the more advanced orthopedic surgeries require special and expensive equipment to perform. It is not cost-effective for general practitioners to invest in the equipment and training to do certain surgeries, since that cost is likely tens of thousands of dollars. They may not see the numbers of appropriate cases to justify such a cost or they might not have the time to perform the surgeries if their practice is geared toward providing other services.

A third reason is that your regular veterinarian may offer a referral to see another vet in order to provide you with treatment alternatives. Also, your vet may feel comfortable working with your pet's problem, but offer a referral as a way to get a second opinion or to give you as much information as you want about your pet's condition.

### Second opinion, anyone?

It is also possible that your veterinarian may not suggest a specialist, but you want one for a second opinion or because you are dissatisfied with how your veterinarian is handling your pet's case. These situations are a little tricky because most specialists

require a referral from a general practitioner. In these situations, it is best for you to tell your veterinarian that you want a referral and ask for a recommendation.

If your vet refuses to give a referral, you can find out if you are able to get an appointment with the specialist without a veterinary referral. If not, you may need to go to another general practitioner to get the referral. Either way, you should switch your regular veterinarian, since he/she is not looking out for you and your animal's best interest.

### **How to find a veterinary specialist**

Generally, you find a specialist by getting a referral from your regular veterinarian. If you are looking for options on your own, the Internet is your obvious starting point. Enter the name of your city, county or state and the veterinary specialty in your favorite search engine (such as Google). From there, you can do research on what services they provide, whether they are board-certified, what others' opinions of them are, and where they are located.

Be aware that if you live in a rural area, you may not find a board-certified specialist within close proximity of where you live. In that case, instead of a specialist, you could choose to see a general practitioner who has received extra training in the field relevant to your pet's needs. Doing this will require some more research on your part, but your veterinarian can and should typically be able to give you this information, or it can be found online.

For instance, let's say your pet needs a TPLO (tibial-plateau-leveling osteotomy) surgery for a torn cruciate ligament, and you can't find a board-certified surgeon an acceptable distance from your home. However, there may be numerous general practitioners in your area who have received training in this surgery and can perform it for you. So, do an Internet search for "TPLO veterinarians near (your town and state)."

In urban areas, there is a growing trend for general practitioners and specialists to work out of the same hospital. These are often quite large hospitals that provide a great service to clients in that if a referral is needed, you don't have to change hospital environments to see a specialist. The downside, though, is that these facilities may not include a less expensive option. For instance, as mentioned in the example above, many general practitioners can successfully perform surgeries for a torn cruciate ligament. However, at the hospitals that combine general practice and specialties, the general practitioners may not have those skills and thus every orthopedic surgery there is done by a specialist, which typically means larger costs.

Having the option to see a veterinary specialist greatly improves the type of care you can provide your pets. Keep in mind, though, that seeing these specialists generally involves greater costs than seeing your general practitioner. But when it comes to certain situations, it is the recommended path to go. For the majority of problems, a trip to your regular veterinarian will suffice and is always the place to start.



## Dental Care for Pets

Dental care for your pets is very important, and oral hygiene is about more than ensuring that your animals' teeth are clean. Tartar buildup on teeth and inflamed gums can actually undermine your pet's good health by causing a variety of systemic issues if not properly addressed.

If you're wondering whether animals develop dental disease, the answer is simple: absolutely. Believe it or not, dental disease is seen more often in pets than it is in humans. Why? Because pets can't brush or floss their own teeth. They depend on us. So it's no surprise that a staggering 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats show signs of dental disease by an early age, as early as age four. In fact, dental disease is probably one of the most common health problems in dogs and cats.



### Look, mom: No cavities

In humans, the cavity is the most common form of dental disease. But in dogs and cats, it's tartar buildup. Tartar causes irritation of the gums, loosening of the teeth, exposure of the tooth roots, infection, tooth abscesses and, eventually, tooth loss.

An untreated infection within the mouth may ultimately invade the bloodstream and be carried to other parts of the body. The result can be more serious health risks, such as kidney, liver and heart disease. Also, sore, painful and loose teeth can make your pets very uncomfortable and unwilling or unable to eat properly, which affects their health and well-being.

### The dry food myth

Most people believe that feeding their pets dry food is enough to ward off dental problems. However, that's simply not the case. Diet is likely much less important to prevent tartar buildup than most people think. Dry food is less sticky, of course, and does not adhere to the teeth as readily as canned food, but eating dry food does not remove tartar from the teeth. Certain chewing toys or strips — especially those that contain enzymes — designed to clean the teeth may help tartar buildup somewhat, but only a professional cleaning by your veterinarian can remove tartar once it forms.

### Causes and signs

One of the main factors that contributes to dental disease is your pet's individual mouth chemistry. Some pets need yearly cleanings. Others need cleanings only once every few years. Breed also plays a role in your pet's dental health. Small dogs, especially those with short faces like Pekingese dogs or pugs, are particularly prone to dental problems, as are Persian cats.



When it comes to tuning in to whether or not your pet has dental disease or, at the very least, is in need of a cleaning, the signs aren't too difficult to discern. Bad breath is one obvious clue. But you may also notice that several teeth are covered with a yellow-brown hard substance, especially next to the gum line. You may observe red or irritated gums that bleed easily. Or you may see broken or loose teeth that are very tender to the touch. With that said, however, despite these indicators, the best way to determine if your pet needs a dental cleaning is to have your veterinarian do a dental health checkup.

### **What happens during a dental**

If your vet determines that your pet needs a dental cleaning, here's what happens. First, your pet must be evaluated for anesthesia so that he or she can be completely anesthetized. It is not possible to thoroughly clean the teeth if your pet is awake. Your pet's teeth (including the area under the gum line that can't usually be seen) will be cleaned, scaled with an ultrasonic scaler, and then polished. A thorough evaluation of the teeth will determine if any of them need to be removed. The vet will examine the entire oral cavity, too, to look for abnormalities such as tumors or deep infections of the gums or jawbone.

After the cleaning, your pet may need to take oral antibiotics or pain medication, and eat a softer diet for a few days, particularly if there was a lot of infection or if many teeth had to be extracted. When your pet goes home, you will be advised on the proper dental care program for him or her. Make sure to ask your vet for the follow-up plan and details about what you can do at home to keep your pet's mouth healthy.

If you're at all unsure about how often your individual dog or cat should be scheduled for regular dental cleanings, your best bet is to have a chat with your vet. A healthy mouth will give your pets plenty of reasons to smile.



## Grooming Your Pets

By Sherry Woodard

Most animals can be taught to enjoy grooming at any age. Regular grooming will help you build and maintain healthy relationships with your pets, and practice gentle leadership skills. Another benefit of grooming is that you may notice a physical change that needs medical attention, something that might not have been obvious if you hadn't been grooming your pet. If you find any lumps, bumps or soreness, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian for a checkup.



Here are some supplies that you might need:

- Shampoo that is appropriate for the age and species of your pet (kittens and puppies need gentle shampoo; very young animals need products free of harsh pesticides; and ferrets should have ferret shampoo)
- Large cup or small bucket containing water, to create a nice lather
- Cotton balls
- Ear cleaner
- Parasite-control products (ask your veterinarian about what is needed in your area for fleas, ticks and mites)
- Metal comb
- Brush (there are many styles to choose from: pin, rake, slicker, mitt or curry)
- Nail trimmers (find the best size for your pet's nails)
- Nail file (some animals will actually sleep while their people file each toenail)
- Styptic powder (to use if you accidentally cut a nail too short)
- Ophthalmic ointment (used in the eyes to protect them from shampoo and debris)
- Detangler or conditioner (great for combing through long hair before a final rinse)
- Spray attachment for your shower (very helpful for rinsing your pet)
- A hair dryer (because some animals can chill easily, but be careful not to overheat the pet)
- Toothbrush and animal toothpaste
- Safety scissors for trimming hair
- Clippers (if you want to learn to style your pet)

One caution about clipping your pet: If you change the length of your pet's natural coat, he/she will need protection from the cold and the sun. (Pets can get sunburned!) Also, some coats do not grow back well, so I recommend that you consult a professional groomer if you want your pet to wear an un-natural style.

Start the grooming process by gently touching all the animal's body parts. If any parts seem sore, stop and schedule an appointment with your veterinarian for a checkup. If your pet seems uncomfortable with your touch, remember that animals learn positive associations with repetition and praise. You will need to be a kind, gentle leader but remain firm in your intentions. The plan is to teach your pet to enjoy being groomed and to groom your pet on a regular basis, not just when the animal is matted or really dirty.

If you need help, you can start by accompanying your pet to a professional groomer for a lesson. Choose a groomer who is patient, gentle and kind. Most groomers are thrilled to meet people who want to work with their animals in between professional grooming visits.

Here are some specifics about various aspects of grooming:

**Brushing.** Brushing and combing should happen daily or at least several times each week, no matter what kind of coat your animal has. If you plan to give your pet a bath, do the brushing part first. Brushing and combing will feel good to your pet; it removes dead hair and tangles, and distributes natural skin oils. If the coat is thick, make sure you are combing all the way to the skin. Be gentle and patient, though; too much pressure on the skin can cause irritation called brush burn, and pulling the tangles will hurt if you try to hurry. A detangler can be used on dry hair to loosen any knots.

Different types of brushes are used for different coats. A curved wire slicker or pin brush works well for long, straight coats. Use a regular wire slicker for medium-length hair and coats with a dense undercoat. I like rakes for brushing undercoats during the shedding season. Short, smooth coats can be brushed with a grooming mitt or rubber curry. After brushing, you can use an all-purpose comb to work out small knots the brush missed.

**Baths.** The water should be warm, even in summer, because very cold water can chill animals and leave your pet with a bad association to bathing in general. If you are bathing small animals, support them in the tub so they don't panic. Give your pet a full body massage while lathering up the shampoo, then rinse. If you wish, add conditioner and comb through the coat before a final rinse. I comb through long-haired dogs and horses' tails with conditioner before doing the final rinse. On cold days, all animals should be dried, and very young, old or sick animals should always be dried to prevent chilling.

**Nails.** Begin by picking up each foot and handling the nails. Then, without clipping, hold the clippers near a nail and squeeze the nail as though you are clipping. Look carefully for the quick — where the blood supply ends. You'll want to avoid cutting into the quick, since it is painful and will bleed. If you ever accidentally cut the quick, don't panic. Cover the nail end with your styptic powder and put pressure on the nail for 30 seconds, until it stops bleeding. Be gentle and patient with your pet. If you start by trimming one nail on each foot daily and rewarding with praise, you will soon have a relaxed, willing animal. Remember to also trim the dewclaws.

If you keep your pets' nails trimmed, you will protect their feet from long nails that can become caught and break off, causing pain. Long nails can also cause permanent damage to toes by bending them into unnatural positions. Animals with hooves need routine foot care by professionals, so make sure they are getting the care they need.

**Teeth.** You can gently massage the gums and brush the teeth on any pet — from the smallest rodents to the largest horses. If taught with patience and kindness, most animals enjoy a mouth massage. The benefits are healthy mouths and fresh breath. Plus, you'll be more aware of when your pet needs dental work by a professional, before your pet is in pain. Remember to use animal toothpaste appropriate for each type of pet.

**Ears.** You should periodically check your animal's ears. If they are clean and free of debris, then give your pet a nice ear rub. Again, a gentle massage is going to give your pet a good association to your touch. If the ears are dirty, smell bad or look sore, make an appointment with your veterinarian. The doctor can check for infection or parasites, and can get you started with a cleaning lesson.

If you are doing a quick cleaning to healthy ears, start by dampening a cotton ball with appropriate ear cleaner and wipe the folds of skin, starting near the head and cleaning out to the ends of the ear flaps. Do not use cotton swabs because they can reach too deeply inside the ear and cause damage. Some animals are sensitive to the feeling of the cleaner going in, so you might want to start with just a small amount. Be prepared to “wear” some ear cleaner, though, as most animals shake their heads and send it flying!

Grooming can be a pleasurable activity for both you and your pets. Enjoy your animal family members and the time you spend interacting with them.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

## Cold Weather and Your Dog

Many people are aware of how dangerous overheating can be for a dog. But what about the cold? Is there anything to worry about medically for dogs when they spend time outside in the winter? Yes, in fact, wintertime can also pose hazards for dogs — especially if your dog is not acclimated to outdoor temperatures or if your dog has a short hair coat (Chihuahuas, for example).



### When is it too cold for dogs?

Like humans, each dog will tolerate cold weather to a different degree. Factors that go into how well a dog tolerates the cold are breed, age, overall health, nutritional status, physical conditioning, coat density and acclimation. Obviously, northern breeds (e.g., Siberian and Alaskan huskies, malamutes, Bernese mountain dogs) tolerate cold temperatures best because of their thick undercoat.

As a general rule, it takes anywhere from one week to two months for a healthy dog to become acclimated to extremes in temperature. This wide range takes into account various individual physiological factors. Keep in mind that wind and wet will magnify the effects of low temperatures.

If your dog stays outside in cold weather for more than potty breaks and walks, he will need a warm, dry place away from the cold and wet. Provide him with an insulated airtight doghouse that is raised up off the ground at least a few inches, and is equipped with a door flap to keep out drafts. Also, make sure the doghouse always has dry bedding; a lot of hay or straw is a good insulator and they can burrow down in it.

Keep an eye on your dog for signs that he is not tolerating the cold — shivering, refusing to move or follow cues, refusing to come out of his kennel or lying in a curled-up position when outside. Above all, please remember that dogs are social animals and you are their family. They want to be with you, so don't leave your dog outside in the cold all the time.

### Coats and boots for dogs: Silly or necessary?

If you have a short-haired dog who spends most of her time indoors and goes out mainly for walks around the park or the neighborhood, consider having your pup wear a sweater or coat in chilly weather. Just ignore the eye-rolling by people who believe they are merely a silly accessory.

On the other hand, when it comes to doggie-wear, if you have a young dog of northern descent who has a thick coat, is acclimated to the cold and spends a considerable amount of time outdoors romping in the snow, a coat may actually cause some degree of overheating.

If you live in an area where there's snow and ice, wipe your dog's feet after walking her. She may have picked up ice-melting chemicals, which can irritate and burn the dog's

pads. In addition, some of these products are poisonous if ingested by pets. You may want to try getting your dog accustomed to wearing boots (see below), which protect your dog's feet from sharp pieces of ice and balls of snow getting stuck between her pads, as well as ice-melting products.

### **Frostbite danger**

Another danger in cold weather is frostbite, which can occur if a dog is left outside for long periods of time on a very cold day and if he does not have the ability to move away from the continued cold surface and maintain adequate circulation in his extremities, from pads to tail to nose. Because frostbite can be very damaging in these situations, pay attention to how your dog behaves when out in very cold temperatures. In general, a quick trip out and about, though, should not result in a condition as severe as frostbite.

If you're at all unsure about how to keep your dog safe and comfortable in the winter weather, a simple conversation with your veterinarian about your dog's particular situation can help you provide the appropriate degree of protection from the cold.

### **Introducing a dog to wearing boots**

Many dogs aren't happy campers when someone puts something on their feet. So if you want your pup to wear boots in the cold, you'll need to introduce her to them gradually and positively. In fact, some dogs are even uncomfortable with having their feet handled. If that's the case with your dog, work on that first and then introduce her to the boots. To learn how, see [Grooming and Medical Handling: Dog Training Plan](#).

Once your dog feels OK with her feet being handled and having the boots put on, she still may not want to walk in them. That's because wearing boots is not a natural sensation for a dog; it's something that takes some getting used to. If your dog won't move, bites at the boots, lifts her feet uncomfortably or just looks miserable when she has her boots on, here's how to help her feel better about it:

- Try putting on one boot, feeding her a high-value treat, and then taking the boot off. Keep doing this until she looks happy when you put the boot on.
- Next, ask her to move around the room, wearing the one boot, with a special treat as a reward.
- Once she's happy walking around in the one boot, repeat the process, adding one boot at a time until she is walking around the room wearing all four boots. Then you're both ready to brave the snow and ice!



## Hot Weather and Your Dog

One of the most life-threatening mistakes people can make is to leave a dog in a vehicle during hot weather. Dogs can't perspire, as humans do, to cool themselves off via evaporation, so they have to pant to cool themselves. If the air that they are taking in is too hot (as it is in a parked car in hot weather), then panting has little cooling effect and the dog quickly overheats.



Many people think their dog will be OK if they leave the windows open, but even with the windows wide open, the car can quickly become hot enough to cause heat stroke, brain damage, and even death. Your pet may pay dearly for even a few minutes spent in a sweltering car.

You should never let your dog ride in an open pickup truck, but it's especially dangerous in hot weather, since truck beds are often dark colors, which get very hot. Please leave your pets at home during hot weather.

Over-exposure to heat causes many of the same symptoms as shock. You will see rapid, shallow breathing, weakness, and a very high body temperature. Cool the animal as quickly as possible by spraying him with cool (not cold) water or wrapping him in cool, moist towels. Because of the many problems caused by an elevated body temperature, seek professional help immediately.

If you walk your dog on lead, keep in mind that asphalt can get very hot during the summer. In fact, it can get hot enough to burn a dog's pads, causing him pain for days. Before taking your dog for a walk, check the ground for hotness with one of your own hands or bare feet. If you can't keep your hand (or foot) on the ground for more than three seconds, it's probably too hot to walk your dog. Also, if you have an older dog or an overweight dog, you might want to do only short walks early in the morning or later in the evening, when the temperatures are lower.

Providing water for your dog is always important, but it's especially critical during hot weather. If your dog is inside during the day, make sure you supply fresh, cool water that remains in a shaded spot throughout the day, since sun coming through a window can heat a bowl of water.

If your dog stays outside during the day, make sure his water bowl isn't in a place where he will tip it over. Water bowls can be tipped over by dogs trying to make a cool spot to lie down. If necessary, buy a tip-proof water bowl. Also, make sure he has a shady place where he can get relief from the sun. Kiddie pools are a nice way to give dogs their own clean puddle in which to play.

Grooming all dogs, even dogs with short coats, helps to keep them comfortable as the seasons change. A natural coat that has been groomed offers protection from sunburn and acts as cooling insulation. Shaving your dog's coat will take away that protection. If you give your dog a close cut for summer, she may need sunscreen.

## Keeping Your Dog Safe and Sound

By Sherry Woodard

### Why shouldn't I let my dog run free?

Many dogs are allowed to roam the streets. The dog's family might say, "Oh, he'll be OK — he comes home eventually; he has friends out there." But the world is often a dangerous place. If you allow your dog to roam, you are abdicating responsibility for his safety. Here are some ways your dog could be harmed:

- He might be hit by traffic, causing injury or death.
- He might be poisoned or suffer injury at the hands of people who feel that the dog is a nuisance.
- He might be poisoned by drinking antifreeze from a puddle, or ingesting snail bait or other toxins.
- He might fight with or be attacked by other dogs, resulting in injury.

Another possibility is that he might be picked up and impounded by animal control officers, who are just doing their jobs. To reclaim your dog, you'll most likely have to pay a fee.



### What do I do about an escape artist?

If you have a dog who is an escape artist, start with securing your yard so he can't escape. (See [Fencing Options for Your Escape Artist](#).) But don't stop there. Your dog may be escaping because he is bored. Try the following:

- Let him spend more time in the house, interacting with his family. Dogs are very social animals and need time with their people.
- Make sure she gets some active playtime with some dog friends.
- Get him some fun things to chew on (like Kongs and hollow bones with treats stuffed inside).
- Get her a dirt box to dig in or a kiddie pool to splash in.
- Take him on more walks so he can smell and explore outside the confines of his yard.

To sum up, make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and mental stimulation. A tired dog is much less likely to try and escape from his yard. He would much rather relax in front of the TV with his family.



## What else can I do to keep my dog safe and sound?

Here are some other responsibilities involved in taking care of a dog:

- Make sure your dog always has a current I.D. tag on his collar, so that you can be called if he is found wandering alone. He should also have a microchip ID.
- Spay or neuter your pet. It's your responsibility to prevent unwanted animals from being born, and spaying or neutering helps animals lead happier, healthier lives.
- Take care of your dog's health by bringing her to the vet for annual checkups. Be aware that your dog may require more medical checkups and medication as she ages.
- Train your dog by teaching him simple cues and proper manners so he will be well-behaved and welcome in any home or setting.

When you take an animal as a pet, it is your responsibility to stay committed to your loyal companion for a lifetime — through thick and thin, through whatever changes occur in your life. If you absolutely must find a new home for your pet, it is also your responsibility to find a home that is as good as or better than your own.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## Preventing Your Dog from Escaping

By Sherry Woodard

Is your dog escaping from the yard or your home? Here are two reasons your dog may be motivated to try to get away:



- **Sexual motivation.** If your dog is not neutered, he may be escaping to search for female dogs. There's a simple solution: Neuter your dog. (The same holds true for unfixed female dogs, who may be escaping to find male dogs.)
- **Lack of exercise and interaction.** All dogs need exercise and interaction with their people. If your dog is spending too many hours out in the yard alone, escaping may be her way of dealing with loneliness and boredom. If you're away from home all day, are there ways that you can break up the long days for her? Perhaps a neighbor could give her a walk halfway through the day or maybe you could arrange to have your dog visit another dog at a friend's home some days while you are away. Other options are putting your dog in doggie daycare or hiring a dog walker. Some dog walkers are seniors or students who don't charge much — they mainly want to enjoy time with a dog.

Here are the various ways that dogs get out and some methods to prevent escape:

- **Latch-lifting.** Some dogs have learned to open gates and door handles or knobs and let themselves out. Most gates have a latch that can be secured by placing a clip through a hole when the latch is closed, and doors can be locked or blocked. The clip can be a clip from an old leash, a lock, or a carabiner. If you need a reminder to use the clip and to get others to use it, put a sign on the gate that says, "Please clip the gate."
- **Jumping or climbing over the fence.** Look for and move objects that the dog may be using as aids. For instance, if the doghouse or a tree that the dog can climb is close to the fence, he may be able to use them to jump over it. Add additional fencing to add height to your fence. You could try using a light-gauge wire for this purpose; if the dog feels that the light wire is unstable, he may decide that he can no longer jump out. If your dog only climbs out at the corners, you can add fencing across the corners over the top. You can try [cat proof fencing](#), which works equally well for most dogs. There's also a product called [Coyote Roller](#), rollers that can be installed on the top of fencing to prevent the dog from being able to grip the top of the fence and climb over.
- **Digging under the fence.** If digging out is your dog's plan, you will most likely

need to either bury fencing in the ground (18 to 24 inches deep), or attach fencing to the bottom of your fence and lay it on the ground at least 12 inches into the yard. Both methods work, but you must fix the entire perimeter of the yard or the dog will probably find the unprotected spots. For some dogs, however, laying down railroad ties or paving stones against the fence in the yard is enough of a deterrent.

- **Dashing out the door.** Some dogs escape by dashing out of the house the moment the door opens. For door-dashers, the best strategy is to train the dog to expect a treat whenever the door is opened. Start by placing a baby gate or exercise pen at the doorway. If you have a big dog, you might want to use one that is tall and extra sturdy. Practice opening the door, stepping over the gate (or walking through it, depending on the style of the gate), and then giving the dog a treat. Soon, your dog will be waiting for a treat rather than dashing out the door.

Next, you can add the cue “sit.” Luring your dog into a sit is done by holding a treat up, giving the cue, waiting until he sits, and then offering the treat. Only give the treat when his rear is on the floor, not before he sits or after he pops up. Practice walking into the house and closing the door behind you, offering the treat only after your dog gives you a sit. When teaching your dog to sit, remember that you don’t need to use a harsh tone. Once he is trained, you can have fun with your happy, well-behaved dog.

Another method for preventing door dashing, if treats are not available or practical for your situation, is to teach “wait at the door.” Put your dog on a leash as a safety net while he is learning, but never use it to pull or yank him backward. Stand next to the door so your body isn’t blocking it, tell your dog “wait,” and then open it just a couple of inches. As long as your dog is waiting politely, continue to slowly open the door. If at any point your dog tries to rush through the door, quickly but carefully close it (avoiding slamming your dog’s head or feet in the door, of course). Say “wait” again, then begin to slowly open the door again. When your dog waits long enough for you to open the door wide enough for him to get through, say “free,” and then allow him to go through the door. When you are consistent about doing this, your dog will learn to wait politely at the door until you release him.

If fences are not possible or allowed on your property, another option is to teach your dog to stay in the yard through boundary training. Learn more about [boundary training](#).

Whatever method you end up using to prevent your dog from escaping, make sure he has a registered microchip and a safety collar with up-to-date ID tags to increase his chances of being safely returned to you, just in case.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Fencing Options for Your Escape Artist

By Sherry Woodard

If you have a dog who's an escape artist, you might have to go the extra mile to provide fencing that will keep your pooch contained and safe. Here are some options for you to consider.



**Coyote Roller.** (*above left*) This device consists of roller bars that you install at the top of existing fencing. The [Coyote Roller](#) can be installed on different types of fencing, such as chain-link and wooden fences. The rollers prevent the dog from gaining purchase when he tries to climb over the fence.

**Wire-Mesh Fencing.** (*above right*) If you need extra tall fencing, chain-link is not a good choice. Instead, buy coated wire-mesh fencing, which is stronger than chain-link. One company that sells this type of wire mesh is [Riverdale Mills](#)

**Flat-Top.** (*left*) For extra insurance against escape, top off your wire-mesh fencing with a foot of fencing that extends perpendicular into the enclosure. Even if the dog manages to climb to the top of the fence, he won't be able to lean back far enough to get up and over the flat-top.



**Top-Angling.** (above) A slightly different approach to the flat-top: Angle the fence extension so that it's aimed upward.

**Full Cover.** (below) For dogs who've managed to climb over every fence, and for dogs who've been in trouble for escaping, cover the fencing completely on top.



**Free-Standing.** This type of fencing pops apart, so it can be easily taken apart and positioned in a different spot. It's a good solution for aggressive dogs who must be kept away from the outside fence line of a yard. [Priefert Ranch Equipment](#) is a good supplier of this type of fencing.

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## Pica in Dogs

The ingestion of non-food items, such as rocks, dirt or fabric, is called pica disorder and it's a fairly common occurrence in pets. Pica doesn't include the ingestion of trash or feces, since the consumption of such things is often driven by different motivations.

### Causes of pica

The causes of pica can be hard to determine, but can include gastrointestinal disease, anemia, liver disease, pancreatic disease, diseases causing excess appetite (such as diabetes), neurologic diseases, poor diet, being on medications such as prednisone, behavioral disorders such as anxiety, or a deprived home environment. Pica can even be a symptom of normal exploratory behavior.



When attempting to assess why your dog (or cat) may be engaging in this habit, consider the animal's environment and lifestyle. Does the animal get enough exercise? Does he or she get an appropriate amount of attention? Are appropriate chew or play toys made available? Is there competition for resources? That is, could the dog or cat be eating inappropriate things to prevent another pet from getting to it first? Does the animal have a fairly consistent routine? Are there other things that could be causing stress for the animal?

### Diagnosing pica

If you think your pet has pica, a thorough medical work-up is recommended. Along with a complete physical exam, this should include a fecal examination to check for gastrointestinal (GI) parasites and blood work to look for conditions such as anemia, liver disease, diabetes or pancreatic disease. Depending on the signs your animal is showing, more specific blood work, to see if the GI tract is perhaps not absorbing nutrients, may be required. Typically, this involves checking folate and cobalamin levels and doing a TLI (trypsin-like immunoreactivity) test to check for pancreatic function.

X-rays may also be warranted if there is concern about a GI obstruction and to rule out other potential causes of pica. Of course, if abnormalities are noted, further testing may be needed. Describing all the diagnostic options could fill a chapter in a textbook. If an abnormality is found, the best course is to treat for that abnormality and see if the pica improves.

The cause of pica in a particular animal can be difficult to identify. It can be frustrating not having an answer that allows for specific treatment, but if a medical cause is identified, it usually either carries a poor prognosis or is expensive to fix.

## **If the problem isn't medical**

If medical reasons have been ruled out, then it's worth consulting a veterinary behaviorist. If one isn't available in your area or within your budget, consulting with your veterinarian or a trainer may be helpful. Your veterinarian should be able to direct you to other professionals with expertise in dog and cat behavior.

There are some basic things that you can try without working with a behavior specialist, although working with one does allow for the greatest chance of stopping the pica behavior. First, make sure the animal is on a good-quality diet. Sometimes this change is all that's needed. Along with diet, make sure the animal has plenty of exercise and mental stimulation. Give the pet appropriate toys to play with, make sure he gets plenty of human interaction and, of course, take him for walks.

Next, if possible, limit the animal's access to the items he constantly tries to eat. For instance, if your dog eats rocks, keep him out of rocky areas of the yard or parks. If this is too difficult or restrictive, have more attractive options available for the dog — such as treats or a Kong — when he's in rocky areas. In extreme cases, a basket muzzle may also be helpful, but make sure the muzzle doesn't restrict the dog's ability to breathe. Remember, too, that the dog should not wear the muzzle for extended periods of time.

Another thing to do is to remove any obvious stressors. For example, if your pet gets nervous when you play loud music, turn down the volume or wear headphones. If your dog gets agitated when the neighbor mows her lawn, keep your dog inside or take him on an adventure away from the activity. Also, provide a regular schedule for your pet. Regular walks, feeding times and play times let an animal know that these things are coming and can decrease anxiety. Above all else, don't punish your animal for eating inappropriate things. This is not an effective training method.

When pica is believed to be associated with anxiety, there are some medications that can help. However, it is important to use medications only under the direction of a veterinarian, and to make sure you are working on the behavior as well. For instance, a dog who is anxious because he gets inadequate exercise will not be made better by putting him on a psychotropic drug. Rather, the dog needs regular exercise appropriate for his age and breed.

In a lot of cases, pica can be managed. If it's not managed, though, it can lead to destruction of belongings, dental problems for your pet or, worst of all, emergency medical problems if the consumed object causes an obstruction or is toxic to your pet.

## Holiday Hazards for Pets

by Sherry Woodard

Though holidays can be a great time for people, they can be problematic for our pets. Here are some things to be aware of as you celebrate the holidays.



### The Fourth of July

Fireworks can be very frightening for our pets. They may panic and try to escape the noise by attempting to leave the safety of their own house or yard. Here's how you can protect your animal family members on the fourth of July:

- Make sure they wear properly sized collars (no more than two fingers should fit under the collar). All dogs and cats (even house cats) should have current ID on their collars, and they should have microchip IDs as well. Cats should wear safety collars that will pop or stretch if they get caught on something.
- Keep your pets inside the house. If there will be a lot of people going in and out, you might want to put your animals in a bedroom with the door shut. Close the windows, curtains and shades so they will feel more safe and secure.
- You can muffle the sound of fireworks by turning on a fan, radio or television.

If your pet is extremely distressed during fireworks, she may become destructive and may even hurt herself trying to escape the noise. To calm her, you may need to stay with her and try to distract her with play or favorite things to chew. Do not verbally reassure a nervous pet, however, since that may reinforce her nervousness.

Do not put a frightened dog in a crate and leave the house. Though his crate may normally be a safe place for him, he may feel trapped in there if he's frightened by fireworks. He could injure himself badly trying to get out of the crate.

### Halloween

Halloween is a fun day for humans, but pets may become spooked (no pun intended!) by the altered appearance of their families. If your dog does not appear to recognize you and your children, use caution when approaching him or her.

Candy can make your pets sick, so you should always keep it out of reach of your pets, but especially on this holiday, when there's so much of it around. You can encourage pet involvement in Halloween by making homemade dog and cat treats for your own animals and for other people's pets. (Make sure they're clearly labeled as pet treats.)

Some people like to dress up their pets for Halloween (or other holidays). Because wearing a costume might be uncomfortable or frightening to your pet, introduce the



costume slowly. Start by taking the costume out of the packaging and allow it to air out. Costumes may have strong smells that pets can be sensitive to. Lay the costume on the floor and allow all house pets to sniff it. If your pet avoids the costume, shows no interest, or is fearful, put treats or a favorite toy near the costume to make it a positive experience for your pet. If your pet walks up to the costume, praise him/her and provide treats.

Wait until your pet is comfortable with the costume before attempting to dress your pet. If you have multiple pets, put the pets who aren't going to dress up in a secured room. The reason for this is that your other pets may become stressed or fearful and have unexpected defensive behavior during the dressing-up process.

The process of dressing your pet should be done in steps and using repetition. If the costume has more than one piece, try one piece a day. For example, on the first day practice putting on the cape, and repeat. On the following day, practice putting on the hat and repeat. The next day, try putting on the cape and the hat. During this process, remember to provide praise, encouragement and treats. If your pet demonstrates fear, stress, and/or defensive behavior during the process, your pet may not be comfortable dressing up. Be respectful to your pet.

Finally, dogs and cats should be kept inside on Halloween. If a lot of people will be coming to your door, put your pets in a bedroom with the door shut to prevent them from escaping into the night. Keeping them in a closed room will also minimize the fright they might get from loud voices and wild costumes. Black cats are especially vulnerable on Halloween, since black cats are often associated with evil and misfortune, and they can be the victims of abuse. So, to keep them safe, keep them inside.

## **Christmas**

Here are some tips for keeping pets safe at Christmas time:

- If you have a real Christmas tree, keep the water in the stand covered so your animals can't drink it. The pine sap is dangerous if ingested.
- Secure the tree to a wall or the ceiling with fishing line and a hook to prevent pets from knocking it over.
- Tree lights should not be left on when you're not around, since your pets may tangle themselves in the cords. Unplug the tree lights when you're not using them.
- Once you've decorated your tree, pick up all tinsel, ribbon and ornament hooks on the floor. These glittery items may be attractive playthings to your pets, but they can get sick if they ingest them. If a gastrointestinal blockage occurs, surgery may be needed to save your pet.
- If your pets express interest in playing with the decorations on the tree, decorate the bottom third of the tree with wood or plastic ornaments that won't break.
- Keep all gifts that contain human food off the floor so that pets are not tempted by the smells. Human treats can be dangerous for pets – especially food containing chocolate, alcohol, raisins and onions.

- Holiday plants such as poinsettias and mistletoe can be dangerous, too, if your pets chew on them. Keep holiday plants well out of reach of your pets, or buy artificial plants.
- Burning candles can also be a concern around this time of year. Put burning candles in places that are inaccessible to your pets and don't let candles burn unattended. Your cat can easily light herself on fire by brushing up against a burning candle or start a fire by tipping the candle over.

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## Bloat in Dogs

Bloat, or gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV), is a serious, life-threatening condition seen in dogs. GDV mainly affects large deep-chested dogs, but it can affect any size of dog. It happens when distention of the stomach with food and/or air together with the momentum of this now heavy organ by movement (walking or running) causes the stomach to “flip” upon itself, closing both the in-flow and out-flow passages. The stomach then becomes more and more distended, causing pressure on the large blood vessels of the abdomen, cardiac irregularities, difficulty breathing, tissue death and toxin release.



### Causes

Many theories exist about why this scenario develops. An older but still accepted theory involves large dogs eating large quantities of food (particularly dry food), eating fast and ingesting air, then drinking large quantities of water, and then exercising. The theory is that the stomach becomes very heavy and “swings” inside the dog’s abdomen. The pendulous momentum sends the stomach in a twisting motion over and around itself.

Since some dogs with GDV have been found to not have a stomach that is excessively full of food or water, newer theories have been adopted. One of these is that, particularly in older dogs, the stomach’s regular contractions become weaker, and air and food can remain in the stomach longer than normal, causing the stomach to become heavy, which then results in the twisting event. Still another theory proposes that, again, particularly in older dogs, the spleen can become enlarged due to congestion or cancer. Since the spleen is so closely associated anatomically with the stomach, it can be involved in causing the stomach to become heavy and pendulous, and then twist.

Regardless of the cause of the twisting, GDV in a dog is a life-threatening medical emergency. For there to be a chance of a good outcome, aggressive medical care must be obtained without delay.

### Symptoms

A dog whose stomach has twisted shows acute signs of sickness: difficulty moving around, restlessness, and attempts to vomit (the “dry heaves”). Usually, a dog with this condition salivates, pants, and has a rather remarkable distention of the abdomen that is very hard and painful to the touch. Once these signs appear, the dog can decline rapidly, and death can occur in as little as one hour. A “wait and see” attitude is not advisable. For the best outcome, the dog must be seen by a veterinarian immediately.

## **Diagnosis, treatment and prognosis**

Diagnosis is made by X-ray. It is sometimes necessary to decompress the stomach; surgery is usually needed to correct the twisting and stabilize the dog. The prognosis for recovery depends upon the condition of the stomach and other organs at the time of surgery. Despite aggressive treatment, though, many of these dogs do not recover. So, monitor your large-breed dog carefully and seek veterinary care at the first sign of a problem.



## Caring for an Older Dog

As happens with humans, dogs often slow down both physically and mentally as they get older. Caring for an aging dog requires different considerations when compared with the days when she was young and spry. So, being aware of your dog's limitations is an important first step in ensuring that her golden years are indeed golden.



### Vet visits

There are several different things you can do to help your dog continue to be as comfortable and healthy as possible as she ages. One of the most important is to schedule regular veterinary visits. In general, we recommend that senior pets have a checkup every six months or so. Dogs age much more rapidly than humans do, so a 12-year-old dog, for example, who gets a vet visit annually is comparable to a 75-year-old person who only sees her physician about every three years.

In addition, if your dog's behavior changes at any time, a trip to see your veterinarian is in order, since a dog's health can affect his behavior. The adage about an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure can hold true in the case of the aging pet.

### Healthy weight and exercise

Maintaining a good body weight and providing regular age-appropriate exercise for your pet are also important. As humans, we all know the health consequences of being overweight, and these consequences are not all that different for our canine family members. Joint stress, osteoarthritis, difficulty breathing and skin irritations are just some of the problems that coincide with obesity in dogs. So, provide an appropriate amount of healthy food and go easy with the dog treats. If you're unsure about what to feed your senior dog, check with your veterinarian.

Regarding a senior dog's fitness regimen, regular exercise is beneficial to both the nervous and musculoskeletal systems. To prevent worsening of mobility and pain, be sure to talk with your vet about the activity level that is best for your dog.

### Other physical changes

As our dogs age, there may be other physical changes to address. The older dog's eyesight or hearing may start to diminish. You can accommodate failing eyesight by keeping the furniture and water bowls in the same locations. A hard-of-hearing dog can be taught hand signals to replace verbal cues. She can wear a vibrating collar and be taught that when it vibrates, a treat is forthcoming. Once that association is taught, the dog will look for you to hand her a treat if the collar vibrates.

## Supplements

Several supplements on the market claim to help with joint problems in older dogs. One of these supplements is very familiar to most people: glucosamine, with or without chondroitin. While some brands tend to be more effective than others, the data to back up the health benefit claims is somewhat lacking. In fact, a December 2010 study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* (JAVMA) showed only weak clinical evidence to support the use of glucosamine and chondroitin supplements for osteoarthritis in dogs.

With that said, glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are considered nutritional supplements by the FDA. However, no standards have been accepted for potency, purity, safety or efficacy by regulatory bodies, and independent analysis has shown a wide variation in products.

These products do appear to be very well tolerated in dogs, cats and horses, but because they are often derived from natural sources, hypersensitivity reactions can occur. Adverse effects could potentially include some minor gastrointestinal issues, like flatulence or stool softening. Before giving your dog one of these supplements, ask your vet what might be best for your particular pet.

There are other supplements, such as turmeric and green-lipped mussel extract, marketed as joint “nutraceuticals” for dogs. Fish oil is known to have anti-inflammatory properties that may help. Other treatments, such as acupuncture and cold or low-energy laser therapy, may also benefit older dogs with mobility issues from arthritic conditions.

In conclusion, you know your pet better than anyone, so if trying these potential solutions yields positive results, your pet will thank you. And if they don't assist in the way you'd hoped, simply be extra cautious about keeping your dog comfortable and content. That may mean shelving the long walks, and instead opting for short jaunts and more naps.

## What to Do About a Smelly Dog

Veterinarians often get asked the question “Why does my dog smell so bad?” People frequently place blame for this embarrassing problem on themselves, thinking that they are not caring for their pets properly. In fact, there can be several reasons why some dogs have a distinctively bad smell.

Some reasons for a dog’s foul odor are obvious. Many dogs like to roll in poop and dead stuff and, yes, play with skunks. You may not witness the event but the smell is unmistakable.

Usually, giving the dog a good bath will solve the problems associated with rolling in smelly things. For dogs who have encounters with skunks, there are several skunk sprays available, but a thorough bath to rinse the oils off the coat followed by some type of acidifying wash using diluted vinegar or tomato sauce can work. Be prepared for the scent to linger for a while, though; you may not want your best friend to sleep on the bed for a few weeks.

Then, of course, there can be other issues that are not as easy to identify. The basics behind an odor from a dog’s skin or coat are pretty straightforward. There is generally some type of infection, a change in the skin’s composition or an alteration to the amount of secretions the skin produces. The difficulty is in trying to figure out exactly what the underlying disease process is that’s causing these skin changes.

### Allergies

Let’s start with one of the most common culprits, allergies. Allergies typically affect pets differently from the way they affect humans. In humans, allergies cause itchy, watery eyes and sneezing, but in dogs, they often manifest themselves as problems with the skin.

Dogs can have allergies to something in their food or something in the environment. The allergens to which the dog is exposed cause an inflammatory response in the skin. A whole cascade of events leads to the dog becoming very itchy, with the primary irritant causing inflammation along with secondary scratching and, ultimately, trauma from the dog scratching himself.

The result is skin changes that, when mild or present for a short period of time, often go unnoticed or untreated. If they persist or worsen, however, they cause the skin to become inflamed. The skin gets thicker, secondary infections develop, and then the skin produces increased amounts of secretions of oils and water.

You can kind of see where this is heading. The thick skin, secretions and infection all mix together to form a pretty stinky stew. Simply bathing the dog will not help, or at least



it won't help for long. The underlying disease or diseases need to be treated. Treating allergies is beyond the scope of this discussion, but your veterinarian may prescribe things such as medicated baths, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and primary treatment for the allergies such as a special diet or allergy shots.

## **Infections**

Yeast infections are another common underlying problem that can lead to a bad skin odor. Yeast is not a typical inhabitant of the skin, but given the right environment, they can sure flourish there. Sometimes the yeast is localized to places such as skin folds or ears – places that stay dark and moist. Often, however, the yeast can infect a dog's skin systemically. This is seen more in dogs who have had a stress to their immune system, but any dog can develop these infections.

Once the yeast infection is diagnosed by your vet, treatment may include medicated baths and oral medication. Be patient, as this type of infection can take weeks or even months to clear up.

## **Seborrhea**

Now let's talk about seborrhea. Dogs with seborrhea have excessive scaling and flaking of the skin. The seborrhea may be dry and flaky or oily and greasy, and is often worse in skin folds.

There are two forms of seborrhea, primary and secondary. With primary seborrhea, which is often breed-specific and starts at a young age, there is no identifiable underlying disease. Secondary seborrhea occurs when another disease causes excessive scaling and flaking of the skin. Hormonal changes, allergies, infections (from bacteria, fungus or parasites), poor diet, obesity and environmental factors such as temperature and humidity changes can all lead to secondary seborrhea.

Both primary and secondary seborrhea are treated with medicated baths, as well as treatment for any of the underlying problems mentioned above. There are other specific medications and supplements that can help, and treatment is tailored to the individual dog by a veterinarian.

To sum up, you've probably noticed that bacterial and yeast infections and allergies are mentioned several times. The take-home point with skin disease and chronic odor in dogs is that many different problems may be at work all at once, throwing off the normal healthy balance in a dog's skin. It can be time-consuming to not only diagnose but to treat successfully. A good outcome is highly dependent on working closely with your veterinarian, following her directions and, above all else, being very patient.

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## Living with a Diabetic Pet

Diabetes mellitus is a common disease in both dogs and cats. The good news is that animals with diabetes can lead full, happy and — yes — healthy lives. A close relationship among you, your pet and your veterinarian is the key to successfully living with and caring for a diabetic pet.



### Diagnosis

Diabetes in pets is fairly straightforward to diagnose and treat. The most common signs you may see at home are increased thirst and urination, increased appetite and/or weight loss. Although there are other diseases that can cause similar signs, a few quick tests by your veterinarian can determine if diabetes is present. Blood work and a urine sample are typically sufficient to confirm the diagnosis.

Dealing with diabetes in your pet may seem daunting. There are things to consider, such as cost, time commitments, medication, and possible complications of the diabetes itself. Your veterinarian will help you fully understand the disease and be able to avoid complications or more quickly address problems if they do arise.

The most complicated and sometimes frustrating part of living with a diabetic pet occurs during the first few months after diagnosis. This is typically when costs are most high, your learning curve is most steep, and more complications can arise. Some pets are quite sick at diagnosis and need to be hospitalized, or there may be complicating factors such as urinary tract infections, skin infections or pneumonia. Some pets take weeks or months to become regulated as your veterinarian determines the appropriate dose of insulin.

Hang in there during these early months. Most pets recover quite well with appropriate care from a veterinarian and go home feeling much better. In fact, because diabetes can arise slowly, you may not realize just how affected your pet was until he is treated and back to his old self!

### Daily care

Caring for a diabetic pet is a lifelong commitment, but the day-to-day care of most stable diabetic pets is actually quite simple. They can sleep in your bed, hang out with you on the couch, go to the park, swim, play, and in general act and be treated like any other pet.

Your diabetic pet does, however, require insulin each morning and night, every day, twice a day, forever. This is not nearly as scary as most people think. The needles are very

small, and there are ways you can make administering the insulin an easy, and even fun, part of your daily routine with your pet.

It is important that your pet feels well and eats a full meal prior to his shot. As he is finishing his meal, you can typically sneak in the insulin shot without him even noticing (yes, really). Or you can associate the shot with a special treat or game or just some one-on-one quality time so your pet looks forward to this time together. Your veterinarian will teach you how to administer the insulin.

If your pet is part of a family, involve all family members who are mature enough to care for your pet. This helps to ensure that the shots are not forgotten and are given on time, and certainly helps to make sure any problems are noticed.

It is a great idea to keep a simple daily log in a spiral-bound notebook tracking who gave the insulin and when it was given, along with a notation about your pet's well-being each day. Watch your pet closely for early signs of not feeling well.

Your pet must be on a stable diet, with regular feeding times of consistent quality and quantity of food. It is not a good idea to share your people food with your pet or offer your ice cream bowl to finish. Your pet must always have access to fresh, clean water. Even a well-regulated diabetic will drink more water than a typical dog or cat.

Your diabetic pet can be an active part of the family, but remember he cannot regulate his own blood sugar, so you need to make sure that if he is really active in a day that he receives small snacks and, as always, has access to plenty of water.

## Potential complications

To care well for your diabetic pet, you need to be aware of potential complications. Most of the things that you need to watch for fall into two categories:

- Signs that the blood sugar is too low (hypoglycemia)
- Signs that the blood sugar is too high (hyperglycemia)

Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, is the more serious of the two complications. Signs include wobbliness, disorientation, vomiting and even seizures. The solution: Do NOT give insulin; feed your pet if she is able to chew and swallow; call your vet immediately. Don't panic. This is not a sign that you have to give up. It does mean that you have to work with your vet to readjust the insulin to a lower dose. Throughout a diabetic's life, the insulin requirements will change. Not all adjustments are associated with signs of hypoglycemia, but you should know what to look for. Another good thing to have on hand is the number of an after-hours emergency veterinary clinic. You need to have a Plan B in case your vet is not available.

Hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar, may be signaled by increased thirst and urination, "accidents" in the house, excessive hunger and stealing food, and weight loss. The solution: Call your vet and arrange for him/her to help you adjust the insulin. Again, don't become discouraged. Even though these signs are not as severe as the signs of hypoglycemia, they can be quite frustrating for a caregiver. Work closely with your vet, since he/she can often help you get these symptoms under control, making your life (and your pet's life) much easier.

## Getting help

If you feel that caring for your diabetic pet is just too much for you to do, ask for help. There are often sympathetic friends, family, neighbors, veterinary technicians, and other pet lovers in your life who will be happy to help. You can ask your veterinarian for sources of help. Many pet owners have found great support and advice on websites set up by others caring for diabetic animals. At [petdiabetes.com](http://petdiabetes.com) there's a comprehensive list of diabetes-related pet websites.

Always remember: You do not have to do this alone! Once you get a system in place, you will find that caring for your diabetic pet is really not as difficult as it might have seemed at first, and your pet can bring you many years of joy.



## Living with a Deaf Dog

A lot of the same things that cause hearing loss in humans also cause hearing loss in dogs. Dogs can be born deaf (congenital deafness) or can become deaf because of some injury, disease, drug, toxin, or simply as a result of aging (acquired deafness).

The most common cause of congenital deafness is related to the amount of pigment (coloring) that the dog has. The proper development of the hearing mechanism depends partly on the development of pigment in certain cells of the inner ear. If there is no pigment development (as seen in dogs who are white), these cells do not function properly and the animal may be deaf. A white animal with blue eyes is more likely to be deaf than a white animal who has gold, green, or brown eyes.

Acquired deafness can happen after an injury to the head or ear canal. Certain drugs can also cause deafness. Even chronic ear infections can eventually cause deafness.



It may be difficult to determine whether or not your dog is deaf. A dog who doesn't respond to being called or to other noises may be deaf, or he may just have "selective hearing," meaning that he hears when he chooses to do so! Older animals may experience a gradual loss of hearing as part of the aging process. The only sure way to know if your dog is deaf is to have a Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response (BAER) test done. Unfortunately, this test is available only at veterinary schools or large referral hospitals.

If you believe that your dog is deaf, start with a complete health checkup by your veterinarian. After receiving a clean bill of health, you can work with your deaf friend to teach him or her how to recognize basic cues.

Dogs who are deaf can lead long, healthy, happy lives. If you're patient with training, they can be taught to respond to cues as well as any hearing dog. In terms of learning principles, deaf dogs are trained just like dogs with normal hearing. The biggest difference lies in how we get their attention, and what type of cues we use to ask for a behavior. Teaching a deaf dog to respond reliably to the "come" cue when she's not on leash is probably the biggest challenge. The simplest solution is to keep her on a long leash rather than wonder how to get her to look at you when she is 50 yards away and looking at a rabbit.

Indoors, stomping your foot on the floor will create vibrations that can signal your dog. If the dog is off-leash in a fenced yard at night, try using a flashlight. Laser pointers also work well at night and sometimes even in daylight. (Caution: NEVER shine a laser pointer

anywhere near your dog's head, as it can cause eye damage. Point the laser at the ground or on an object in front of your dog.) You can also train your dog to come to you in response to a flashing light: You can flick your porch light off and on when your dog is outdoors at night; indoors, you can use the room lights. If you're gadget-oriented, you might want to buy a remote-controlled vibrating collar, which creates a sensation similar to that of a cell phone or an electric toothbrush.

To teach most behaviors, such as sit, down and stay, the techniques of capturing or luring work equally well for deaf dogs and dogs with good hearing. In some situations, in fact, deafness is an advantage because deaf dogs are less susceptible to random distracting noises during training. Instead of using a verbal cue ("sit," "stay"), you'll use a visual marker, such as a hand signal. Dogs are actually more naturally disposed to respond to visual cues. (It is humans who like to put words to things.)

A few more points worth mentioning:

- Although verbal praise may not be a meaningful reinforcer for a deaf dog, you are not limited to food as a reward. Physical contact like petting or other playful interactions can be highly desired rewards for any dog.
- The loss of hearing associated with normal aging occurs gradually and in stages. The few studies done show that hearing is lost first in the middle- to high-frequency range of sounds, with the hearing loss for low-frequency sounds coming later. Therefore, your dog will be able to hear you when you speak in a low-pitched voice for a longer period of time than when you use a normal or high-pitched voice. Sometimes, whistles (sports or dog whistles, or using your own mouth) will work for certain partially deaf dogs.
- Because hearing-impaired dogs can't hear approaching cars, always pay extremely close attention to your dog whenever you and he are near a street or road.

Two excellent resources for people who have deaf dogs are the [Deaf Dog Education Action Fund](#) website and the book *Living with a Deaf Dog* by Susan Cope Becker.



## Living with a Blind Dog

When blindness strikes a pet, it can be quite sudden or it can develop slowly over time. If you think your dog has gone blind or is going blind, a trip to the veterinarian is in order as soon as possible. Blindness can be caused by a variety of medical problems, not just those affecting the eye itself. Diabetes in dogs can cause sudden blindness, as can cataracts or glaucoma. Diabetes is potentially life-threatening, so it's important to make an appointment with your vet right away. Also, a quick diagnosis and treatment can sometimes restore the animal's sight.

If the medical conditions have been dealt with and your pet has been determined to be permanently blind, you need to be aware that blind pets need time to adjust to their new limitations. Here are some guidelines:



- Do not approach and handle your pet without first announcing your approach. Gently say his name before trying to touch him, so he knows who you are.
- Blind pets may not like to be picked up. They lose their orientation and may become frightened. Pet and play with them on the floor, where they feel more secure.
- Limit changes in furniture arrangement and routines as much as possible. Place food and water bowls in familiar places that are easy to locate.
- If your pet has recently become blind, carefully monitor her food and water intake until you are sure she is able to manage on her own.

Despite these few limitations, life for blind pets can be quite enjoyable. Since dogs have such a keen sense of smell, walks can be just as much fun as they were before the onset of blindness. For safety, of course, it's a good idea to keep your dog on a leash when you're out walking and watch for obstacles in her path. If your dog is a ball or toy lover, he can still locate these things with his sense of smell. Again, make sure there aren't any dangerous obstacles in the way when you play with your dog.

The internet contains suggestions for toys and games for blind dogs, as well as other resources to help you enhance your dog's quality of life.



## Cleaning Up Pet Stains and Odors

By Sherry Woodard

If your pet has an “accident” in your home, it’s important to neutralize the spot with an enzymatic cleaner to completely get rid of the odor. Otherwise, the smell is an invitation to the animal to mark the same spot again. The enzymes in the cleaner (Nature’s Miracle and Simple Solution are two brands) digest the odor-causing protein in organic materials. These products are safe for use around pets and children.

Bleach is also a good cleaner, but it is not as safe because it is often used at strong concentrations. (It may also bleach out your carpets or floors.) When using any cleaners, always read and follow the directions carefully.

A black light can be helpful in locating urine accident sites, even old accident sites. Turn off all the lights in the room, except the black light, of course. As the stain lights up, you can mark the outline with chalk. You may need to rinse or soak the spot if prior efforts failed to completely clean the site.

While accident sites are drying, they may still be attractive as an elimination spot. To discourage your pet, you can try covering the spot with vinyl, flannel-backed tablecloths, which are machine-washable, inexpensive, and unattractive to most dogs and cats.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*





## Positive Reinforcement: Training with Praise and Rewards

By Sherry Woodard

Positive reinforcement is the most effective and humane way to train animals. The basic principle is to reward a desired behavior with something pleasant. As with so many things, correct timing is essential. To get the animal to associate the reward with the correct behavior, the treat or praise must be delivered immediately. Consistency is also essential. Always reward the desired behavior and don't ever reward undesired behavior.

The reward for good behavior can be a favorite toy, a game, petting, praise or food treats. Most dogs and cats will work for food, so food is the most common training reward. Use small pieces of soft treats that don't require a lot of chewing, so that you don't lose the animal's focus on the task at hand. Offer praise and food rewards every time a dog is learning a new behavior. After the dog responds consistently to a cue, you can praise him without offering any treats.



Your dog will learn cues better if everyone in your household uses the same ones, so try to get everyone in your home involved in training. Some commonly used cues are sit, stay, down (used when you want your dog to lie down) and come.

Keep training sessions short; you want training to be fun for both you and your pet. Dogs are very sensitive to the tone of your voice, so if you're in a bad mood, put off the training session until you can enjoy the time spent with your dog.

Remember, to remain well-behaved, all dogs need regular exercise and social interaction. To keep them socially acceptable, they need to socialize. After some basic training, your dog will politely interact with most humans, whether they are guests in your home or strangers in the park. For lots more information about dog training and behavior, read the other resources in this and the following sections of this manual.

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## Getting the Behavior You Want from Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

All dogs benefit from learning how to behave appropriately when sharing space and time with their human family members and their other animal friends. Dogs aren't born knowing how to interact politely with people, so you'll need to teach your dog the basics using positive reinforcement training techniques.

The basic cues every dog should know are:

**Recall.** Recall involves name recognition and getting your dog to come when called. Be aware of the tone of voice you use. We humans often use recall with an unhappy tone, and it also often means that whatever fun thing the dog is doing is about to stop. You want your dog to associate good things with running to you, so practice the following daily: Using a happy tone, call your dog and when she comes, reward her with a treat or a pet, and then let her go.



**Sit.** Dogs cannot jump up and sit at the same time, so teaching your dog to sit can eliminate jumping-up behavior. "Sit" is a great way for your dog to greet new people.

**Down.** Teach your dog to lie down all the way, with elbows on the floor. As with "sit," the cue "down" can stop jumping-up behavior by replacing it. "Down" also helps to teach patience and self-control to your dog.

**Stand.** This cue is used for grooming, and inspecting lumps and bumps. You can use "wait" with a stand position.

**Wait.** The cues "wait" and "stay" also teach your dog patience and self-control. "Wait" involves a brief wait. In a sit, stand or down position, ask your dog to wait for food, wait to have a leash clipped on her collar, wait while you go in and out of doorways.

**Stay.** The "stay" cue is used for longer waiting periods. If you don't want the dog to move, it's best to ask her to stay in a down position, since other positions may become uncomfortable to hold. Teach "stay" on a bed or mat if you want the dog to stay in one place. Using a mat makes the place for the stay more comfortable, and the dog can clearly see, feel and relax in the designated space.

Make sure you use "stay" appropriately. For example, if you teach a dog to stay until released, but then start saying it as you leave for work every day, you will confuse your dog and lose the true use of "stay."

**Go to bed.** You can make a game out of "go to bed." Start by leading your dog to his bed and then rewarding him. Then, add the words once your dog is running to this place, expecting a treat, toy, praise or chewy.

For more details on how to teach these cues, see the training plans at the end of this section of the manual.

Once you have taught your dog the basics, you can reinforce his learning throughout the daily routine. There are many opportunities to practice every day, without setting aside a specific time for training. Here are some examples:

- Ask your dog to sit before going outside and before coming back in.
- Use “down” before giving your dog a meal.
- Use “sit” before giving the dog a treat or toy, or before throwing a toy for a game of fetch.
- You can add “wait” or “stay” to any “sit” or “down.”

Ask your dog to sit, lie down, wait or stay in order to get access to anything the dog wants: a walk, a favorite game, toys, treats, social time with people and other animals. Remember to reward only when the dog is in the correct position.

Being consistent with this daily training and making it fun will allow you and your dog to develop a trusting, positive relationship. Your dog will see you as the best, most generous leader ever — and he’ll respond with great behavior in exchange for fun rewards.

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## Improving a Dog's Social Skills

By Sherry Woodard

All dogs can benefit from practicing their social skills. Many dogs lack basic social skills, either because of limited exposure to other dogs and people, or a lack of positive experiences. Dogs who were raised without leaving their house and yard often show fear of many commonplace situations, such as meeting new people. These dogs are uncomfortable near new people because they look, smell and sound different from their families.



If a dog has had limited experience with the outside world, any change, such as a move to a new house or city, can be quite a challenge. When dogs like these end up in shelters, they often have a very hard time adjusting to their new environment. They may have been great with their people, even with a few family friends, but when everything in their lives has been turned upside down, they become fearful and antisocial. Unless someone works with them to improve their social skills, they are often deemed unsuitable family pets.

We can help these dogs by teaching them that the world isn't as scary as it seems. On the next two pages is a list of things to practice with a dog to get him up to speed on his social skills and more comfortable with all types of situations. When working with a dog, try to check all the boxes and use a fresh copy of the worksheet each month. If your dog develops positive associations with meeting new challenges, he will soon be comfortable and relaxed, ready to go places and do many fun things.

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## Dog Socialization Check-Off Sheet

Handle all the dog's body parts on a daily basis, giving praise and small food rewards for relaxing. As the dog becomes more comfortable, have other people start to handle the dog, too.

### Introduce the dog to people.

People of various ages:

- Newborn to three months
- Three months to six months
- Six months to nine months
- Newly walking toddlers
- One year old
- Two years old
- More than one toddler at a time
- Three to four years old
- Groups of children playing
- Teenagers: boys and girls
- Adults: many different ones
- Seniors: many different ones

People doing different things:

- Singing
- Dancing
- Clapping
- Jumping
- Hopping
- Skipping
- Whistling
- Jogging
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Differences in people:

- Loud man
- Loud woman
- Ethnic differences
- Using oxygen
- Using a cane
- Using a walker
- Using a wheelchair
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

People wearing different things:

- Hats
- Glasses
- Sunglasses
- A helmet
- Coats with hood up
- Capes with hood up
- Gloves
- Masks
- Big boots
- Uniforms

### Introduce the dog to other animals.

To keep all pets safe, supervise at all times.

- Cats
- Kittens
- Dogs
- Puppies
- Horses
- Small pet animals

### **Introduce the dog to household activities.**

If the dog was an outdoor pet, everything will be new, so don't do too much at once.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog nail clippers               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broom                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog brush and comb              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mop                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sound of electric hair clippers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm clock                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sound of electric fan           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bags flapping           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio                        | <input type="checkbox"/> A balloon with air escaping     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise-making children's toys | <input type="checkbox"/> A recording of storm sounds     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's pull toys         | <input type="checkbox"/> A kite                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Umbrella (open and close it) | <input type="checkbox"/> Things being dropped            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                  |  |

### **Introduce the dog to the big wide world.**

Take the dog on many different types of outings.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ride in cars                      | <input type="checkbox"/> See people on bicycles          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk on different flooring        | <input type="checkbox"/> See people on skates            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use stairs with and without backs | <input type="checkbox"/> See people using shopping carts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk on bridges                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Meet new friends                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit other people's homes        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take the dog to be groomed        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See and smell parks               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit at coffee shop with you       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use elevators                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use automatic doors at stores     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                       |  |

## Teaching Your Dog Basic Cues

By Sherry Woodard

Teaching your dog to respond to basic cues such as “sit” and “down” is easy, fun and gives fast results. When training, make sure you have yummy treats, broken into pea-sized pieces, and use a “marker” of some sort. A marker is a signal (either a clicker or a word such as “yes”) that marks a desired behavior the moment it occurs. It is your way to communicate



with the dog to tell him that he did a good job and is getting a treat. Here’s how to train your dog to respond to several useful cues.

### Teaching “sit”

Hold a treat in front of the dog’s nose, just out of the dog’s reach. Raise the treat toward the top of the dog’s head. When the dog’s head follows the treat up, his rear end will go down. When the dog’s rear hits the floor, use your marker, give the dog the treat and praise him. If the dog jumps up rather than sits, you are holding the treat too high. If the dog backs up, try teaching the cue with a wall behind the dog. When training any new skill, do not use a verbal cue (like “sit”) in the beginning. The verbal cue will be introduced later, when the behavior is strong enough to be given a name.

### Teaching “down”

Start with the dog sitting in front of you. Hold a treat near his face, then move the treat straight down toward the floor. Wait a moment, holding the treat close in to the dog’s body, then move the treat slowly away from the dog. If the dog gets up instead of lying down, try again. Also, make sure that you are pulling the treat straight down; sometimes, by moving it forward instead of down, the dog will stand up to follow the treat. Be patient with this exercise; it may not work perfectly the first time. Once the dog lies down, use your marker and give him the treat.

### Teaching “stand”

Start with the dog sitting in front of you. Put the treat in front of his nose and then slowly move the treat toward your body, taking one step back. The motion is similar to opening a drawer. As the dog follows the treat, he will stand up. As soon as he stands, use your marker and give him a treat.

## Teaching “sit” from “down”

Start with the dog lying down. Hold a treat in front of the dog’s nose, keeping the treat close to his nose, almost like a magnet drawing him upright. Slowly raise the treat up over his head. As he follows the treat, he should move into a sit. As soon as he is sitting, use your marker and give him a treat.

## Graduating from a food lure

When using food as a lure to teach a dog new behaviors, you want to make sure that you don’t get stuck in the rut of needing to have a treat in your hand before he responds to the cue. When teaching any of these behaviors, try using a treat for the first 5 to 10 times (depending on how quickly your dog is moving into the desired position), but after that, do the same motion with your hand without holding a treat. Most dogs will follow the hand as if there were a treat inside. As soon as the dog drops into a down position or sits (whatever behavior you’re working on), use your marker and then give him a treat. That motion with the hand is now becoming the hand signal that cues the dog to do the behavior.

## Adding a verbal cue

When you begin training a new behavior, don’t say anything. If you say “sit” over and over again when trying to teach a dog to sit, the cue “sit” loses its meaning for the dog. First, get the dog reliably doing the behavior. Then, work on him doing the behavior consistently with a hand signal (usually the same motion of your hand that you were using when you had treats in your hand to lure him into that position). Finally, you can add a verbal cue.

To teach a new cue, the process is new cue, old cue: Say “sit” (the new cue) and then give the hand signal to sit (the old cue). Use your verbal marker (e.g., “yes”) or the clicker when the dog sits. If you start giving the verbal “sit” cue after you give the hand signal, the dog will not clearly associate the new cue with the behavior. Repeat this many times so the dog learns that the word (e.g., “sit”) is the same as the hand signal, which is a cue to perform the behavior (e.g., sitting). Eventually, you will not need to give the hand signal after saying the verbal cue. If done correctly, this is an easy way for the dog to learn that a particular verbal cue is associated with a particular behavior.

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## Clicker Training for You and Your Pets

By Sherry Woodard

### What is clicker training?

Clicker training is a fun and effective way to communicate with your pets. You can train almost any kind of pet – including cats, birds, dogs, rabbits, rats and horses – to respond to the clicker. For example, you can teach your dog to sit or your bird to hop onto a stick using clicker training. The only thing you need is a clicker, some treats, and an animal friend.



Clicker training is gentler than traditional training methods. According to Karen Pryor's clickertraining.com website, "In traditional training, you tell an animal or person what to do, make that behavior happen (using force if necessary), reward good results, and punish mistakes. In clicker training you watch for the behavior you like, mark the instant it happens with a click, and pay off with a treat. The treat may be food, a pat, praise, or anything else the learner enjoys. If the learner makes a mistake all you do is wait and let them try again."

### How did clicker training get started?

Clicker training uses a method called operant conditioning, pioneered by psychologist B.F. Skinner in the 1960s. Skinner observed that an animal will tend to repeat an action that has a positive consequence and will avoid an action that has a negative consequence. If a primary reinforcer (like food) is used, the animal will become conditioned to repeat the action that produces the food. Using operant conditioning, Skinner trained rats to push a lever that released food pellets.

The clicker is used as a conditioned reinforcer — a cue that something good is coming. A form of clicker training (using whistles) was originally used with great success on dolphins. In the 1990s, clicker training for other animals really took off when trainers realized how easy and effective it was.

### How does clicker training work?

Clicker training works by getting your pet to expect something enjoyable (like a treat) in return for doing something you ask him or her to do. You use the clicker so that your pet will associate the treat with the clicking noise.



## How do I do clicker training?

**1. Choose the best clicker.** There are several types, and you will want one that elicits a sound that does not startle your pet. Cats, for example, are sometimes frightened by a loud click. Some pets may even require a very soft clicking sound, such as that made with a ballpoint pen.

**2. Charge the clicker.** Next, you'll need to "charge" the clicker — that is, give the clicker a particular meaning so that your pet associates something good with it. Think of it like this: The first time you use an electric can opener to open a can of cat food, that sound means nothing to your cat. But after you've made that sound a few times, and a bowl of food promptly appears, your cat expects food when he hears the can opener. That's the type of association you want your pet to have when he hears the clicker.

To start, make sure you have your clicker and some soft treats on hand, cut or broken up into small pieces. Next, position yourself near your pet, someplace quiet where there aren't any distractions. Push and release the clicker, then immediately give your pet a treat. Repeat this numerous times. You want your pet to expect a treat every time she hears the clicking noise.

**3. Use the clicker to reward behavior.** Next, when your pet does anything that you'd like her to repeat, you can "capture" that behavior by click-and-reward. You're sending the message "What you just did is good," and your pet will want to do that behavior again. It usually only takes a few repetitions for a pet to learn that a particular behavior elicits the click, followed by the reward.

For a behavior that you would like your pet to do, you can do a click-and-reward when there's even small movements in the right direction. For example, if you are working on teaching her the "come" cue and she takes two steps in the right direction, click the clicker and offer a treat. After she learns that this small step elicits a reward, withhold the click until she moves a bit closer to you. Repeat this exercise until she eventually comes all the way to you. This process is called "shaping."

## What if my pet doesn't do what I asked?

First, don't ever push, pull or force her to do what you want. If your pet doesn't do what you've asked (like sit or come), don't click or offer a treat. You can try to help her get the idea by holding the treat above her nose (to get her to sit) or by walking away from her and holding the treat out in front of you (to get her to come). This technique is called "luring."

## What other kinds of things can I teach my pet to do?

Once your pet has learned one behavior and does it every time, you can start adding others. Don't try to teach her more than one at a time. Here are some examples of other behaviors to click and give treats for:

- Holding up one paw (high five!)
- Sitting up on her hind legs
- Turning in a circle
- Stepping up onto or down from different surfaces

Remember:

- Click while the behavior is happening or immediately afterward.
- Always click first, then offer a treat.
- Only click once.

One last thing: Keep the practice sessions short. You want your pet to enjoy clicker training, so don't make it into a chore. Have fun clicker training your pet!

### **Where can I find out more about clicker training?**

Here are two websites to check out: [clickertrain.com](http://clickertrain.com) and [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com). And here's a [Best Friends video](#).

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Teaching ‘Come’

By Sherry Woodard

The best way to have your dog come reliably is to make it a party every time you call her and she comes to you. Whether the party involves giving treats, affection, praise or toys, she should never have a reason to think twice about coming to you.

To teach your dog to come, prepare yourself for the lesson with pea-sized treats in a treat pouch you wear and/or a favorite toy tucked in your pocket. Take the dog somewhere with few distractions. I tether the dog to me, a doorknob or a chair leg so she won't wander off. Say “come” (or her name) only once, but say it with great enthusiasm and wave treats right in front of the dog's nose. Reward her with a treat when she comes and repeat the exercise. If she does not come within a few seconds after you say “come,” don't repeat the cue. Just wait until she comes, reward her, and start again. Do this over and over; to keep it fun, always use a happy tone.



When she comes consistently with only a short distance between you, gradually increase the distance and repeat the exercise. The length of leash can grow to a 20- to 30-foot-long line with improved skills at learning the cue. A dog should never be allowed off-leash, or at least never be asked to come when off-leash, until she has perfect recall on leash.

Once you have practiced in locations with few distractions, start practicing in locations with more distractions. Then, add other people to the game of learning. Start with the exercise described above: Have a friend stand near the dog and instruct him/her to say “come” and give her a treat when she complies. Next, stand a short distance from your friend and alternate between saying “come” and giving treats. You and your friend can start moving farther away from each other and have the dog on a long leash so she can run between you for fun and treats. This can grow into a long-distance game of recall. It's a great way for your dog to interact, exercise and learn to enjoy more people.

One of the reasons that “come” can be challenging to teach is that it is often used to interrupt what a dog thinks is fun. For instance, say your dog is running in the yard, barking at the neighbor's cat. You respond by yelling, “Stop that and come in the house!” For the dog, continuing to bark at the cat is a lot more fun than responding to your stern tone of voice. So, call your dog in a cheerful voice and reward her generously when she comes.

To create a positive association with “come,” don't use it casually. “Come” can be a lifesaving cue if your dog is in danger. Practice until it becomes a reflex for the dog. Remember to keep all learning as fun as possible. Use a happy tone, be patient, and keep lessons short and frequent.

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## Teaching ‘Down’ and ‘Stay’

By Sherry Woodard

“Stay” is a lifesaving cue to teach all dogs. When can “stay” save your dog’s life? Whenever giving the cue would prevent your dog from making a mad dash out the front door, the car, or the backyard gate. Stay is a cue that many people forget to practice — and without practice, your dog may not have this skill when it truly matters.

Prepare yourself for the lesson with pea-sized treats in a treat pouch you wear and/or a favorite toy tucked in your pocket. Select a place with few distractions. I offer a flat pad or mat for the dog to lie on. I think it helps communicate to the dog that if he moves from that spot, he will be going back and trying again before a reward comes his way. For the dog’s comfort, I teach him to stay in a “down” position. He can wiggle in a “down” without leaving his stay, whereas wiggling in a “sit” or “stand” often means leaving the desired position.

### Down

If your dog doesn’t know “down,” here’s how to teach him: Start with the dog sitting in front of you. Hold a treat near his face, then move the treat down toward the floor. Wait a moment, holding the treat close in to the dog’s body, then move the treat slowly away from the dog. Be patient with this exercise; it may not work perfectly the first time. If the dog gets up instead of lying down, try again. Once the dog lies down, praise him and give him the treat.



When the dog is consistently doing a “down,” add a verbal cue (e.g., “down”) when the dog is lying down. If you start giving the cue before the animal is doing the behavior, the dog will not clearly associate the cue with the behavior. Instead, get the behavior first and then start giving the cue while the dog performs the behavior. Gradually move the cue back in time until you are giving the cue before the behavior. If done correctly, this is an easy way for the animal to learn that a particular cue is associated with a particular behavior.

### Stay

To teach “stay”: Have your dog lie down. Put one hand out toward him and say “stay.” Give a treat quickly, before he moves. He may then get excited and stand up. Have him lie down again and repeat: Say “stay” and give a treat quickly so he gets the idea that the treat is given only when he is down.

Then, start lengthening the time before the treat is popped into his mouth. I start using a release word to indicate that the dog may move. In fact, I use the word “release” because

it is a word not often used in casual conversation. Once your dog is waiting consistently in a “down,” move one step away before stepping back and giving him the treat. Use small steps for best results. I continue this process, gradually increasing the number of steps back, until I have the dog waiting for a treat while I leave the room and return.

If your dog is high energy or easily bored, you can start the lessons with a tether on him so he cannot move away. If you started with a tether, remove it once you have a brief “stay.” If your dog needs many lessons with the tether before he has the self-control necessary to do a “stay,” don’t worry. Some dogs need more time to get the idea.



Remember to keep all learning as fun as possible. Use a happy tone, be patient, and keep lessons short and frequent.

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## Teaching ‘Leave It’

By Sherry Woodard

Like “stay,” “leave it” is a cue that may prevent your dog from being injured and may even save his life. “Leave it” should be taught to all dogs and practiced frequently. Hazards that you want your dog to leave alone include antifreeze in a puddle; sharp bones, broken glass or any other dangerous trash on the ground; and even a dog squabble at the dog park. Your dog responding to the cue “leave it” can be the difference between you giving quick praise or heading to an emergency vet clinic.



Teaching “leave it” is not difficult. Begin the lessons inside your home or in an area with very few distractions. Here are the steps for teaching “leave it”:

1. Make sure you have two different types of treats. One type can be fairly boring to the dog, but the other type should be a high-value treat that he finds pretty delicious. You will also want to make sure that the treats are broken up into pea-sized pieces so it won't take him too long to eat them.
2. Put one type of treat in each hand. If you like to train with a clicker as your marker, you can also hold a clicker in the same hand that holds the high-value treat. Then, place both of your hands behind your back.
3. Make a fist with the hand that is holding the treat of lower value and present your fist to your dog, letting him sniff.
4. Say “leave it” and wait until he finishes sniffing your fist.
5. As soon as your dog is done sniffing, you can either click with the clicker or say “yes.” Then offer him the higher-value treat in your other hand.
6. Repeat until your dog immediately stops sniffing your hand when you say “leave it.”
7. When you say “leave it” and he stops sniffing right away, leash your dog and then toss a low-value treat outside of his reach.
8. Wait until he stops sniffing and pulling toward the treat. As soon as he does, either say “yes” or click and then give him a high-value treat from your hand. Practice this exercise a number of times.

Over time, by practicing “leave it,” your dog should stop pulling as soon as you give the

cue. When rewarding him with a treat, make sure that it is something good, not plain old kibble. By doing so, you are teaching him that asking him to leave some food doesn't mean he won't get anything, but that in fact he might get something even more delicious.

When your dog is reliably responding to the cue, you can teach him that "leave it" can apply to other things as well, not just food on the floor. Repeat the exercise with five different items that are fairly boring to your dog.

After using five different "boring" items, start using slightly more exciting items. You know your dog, so you alone know what items he would consider more interesting, but don't jump to high-value items right away. To increase his chances of success at learning the cue, you want to work up to high-value items gradually. If Kleenex or a piece of plastic, for instance, would attract your dog on a walk, don't start with those. Choose the items based on your ultimate goal: Anytime you say "leave it," you want to be confident that your dog will indeed leave whatever you are asking him to leave. .

The reward he receives when he leaves an item can change as well. If your dog has a favorite toy, squeak it and play for a moment when he comes running to you after leaving the other item of interest. Most dogs love interacting with us, so a moment of praise or play with a toy can be just as effective as a treat.

Finally, remember to keep it fun. Even though you're practicing "leave it" as a way to keep your dog safe, you want him to see it as a fun game you play. When your dog is proficient at the game in your home, start practicing in a variety of locations with more distractions.

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## Teaching ‘Speak’ and ‘Quiet’

By Sherry Woodard

Why would you want to teach your dog to “speak” (bark)? Well, teaching a dog to bark on cue can actually help control excessive barking. Plus, barking is one way for dogs to express themselves.

It’s a good idea to teach “quiet” first, though, especially if your dog is very talkative. Have a supply of soft, small yummy treats at the ready. You can teach “quiet” by rewarding the dog with a treat

between barks. You want to be clear that you are rewarding the quiet, not a bark, so use a marker — a clicker or your voice saying “yes” — at the quiet moment. Start by rewarding a quiet moment, then reward for longer and longer periods of quiet.



Add a verbal cue (“quiet,” for instance) once the dog is consistently giving you the behavior you want. If you start giving the cue before the animal is doing the behavior, the dog may not associate the cue with the behavior. Instead, get the behavior first and then start giving the cue while the dog performs the behavior. Gradually move the cue back in time until you are giving the cue before the behavior. If done correctly, this is an easy way for the animal to learn that a particular cue is associated with a particular behavior. Your dog will learn that if you give the cue “quiet,” she will only be rewarded if she doesn’t make a sound.

To teach “speak,” I often have another dog act as a role model. This technique works amazingly fast if you are rewarding the “speaking” dog with treats. Tether both dogs and stand in front of them so you can be ready to reward the “speaking” behavior from each dog.

If you do not have a role model who speaks, start by tethering your dog and standing in front of her. Show the dog the treat and wave it close enough for the smell to be enticing.

Most dogs will then start offering any behaviors that have been rewarded in the past (sit, down). Others may wiggle and seem confused. Give the dog time to become slightly frustrated. It doesn’t take more than a minute for most dogs. If the dog makes any sound — a whine or a yip — give her a marker (a click from a clicker or a verbal “yes”) to mark that moment, then reward her with a treat.

Step back and wait again. I reward for any sound for about five repetitions, then I wait for more sound. If I don’t get a bark but do have more vocalizing, I continue to reward the dog. As with teaching “quiet,” get the behavior first and then start giving a cue (e.g., “speak”)



while the dog performs the desired behavior. Gradually move the cue back in time until you are giving the cue before the dog barks.

I have met many people who say they will never again teach a dog to speak because their dog started barking all the time, as a way of requesting treats. If you want your dog to speak on cue, reward her for speaking only when you have asked her to speak. Ignore any unsolicited barking: Turn your body away or walk away.

To increase your rate of success, practice both of these cues often and remember to keep it fun. Talkative dogs love to interact! With that said, I do meet dogs who are not barkers. If your dog is not enjoying learning to speak, I suggest that you move on to something both you and your dog will enjoy.

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## Teaching Your Dog the Joy of Touch

By Sherry Woodard

Is your dog sensitive to touch? Many dogs have sensitive areas where they would rather not be handled. Many different things can influence a dog's level of comfort with being touched. Here are a few examples:

- **The dog's nails were cut to the quick.** Cutting a dog's nails too close (which usually results in bleeding) is very painful. The next time someone tries to lift and hold a paw, the dog may anticipate pain.
- **The dog was badly matted or overdue for a grooming.** If his coat was in poor condition, his hair may have been pulled during grooming. Because they pull on the skin, mats themselves can become painful.
- **There was a lack of socialization as a puppy.** This is a common reason why some dogs don't enjoy touch as much as they would if they had been properly socialized and handled when they were younger.



If you've adopted a dog with an unknown past, you may never know what past experiences triggered your dog's current aversion to having certain areas of his body touched.

### Tips to help a dog enjoy being touched

You can teach your dog that handling can be a good thing, even if she might not currently like being touched. First, see a veterinarian to rule out any medical causes for the discomfort. You want to make sure that your dog isn't in pain. The training you will do will not help if your dog hurts whenever you touch her. After you get the OK from the vet, you can begin to work on teaching your dog new associations to touch. Here are a few things you will need:

- Comfortable clothes that allow you to move freely.
- A lead, to let the dog have freedom of movement without allowing wandering.
- A washable mat big enough for you and the dog to sit on. Ideally, the mat would be big enough so the dog could lie down on the mat next to you or between your legs.
- A treat pouch, such as a fanny pack with a zipper or other closable pouch.
- Treats to fill the pouch. They should be your dog's favorite treats, broken up into pea-sized pieces.
- A grooming kit: a comb, a brush and nail clippers. (These are for teaching instead of actual grooming.)

If you are doing this exercise at home, you might want to work with soothing music playing, to reduce distractions. To get started, put the dog on lead and wear your treat pouch. If the dog is too focused on the pouch, you can keep the treats in a plastic bag inside the pouch to control yummy smells until you are ready to give a treat.

Next, place your mat and grooming tools on the floor and let the dog investigate. If your dog is disinterested in the items, you can sprinkle some of those delicious treats around the items to encourage your dog to come and investigate.

Try sitting on the mat with the dog and encourage her to come toward you. You can call her to you or toss treats next to you on the mat. Don't stare directly into the dog's eyes or lean over the dog, since she may find this behavior threatening.

Make sure you are relaxed yourself. If this exercise is going to be relaxing for the dog, you too must be relaxed. Start talking to the dog using a calm, soothing voice. If your dog has a strong aversion to touch, don't touch her at all this first session; just reward her with treats for being comfortable with you nearby.

During the next session, repeat what you did the first session, giving treats when she seems relaxed. Signs she might not be relaxed include panting, suddenly closing her mouth when you reach toward her, licking her lips, or turning her head away from you when you reach out.

If she does seem relaxed, you can try touching her. To do so, start on the spots that are within her comfort zone. For example, she might be more comfortable with having her neck and shoulders touched rather than her rear end. As you touch her, move your hand slowly so you don't startle her. Again, give treats as rewards for being relaxed. Try not to touch the spots that she is uncomfortable with.

Depending on how sensitive she is, you might see her relax quickly or not relax much. You might have to do several sessions before you see and feel the changes in her energy and body language.

Some dogs are fearful of touch in general and will need many sessions of these exercises to become relaxed. All sessions should be kept short; five minutes or less is a good starting point. When the dog begins to relax, you can add five more minutes, and continue adding time until the dog is able to fall asleep.

## **When there are specific sensitive body parts**

Some dogs need help on very specific body parts, such as feet or ears. If that's the case with your dog, you don't want to jump into touching those areas during the first few sessions. Over several sessions, you can work closer and closer to those areas. If your dog does not like her feet touched, for example, start by just touching her shoulder. Then, work your way down her leg closer and closer to the foot.

Keep an eye on her body language. If she moves away or begins showing signs of stress or fear, slow down. Stop and back up, touching other parts of her body. Gradually work your way back to the sensitive area. Lightly touch it and as soon as you do, start

giving her a steady stream of those delicious treats. As soon as you remove the hand that is touching her, remove the treats.

At first, only touch the sensitive spot for a second or two. Then, as your dog becomes more comfortable, you can touch the spot for longer periods. Make sure that you remove your hand — and the treats — before she begins to get uncomfortable. The goal is to change her association of having the sensitive area handled from one of discomfort or fear to one of excitement. “(Touching my paws means I get treats!”)

Remember to keep the overall sessions short, until you have a relaxed dog. Once you have a relaxed dog, and following the same process described above, you can proceed to lifting and holding her paws, lifting her lips and rubbing her gums, giving hugs, combing and brushing, and looking in her ears.

If you want to progress to clipping her nails, the first step is to simply move the nail clippers near her feet. As you bring them close, start giving her delicious treats. Then, as you pull the clippers away, stop giving treats. Depending on how fearful your dog is of the nail clippers, you might have to just show her the clippers, give lots of treats, and then put them away. Moving toward her with them might be too scary at first.

When she is comfortable with the presence of the clippers, you can slowly start bringing them closer and closer. At first, you might only be able to bring them within two feet of your dog’s paws. However, with patience and good treats, you can slowly bring them closer and closer. Next, just touch the clippers on her nails, watching your dog’s reaction. If she pulls away or acts nervous, that is a sign you’ve moved too quickly and need to back up a few steps in the process.

The key is to do everything slowly and gently. The goal is to teach the dog to enjoy being touched everywhere, not just to tolerate handling. If you can achieve that, you’ll have a relaxed dog with good associations to the presence of the handler, the act of being handled, and the use of grooming tools.

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## Helping Your Dog to Enjoy Car Rides

By Sherry Woodard

Do you have a dog who hates car rides, or who looks ill at even the mention of a ride in the car? Many dogs lack positive associations to car rides because when they do go for a drive, it's to the groomer or veterinarian, outings they may not like.

We can help most dogs feel better about car rides by teaching them to associate the car with good things. Before starting these exercises, open a car window just a little for fresh air. If it's hot out, you may want to work in the evenings or early mornings. You could also try cooling the car before bringing your dog out to it, but don't blast air conditioning on the dog. Remember to praise your dog for all progress she makes.



Here are some steps you can take to help your dog enjoy car rides:

1. Don't feed your dog her daily meal before doing the exercise. Start with a walk out to the car. If your car is in an unfenced driveway, keep her on a loose lead for safety. Open the car door and hand the dog a small piece of food or her favorite toy, which you have retrieved from inside the car. If your dog doesn't want to get into the car, walk back to the house. (If the dog does get into the car, move on to step 2.) Repeat this step one to three times each day for six days.

2. Once you've established a positive association to being near the car, climb into the car holding the dog's lead and hand her some of her food, kibble by kibble, or hold out her favorite toy. Tell her how much fun car rides are, hand her one more piece of food or the toy, and return to the house. If she still seemed reluctant during this step, repeat the process three times daily — and start moving further inside the car so that she is stretching to reach the toy or kibble. If needed, repeat three times each day for six days. Hopefully, when she feels more relaxed, she will surprise you and climb in. You can also up the ante by using a more enticing food treat (like boiled chicken) as you move further into the car.

3. After six days, you should be able to walk out and sit in the car with your dog. If she is still unwilling to climb in, gently pick her up and help her in. Attach a seatbelt to the dog if you plan to use one for rides. Sit next to her, pet her and praise her, and use the toy or food as a reward. Then, teach her a release word, such as "OK," and climb out together (you first) and go for a short walk — another reward. Practice three times in one day.

4. On another day, repeat step 3 but this time have your dog eat her whole meal out in the car. Sit in the car with her next to you and let her eat. After she has finished, release her with an “okay” and take a walk.
5. Dinner out again! This time, put the dog in the car with her food and start the engine. Don't go anywhere — just start the car. If she is willing to eat with the motor running, let it run. If not, shut it off and let her finish her dinner. Then, release her and take your walk together.
6. If the dog stopped eating with the motor on, try a higher-value food the next day. Repeat the previous day's activity: give a yummy dinner with the motor running and take a walk afterward. Practice daily or nightly until your dog is relaxed, climbs in and out of the car, and enjoys dinner with the motor running.
7. You have reached the big event: the car ride! Just like every other day, go out together, get in the car and start the motor. Have the dog's dinner with you, but don't serve it yet. Attach her seatbelt and give her a toy for the short journey. As you leave the driveway, talk to her and praise her. Drive no more than five minutes and when you get back, serve her dinner in your driveway with the motor still running. Then release her, take a walk together, and tell her how great she is.

From this point on, practice daily, adding drive time each day. If your dog starts to drool or become anxious at any time, stop and take her for a walk to relax her, and then go home. Make the next day's drive a little shorter or take a route with fewer curves and bumps if you suspect that might make a difference. Start taking her out for walks during your outings and remember to travel together often. You don't need to serve dinner, but a small treat or playtime are great rewards for stress-free trips. Thank you for working with your dog so that she can enjoy car rides for the rest of her life.

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## Dogs and Aggression

By Sherry Woodard

Aggression is normal canine behavior. In the wild, dogs use aggressive behavior to hunt for food, to defend themselves, and to guard their territory. Dogs use aggression to intimidate or harm, but most of the time, dogs threaten aggression without needing to follow through. The reason is that dogs who are properly socialized understand and respect the pack hierarchy.



Because people don't communicate in the same ways that dogs do, misunderstandings between people and dogs can occur. If a dog feels intimidated, confused or threatened by a person, the dog may growl, show his teeth or snap.

Unneutered dogs are more likely to display aggressive behaviors. If your dog has not been spayed or neutered, that surgery alone may lessen aggressive behavior. Besides spay/neuter, the best way to prevent aggression is to thoroughly socialize your dog as a young puppy. Introduce her to many different people and situations. She needs to experience positive interactions with other dogs and other animals, and the sights and sounds of everyday life. Take her out with you often and make new experiences fun. Make sure she understands that strangers can be her friend; she should enjoy being petted and handled.

If you watch dogs play together, they often mouth each other in a sort of mock bite. Other puppies and mom dogs teach soft biting during normal dog play. Many dogs play with people in the same way — by mouthing our hands or other body parts. Though mouthing is not biting, it can become too aggressive to be acceptable. To discourage mouthing, always use a toy to play with your dog. If you inadvertently become the toy, say "Ouch!" in a loud, surprised tone and take your hand away.

Aggression between dogs and people can be very dangerous. If your dog has ever hurt (broken the skin) of a person, it is your responsibility to seek help from a behavior specialist for your dog's aggression. For more information about finding a behavior specialist, read [Aggressive Dog: Resources for Getting Help](#).

You should protect both your dog and people by using a muzzle in situations like trips to the veterinarian or the groomer. If you are planning to use a muzzle, buy a basket-style muzzle and secure it with string in at least two places on your dog's collar. Test the muzzle for safety and proper fit before trying it in any situation where it is truly needed. For more about muzzles, see [Muzzles: A Tool to Keep Everyone Safe](#).

If your dog has broken the skin on another dog, you should still be concerned about injury to people, since they can be bitten trying to stop dog fights. Again, you should seek help from a behavior specialist for your dog's aggression.

If your dog suddenly starts exhibiting aggressive behavior, there could be a medical cause, so consult your veterinarian first. If that's ruled out, ask your veterinarian to recommend a behavior specialist. Choose an expert who uses positive reinforcement. Physical punishment won't help the situation; in fact, it can make the problem much worse. You might also want to choose a behaviorist who does in-home evaluations. Aggression can be a very complex situation to resolve, so it can be potentially dangerous to follow recommendations made without doing an in-home evaluation.

There are various types of aggression exhibited by dogs:

**Dominance aggression** is motivated by a perceived challenge to the dog's social status or a challenge to his control of a social interaction. Most well-socialized dogs will work out dog/dog disagreements without a fight. Dominance toward people most often occurs when there is an unclear hierarchy. Some dogs may place themselves higher than people in their perceived pack, which can be a human family. Dogs who show dominance toward people need training to help reinforce the hierarchy of the pack. The training must be done with positive reinforcement, not punishment.

**Fear-motivated aggression** is a defensive reaction that occurs when the dog believes she is in danger. For example, if she believes you are going to hurt her when you lift up your arm to throw a ball for a game of fetch, she may bite you. A dog may perceive the approach of another dog as a threat and act aggressively out of fear. Fear-motivated aggression can often be greatly reduced through training and socialization.

**Prey aggression**, or the prey drive, is motivated by a natural instinct to obtain food. If you find that your dog wants to hurt small animals — such as cats, rabbits, hamsters or small dogs — you must protect your dog from his tendencies. As the guardian of our pets, we are responsible for their behavior.

**Territorial aggression** happens when a dog defends what he sees as his property. The boundaries of what he considers his territory, however, may extend far beyond your yard.

**Protective aggression** is usually directed toward perceived threats to the dog's family.

**Possessive aggression** happens when a dog is defending his possessions. Guarding objects like food or chew toys is quite common, but dogs will guard almost anything that is important to them — from a favorite spot on the couch to a dirty sock on the floor! You can help alleviate this type of aggression by working with trades. If your dog is guarding something, you can trade him for something better.

**Redirected aggression** is relatively common and often misunderstood. If a dog is in an agitated, aggressive state, she may redirect her aggression onto someone else. For example, if two dogs are watching another dog (a potential intruder) walk by outside their fence, they may get so excited that they redirect their aggression onto each other.

Remember: Working with aggressive dogs can be dangerous, so use caution and seek help from a behavior specialist.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*





## Fun Things to Do with Your Dog

By Sherry Woodard

There are many activities that you can enjoy with your dog. Here are some examples:

**Agility.** In agility trials, human handlers guide dogs off lead through obstacle courses that consist of hurdles, teeter-totters, tunnels, balance beams, weave poles, climbing structures, etc. Agility trials can be very competitive, or they can be done just for fun. Dogs gain confidence, release energy and learn how to stay focused while in high spirits. There are various organizations in the United States that sanction agility trials.



### **Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA).**

These activities usually take place in a hospital or nursing home, not in a rehabilitative setting. Teams doing this type of visit help to improve mood or promote socialization rather than work on specific patient goals. Facilities that use animals for these activities may or may not require that handlers and animals become certified.

**Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT).** AAT is more goal-directed than AAA; the results may be documented to meet a particular patient's specific goals. AAA and AAT are valuable tools that can be used to promote well-being while celebrating the joy inherent in the canine-human bond. There are several programs in the United States that certify both the handler and the animal for therapy work. For more information on both AAA and AAT, visit the website for [Pet Partners](#) (formerly the Delta Society), whose mission is to improve human health through service and therapy animals.

**Backpacking.** Dogs, like people, love to get away from it all! If you're going on a backpacking trip with your dog, plan ahead. Taking a dog out on the trail without some type of fitness conditioning can be dangerous to your dog's health. Fitness doesn't come overnight, so start the process well before your trip. Check with a local authority to see if pets are allowed in the area where you'll be trekking; some places allow dogs, but require permits. Carry a first-aid kit for you and your dog, and know how to administer basic first aid if your dog becomes injured. At any time of year, remember to pack enough water for you and your dog. For more information, visit [dogplay.com](http://dogplay.com).

**Day Trips.** Most dogs love to ride in the car. Take your dog along if you're visiting friends or family. For a special treat, include a side trip to do some shopping with your dog.

Some dogs love to browse at pet supply stores (many of which allow you to bring your dog inside). Your dog may ask for a treat or two, so be prepared to spend a little money on this outing.

**Dog Parks.** Dog parks — places where dogs are allowed to roam free — are becoming more common in many cities. The best ones are securely fenced, have safety signs posted with park rules, and require that you clean up after your dog (take some bags in case they're not provided). Social dogs enjoy meeting new dog friends and returning to see them time and time again. You might make new friends as well! If your dog is toy-sized, supervise him or her closely around other dogs. While trying to play, a big dog may injure a small dog unintentionally. Some parks have a section exclusively for small dogs. For more information, read our resource on [dog parks](#).

**Freestyle Musical Dance.** This choreographed set of moves, performed to music, is done by dogs in partnership with their handlers. If you have not seen this new “sport” in action, you will be amazed at the level of expertise that can be achieved through teamwork, focus, and practice, practice, practice. For more information, visit [dogplay.com](#).

**Flyball.** Flyball is a relay race that requires a dog to race over four hurdles, catch a tennis ball that has been released from a spring-loaded launcher, and then race back over the hurdles again. The dogs race in teams of four. Any dog who likes to chase a ball will probably love flyball, and it's an excellent way for your dog to burn up excess energy.

**Frisbee.** Dogs who love to play Frisbee, either purely for pleasure or in competition, are called disc dogs. Some dogs won't allow their people to play without them! If your dog loves to play ball, you may want to buy a disc and get your dog involved in this great form of exercise. One word of caution, however: This sport involves a lot of jumping, so consult with your veterinarian before starting your dog on a vigorous Frisbee training program. For more information, visit [dogplay.com](#).

**Hiking.** Though most national parks don't allow dogs on trails, there are many state parks that do. For more information on finding dog-friendly trails in your state, visit [hikewithyourdog.com](#). Also, almost every city has trails pretty close by that you can explore with your canine companion. Even city streets can be used for a hiking adventure. Take a local map and mark off a path up and down streets, adding a hill or two for more strenuous exercise. Don't forget to pack a first-aid kit, poop bags, and plenty of water.

**Nose Work.** [K9 Nose Work](#), informally called “nose work,” is an up-and-coming canine sport. Similar to search and rescue work, this sport involves the dog seeking out and finding different scents hidden in various environments, both indoors and outside. You start by getting your dog excited about using his excellent sense of smell to search for a favorite toy or treat hidden in one of several boxes. As the dog gains more skill, specific target odors are introduced and the search can be expanded to entire rooms or outdoor locations.

**Obedience.** All dogs should receive some obedience training. How far you take it is up to you. Some people want their dogs to compete in serious obedience trials, while others just want a dog who will obey simple cues in daily life. In either case, both you and your

dog will enjoy the benefits of better communication and the increased bond between you that results from time spent together teaching, learning, and practicing. For more information, call your local animal shelter and ask for a referral for a training class.

**Tracking.** Playing hide-and-seek with a toy or item of clothing can be a tracking challenge for your dog. In winter, a fun game is to place a glove (with a treat inside for extra enticement) just under the surface of the snow.

**Trick Training.** Using clicker training or lure training (using treats for motivation) to teach your dog to do tricks is a great way to spend time with your dog, improve your relationship, and make obedience training even more fun. Once you and your dog have a repertoire of tricks, you can show off your wonder dog! Here are two websites on clicker training: [clickertrain.com](http://clickertrain.com) and [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com).

**Vacations.** If you haven't taken a vacation with your dog, give it some thought. It can be very rewarding to have your dog along on your adventure, and many hotel chains accept dogs these days. To find dog-friendly lodging, visit [dogfriendly.com](http://dogfriendly.com), a website that also lists dog-friendly restaurants, parks, beaches and other attractions. The website called [petfriendlytravel.com](http://petfriendlytravel.com) includes vacation rentals, such as cabins, condos and B&Bs. If you want to take it a step further, look into dog camps, the ultimate vacation for you and your dog. They provide games, training opportunities, and plenty of other dogs to interact with. For a list of dog camps, visit [dogplay.com](http://dogplay.com).

When thinking about involving your dog in any strenuous activity, consider his or her health and physical ability. If your dog has not been exercising regularly, schedule a visit to your veterinarian. If more than a checkup (blood work to look at organ health, X-rays for joint health, etc.) is needed, your vet will advise you. He may also encourage you to increase your dog's exercise level gradually.

Remember, your dog loves spending time with you, so get out there with your canine companion and have some fun!

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## Dog Toys

By Sherry Woodard

Like most animals, dogs like to play and need activities to keep them busy. Dogs who don't have these opportunities can get bored or frustrated, and begin to exhibit problem behaviors, including chewing, digging, jumping up, play biting and anxiety. One way to avoid these problems is to provide toys for your dog.

Dogs who have their own toys are less likely to be attracted to children's toys, or to use household items — such as the garden hose or your favorite shoes — as playthings. Also, just like humans, dogs get bored with the same old thing, so get your dog a variety of fun and interesting toys to play with. The items you buy should be appropriate for the size, strength, activity level and interest of your dog.



### Safe play with dog toys

Every dog has his own idea of what's fun. You may find that your dog won't touch one toy, but spends hours with another. If your dog doesn't like the first toy you give him, don't give up. Try some other types, and try playing different games with them, such as fetch or tug.

For safety, you should observe how your dog likes to play with his toys. For example, some dogs love soft plush toys and will keep a soft toy forever without "killing" it. Other dogs will gleefully destroy soft toys; this is natural behavior, and it's all part of the fun. However, it could be dangerous if parts of the toy are ingested or become lodged in the dog's mouth or throat. Wood and plastic can become lodged in gum tissue, causing painful injuries and infections that may require medical attention. If ingested, the toy parts can create blockages in the dog's intestines, and surgery may be needed to remove the blockage.

Always supervise your dog when he plays with any new toy until you are confident that it is safe. Check all toys periodically for wear and tear, and discard any toys that become so worn as to be unsafe.

### Types of toys for dogs

It's a good idea to let your dog play only with toys that are designed for dogs. This way, your dog will know better what things he's allowed to play with, and what things are off-limits. If you let your dog play with old shoes or socks, for example, he may be more likely to play with your newer shoes and favorite socks, which often ends badly. Also,

toys designed specifically for dogs are most often safer. With that said, though, some dogs can and will have fun destroying just about anything, even the brands of toys that come with claims that they are super tough or indestructible.

Avoid giving your dog toys that are not dog-safe (for instance, stuffed animals that have ribbons, plastic eyes, small appendages and other parts that may be chewed off). With care, you can sometimes make toys like this safe by removing the dangerous parts. Check what the stuffing is made of, too, since some toys contain sharp pieces of nut shells or plastic beads that your dog could ingest. If the toy has a squeaker inside, many dogs feel compelled to remove the noise-making item. Dogs who tend to be destructive with toys should only play with these toys under supervision. Take the toys away if you are leaving the dog alone.

Here are some different kinds of toys to try on your dog:

- **Balls.** Rubber balls and tennis balls are often favorite fetch toys. However, never throw them hard and fast toward the dog for her to catch; they may become lodged in the back of her mouth or throat. If your dog is extra large, use balls that are larger than tennis balls. Some dogs like to chase after rocks, but don't use rocks as fetch toys, since they can wear down and even break your dog's teeth.
- **Items for chewing.** If your dog loves chewing, you could try giving him Red Barn bully sticks or rawhide chips. Again, though, always watch the dog at first. Some dogs are so enthusiastic that they swallow without chewing enough, which could cause choking. Nylabones, Kongs, and similar dog toys are also great for chewing. Nylabones are hard rubber chew toys that come in a variety of sizes and flavors. Kong toys, which come in a variety of shapes, are great fun for dogs: You can stuff them with treats or peanut butter, freeze food in them, and hide them for a game of hide-and-seek.
- **Puzzle toys.** Puzzle toys are entertaining, safe toys that keep your dog occupied for a while. You put kibble and/or treats in the toy, and the dog has to work on the toy to get the food to fall out. Examples of puzzle toys are Buster Cube, Busy Buddy and Kong Wobble, but there are lots of others. Always supervise closely when your dog is working with a plastic puzzle toy, since his teeth can get caught in small holes and plastic can break into small pieces.

To get the most fun out of toys, keep some hidden away and trade a few out every week or so. That way, your dog will think she's getting a constant supply of new toys. Also, play hide-and-seek with toys. At first, you may need to teach your dog to seek, but most dogs love the game once they get the idea. If you have a place in the yard where digging is encouraged (a dirt box, for instance), you can bury toys there for your dog to find. And don't forget good old-fashioned fetch and Frisbee-playing.

Finally, keep in mind that any product can be dangerous, so watch your dog to find out his habits and preferences, and know how to keep him both safe and busy. Remember, too, that playing with your dog enhances both of your lives; the interaction provides exercise, stress relief, comic relief and bonding opportunities.

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## So Your Dog Has ‘Drive’?

By Sherry Woodard

When it comes to dogs, what does “drive” mean? Is there more than one type of drive? People talk about sex drive, play drive, prey drive. They also talk about drive in terms of high or low: a certain breed has a high prey drive, for example.

I have read everything I could find on drive and have found no scientific evidence that “drives” can be generalized in dog behavior. Every dog is an individual and should be treated as such. There is no special energy stored in a dog for sex drive or prey drive or ball drive. What’s important is not whether a dog has a high prey or play drive, but what motivates each dog as an individual.

We can learn how to use the dog’s preferences to encourage behavior we want or that the dog will enjoy. For instance, we can direct the dog’s energy into actions such as retrieving a toy, herding, lure coursing, participating in agility or flyball, catching a Frisbee, or doing scent work (detection or just hide and seek). On the other hand, I have met many dogs who did not seem to want to participate in one of these activities until they were encouraged, taught, and/or reinforced.

I think the word “drive” is adding confusion to many human lives. Thinking we can generalize about what drives dogs is far too simple. Behavioral control in each dog is much more complex. I have found “prey drive” defined as natural behavior based in the survival instincts of wild animals. For the most part, though, dogs have not been wild animals for thousands of years and dogs have been bred for hundreds of years to create many different types, sizes and shapes of dogs with many different traits.

Of course, many dog breeds were developed to perform certain jobs, like herding or retrieving. But, I meet many dogs that get labeled as a particular breed because of what they look like, and sometimes these dogs don’t have the expected breed traits or characteristics. There are retriever-type dogs, for example, who don’t “naturally” seem highly motivated to retrieve. I think the concept of “drive” is over-used and misunderstood — and can lead to people feeling disappointed in their dog’s level of drive.

It’s not just genetics that influence who a dog is. The social skills a dog develops and the training techniques used also affect a dog’s overall personality, energy level, potential



reached, and ability to show his true self. Fearful dogs may seem to have low energy: They may not play or chase anything.

Again, each dog should be treated as an individual; your dog's energy level, motivations and preferences are unique to him/her. You can influence your dog's behavior by rewarding the behavior you like. If your dog has extreme behavior or behavior you do not like, manage the dog so that she does not practice unwanted behavior while giving her other options that are more acceptable to you. (Please read [How to Manage a Dog Willing to Bite](#).) If your dog's behavior changes suddenly, make an appointment with your vet for a checkup because behavior changes can signal illness or injury.

Instead of focusing on how much (or how little) drive your dog has, I recommend that you concentrate on building a great relationship with your dog and directing your dog's energy into activities you can both enjoy. Try different toys, use different play spaces and have fun together.

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## Nose Work: Scent Training Sport for Dogs

K9 Nose Work, informally called “nose work,” is an up-and-coming canine sport. Similar to search and rescue work, this sport involves the dog seeking out and finding different scents hidden in various environments, both indoors and outside. You start by getting your dog excited about using his excellent sense of smell to search for a favorite toy or treat hidden in one of several boxes. As the dog gains more skill, specific target odors are introduced and the search can be expanded to entire rooms or outdoor locations.



The sport was created in 2006 by three professional trainers who work with certified detection dogs. They developed [K9 Nose Work](#) because they thought everyday companion dogs could also benefit from the joys of scent work.

### What are the benefits of nose work?

Benefits for the dog include physical activity, mental stimulation and confidence building. For both the dog and the handler, nose work is a great way to bring their relationship to the next level. In fact, nose work is being used more and more to provide enrichment for dogs in shelters. Engaging in nose work helps keep dogs mentally healthy while they're waiting for forever homes, and it can even be a marketing tool that helps them get adopted.

### What type of dogs can do scent training?

The beauty of nose work is that virtually any pooch can do it, including dogs who can't take part in more vigorous exercise because of age or physical limitations. Nose work training can increase the confidence of shy or fearful dogs, and it's even suitable for dogs who have too much energy, because it helps them learn how to focus.

### What sort of equipment or supplies are needed for nose work?

That's another great thing about nose work: The only “equipment” you'll need to get started is a supply of tasty treats and some cardboard boxes. And your dog's nose, of course.

### Are there classes where my dog can learn the sport?

Absolutely. Visit the website of the [National Association of Canine Scent Work](#) for more information on finding nose work workshops and certified nose work instructors in your area. Instructors work with just one pup at a time, so the one-on-one classes are fine even for dogs who are reactive toward other dogs.



## **Are there formal competitions for K9 Nose Work?**

Yes, but you must join the National Association of Canine Scent Work to begin competing in the sport. To gain eligibility to compete in the sanctioned trials, dogs must successfully complete an odor recognition test.

## **How do I get my dog started with nose work?**

It's really easy to start teaching your dog nose work. Here's what you'll need:

- About six cardboard boxes
- Some of your dog's favorite treats
- A six-foot leash (minimum length)

Here are the steps to follow:

1. Confine your dog so he is not in the working area, which could be a room in your house or a fenced backyard. You don't want him to see where you're hiding the treats.
2. Lay out the boxes and bait at least half of them with a couple of smelly treats. Leave the boxes open and easily accessible to make it easier for your dog to find the goodies. The idea here is encouraging the dog to self-reward, a powerful incentive for him to continue the game.
3. Bring the dog into the working area and let him figure out where the treats are on his own. Allow him to freely eat treats from the boxes. You can praise him while he's eating as long as it doesn't distract him.
4. Bait additional boxes as your dog is searching.
5. Remove the dog from the working area and allow him to rest for a few minutes. He does not have to find all the treats before resting.

For each training session, repeat the steps a couple of times, for a total of three to five rounds. Each round only needs to last a minute or two, with the complete session lasting about 15 minutes. You'll want to do at least six sessions before introducing the next challenge, which could be loosely closing the boxes to make it a bit more difficult for the dog to find the treats, putting the boxes up above floor level or nesting boxes inside boxes.

Here are some additional tips:

- Because searching is thirsty work, make sure you offer the dog some water between rounds.
- During the training rounds, don't allow the dog to wander outside the working area.
- Avoid petting the dog while he's searching; you don't want to distract him.
- Don't worry about whether or not your dog is displaying proper manners. Remember, this is a game.
- Keep in mind that the dog should only get rewarded by the "find." If he sniffs at your treat hand, that's OK, but don't give him any treats directly.

## Pros and Cons of Dog Parks

For some people and their furry friends, the dog park can provide a wonderful opportunity for dogs to meet other dogs, practice social skills and get exercise. For others, a dog park is an anxiety-provoking or even dangerous prospect. So we've put together this Q&A to help make your trip to the dog park as safe and fun as possible.



A “dog park” is a general term used to describe any place that humans bring their dogs to play, sometimes in unofficially designated and unenclosed areas of public land. For the purposes of this column, “dog park” will mean an officially designated (usually by local public services) and enclosed area for humans to take their dogs to run off-leash.

### Is my pup a good match for a dog park?

A dog who has a history of playing well with other dogs may be a good candidate. If you know that your dog has fought with or attacked other dogs, however, it's best not to take him to a dog park. Some dogs simply don't like other dogs. If your dog's social history with other dogs is unknown, try introducing him via a private play date to one other very social dog first, to see how he does. The dog park is not a safe place to test the social skills of a dog with an unknown history.

### What makes a good dog park?

Good dog parks are well-maintained and have secure fencing and air locks (enclosed entry/exit areas between two gates). The very best dog parks also have posted rules. It's a good sign when a dog park requires that all dogs entering are licensed and vaccinated. Some dog parks even require that dogs are pre-registered (in other words, you need a pass to get in) and are spayed or neutered. Although the rules may seem onerous, the better-regulated dog parks are usually safer.

### Should small dogs go to dog parks?

Very small dogs should go to special parks only for dogs their size, to keep the play safe.

### What about etiquette — for dogs and for humans?

A good dog park will have clear (and, ideally, posted) etiquette rules for both humans and dogs. As in any social situation, being polite and considerate goes a long way toward keeping everyone safe and happy. These rules may include whether food or toys are allowed, and whether there is a restriction on small children. Even if kids are

allowed, it's never a good idea to take small children to a dog park, since they can get scared, knocked down or hurt by dogs running around and playing. Other good practices include keeping your dog on leash until you are safely in the air lock and removing your dog's leash before entering the play area.

The humans who use the dog park matter as much as the dogs. Dogs have a way of bringing people together, and most dog people are empathetic and respectful. Your dog park may have a lot of regular attendees, which can be great because it keeps things predictable. Try to be as inviting as possible to newcomers, though, as all social dogs can benefit from an expanded circle of polite canine playmates.

### **How can disagreements at the dog park be resolved?**

As with any social circumstance, there will inevitably be disagreements at dog parks, both between dogs and between humans. It's best to think of these as opportunities to find ways to keep everyone safe and happy. Sometimes a dog will "disagree" with another dog about whether play is appropriate. This can lead to squabbles, which do not necessarily lead to fights. In fact, a brief scuffle with growling or barking, with little to no physical contact, can be an opportunity for dogs to learn from each other. With that said, any dog who becomes agitated or upset — or starts fights — should be removed from the park.

The most important thing for humans at the park to agree on is that everyone, dogs and humans alike, should feel safe there. If you are uncomfortable with the style or intensity of play, your dog may start to feel uncomfortable, too. The best thing to do in a situation like that is to ask for a "consent test": Separate the dogs briefly and then, if both want to go back to playing, let them. If any dog looks happy to stay away from the play, give him a break. There's never a bad time to do a consent test; the worst that will happen is that play will be interrupted for a few seconds. It's healthiest for the dogs when their humans are respectful and considerate of each other.

### **What social opportunities are there for my dog besides going to the park?**

If you and your dog decide that going to the dog park isn't for you, there are alternatives. You can schedule private play dates with friends' dogs or participate in classes with a relationship-based trainer that include free play or social time. Another option is to have your dog go to a well-run day-care facility periodically, even if you will be home. It's an opportunity for your dog to meet other dogs in a safely supervised environment.



## Dog Etiquette in Public

Our dogs are members of the family, so most of us enjoy taking them out in public — whether it's for a walk in the park, shopping at the farmers' market or an outdoor concert. While we might be enthused about bringing them along, we need to consider how our dogs might feel about it. (We also need to consider how others might feel about our dog's presence.) To that end, it's important to give some thought to what rules of etiquette might apply.



### Your dog's comfort and safety

Before choosing to take your dog someplace new or letting strangers pet him, always consider how comfortable and safe your dog will feel. Busy, loud or crowded events or locations — such as fairs, sporting events and playgrounds — may be stressful for some dogs. Even a dog who is considered friendly may struggle in these environments if he is not used to them.

The best way to discern how your dog is feeling is to pay attention to his body language. For example, let's say you're out and about with your dog, and a stranger approaches, wanting to pet him. If your dog becomes very still, his body stiffens or he seems to want to avoid the interaction, he's probably not comfortable in that particular situation. For him to feel safe, it might be best to decline the person's request to pet him.

If you feel that your dog will be perfectly happy at an event, make sure that it's a function or setting where dogs are welcome. At many restaurants and public venues, and some parks, only service dogs, who are trained to perform specific tasks, are allowed. You should also think about whether you'll be able to leave the event early if you see that your dog is not doing well. Always bring plenty of water, a travel bowl, training treats (if needed) and poop bags for your dog. And don't forget to check the weather. If the event involves spending hours in the hot sun (or the freezing cold, or the pouring rain), your dog will likely be more comfortable and safe at home.

### Interacting politely with people and other dogs

If your dog has a bite history or is very stressed around strangers, please do not bring him to crowded or loud events where many strangers will be present. When it's necessary to take these types of fearful dogs out in public, such as to the vet's office, be prepared to ask for more space from people as needed. It's also a good idea to train your dog, in a positive way, to wear a muzzle.

When it comes to other dogs, if your pooch tends to be reactive (barking or lunging, etc.) to other dogs in public, remember to bring training treats with you so that you can reinforce the behaviors that you want to see. And make sure that there will be enough

room for you to keep far enough away that he doesn't become very reactive. If you're attending an event, do some research beforehand about the location. If the space will be cramped or your dog has injured another dog before, it is best for him to stay home, both for his sake and for others. At the very least, a barking dog will almost certainly be unpleasant for those around you.

You should also be sensitive to the fact that not everyone likes dogs. Other dogs (and some people) may not be comfortable with your dog approaching them, even if your dog is very friendly. Most public spaces have leash laws, so be sure to respect them and only let your dog off-leash in places where it is allowed.

Here are some other tips for good dog etiquette in public:

- Try not to allow your dog to jump up on people; even if your dog is friendly, it's not polite behavior.
- Be especially careful not to let your pooch jump up on small children or the elderly, since he can potentially scare or injure them.
- Don't let your dog approach someone unless that person solicits attention from your dog.
- Bring training treats with you and use the opportunity of being out in public to teach your dog polite greetings.
- Get down low so that you can effectively manage an interaction your dog has with a child.
- Be prepared to gently interfere if a child is behaving inappropriately with your dog.

Ultimately, it is up to us to make sure that when we take our dogs somewhere public, we have the comfort and safety of everyone — our pets, other people's pets, other humans — as a top-of-mind priority, so that everyone can enjoy the experience.



## Food Puzzles for Pets

Think about all the wild animals that roam the earth. What do you think those animals do during their waking hours? If your answer is that they spend a great deal of their time searching for food, you are correct. Even though most of the animals who live with humans have been domesticated for thousands of years, they still share a lot of similarities with their wild counterparts.

One of the similarities is their need to forage for their food. Just like people, non-human animals need to have tasks that involve both mental and physical engagement in order to feel fulfilled, confident and happy. Enabling our companion animals to make decisions that result in desired outcomes is one of the most empowering things we can do for them, and will help them to be mentally and behaviorally healthy. In fact, many of the behavior issues that we see in companion animals can be alleviated or resolved simply by giving them a job.



Toys or other objects that allow an animal to forage are called foraging toys, food puzzles, puzzle feeders or treat dispensers. They're the easiest, most convenient way for people to give their feathered and furry friends a job to do, keeping both their minds and bodies busy. Food puzzles are also great for pets who wolf down their meals because the animal must eat more slowly and, therefore, can savor the food a bit more.

There are many different kinds of food puzzles — geared for various animal species, skill levels and preferences — available for purchase at pet supply stores. Some of our favorites are the products made by Kong, Busy Buddy, Nina Ottosson, Creative Foraging Systems and PetSafe. You can also make your own food puzzles from common household objects. For a dog, start by offering food out of a cardboard box with one whole side cut away, then start offering boxes with less and less of the side removed, until the dog can get the food out of a completely closed box. Another idea is to put kibble or treats in the cups of a muffin tin, cover each cup with a tennis ball and encourage your pup to find the kibble.

Before you start buying or making a bunch of food puzzles for your pets, though, it's important to understand a few things:

- **Animals aren't born with foraging skills.** In the wild, their parents and family members teach them how to forage for food. In a home environment, it's our job to teach them. Just as we begin with learning simple tasks and work our way up to mastering more complex ones, most companion animals must start with simple food puzzles and gradually take on more challenging puzzles as they gain skill.

- **Not all animals learn at the same speed.** Just because your friend's dog immediately figured out how to use that more advanced food puzzle doesn't mean your dog is going to pick things up just as quickly. There are different kinds of intelligence, so be patient with your pet's learning curve.
- **Consider the food you're putting in the puzzle.** If your pet doesn't seem interested in a food puzzle — even the easiest one you can find — try switching the type of food you're using in the toy. Instead of kibble, try filling the food puzzle with special treats that you know your pet likes. Then, after she understands what a food puzzle is and starts to enjoy playing with it, you can start incorporating less exciting foods.
- **Animals have different play styles and toy preferences.** Food puzzles come in lots of shapes, sizes, colors and textures. If your pet doesn't like one type of food puzzle, don't give up. There are many different kinds, and he just may not be dazzled by that particular one. Every animal is an individual, and figuring out what each of them likes is part of the fun of having pets.

The options for pet food puzzles are nearly limitless. A quick Internet search will yield dozens of websites that sell food puzzles for a wide variety of species, and just as many sites offer ideas on how to make your own. So, put aside those boring old food bowls and start teaching your pets how to play with their food!



## Overcoming Training Obstacles

When it comes to training animals, things sometimes don't go as planned. Training seems simple in concept but can turn out to be harder than it looks. If you have ever felt this way, please know that there's nothing wrong with you or your pet. It doesn't mean you can't train him or her. It doesn't mean training doesn't work. It doesn't even mean you have to resort to methods that rely on force, intimidation, pain or fear to get the job done. This is a common misconception, even among some trainers, but fortunately it isn't true. There are many reasons that training attempts may not yield the desired outcome; it's simply a matter of identifying the obstacles to your success.



### **Underlying physical or mental illness**

To set up both you and your pet for success, make sure your pet is of sound mind and body before spending any time and energy on training. All the training in the world won't change an undesirable behavior if that behavior is being caused or exacerbated by an illness. So, if your pet starts exhibiting an undesirable behavior, take her to your vet to rule out any physical or mental causes.

### **Misdiagnosis of the behavior**

Most countries have no regulations for the field of animal training, which means many pervasive myths about animal body language, behavior and training get passed among trainers and their clients, and become part of popular culture. These myths can result in the misdiagnosis of a pet's behavior, which results in the use of inappropriate and damaging — or merely unsuccessful — training methods.

### **Management of the environment**

Think of your training goal as a destination. In every training session, your pet takes a step toward that destination, whereas every time your pet practices the undesirable behavior, she takes a step away from it. To get where you want to go, you must manage the environment to prevent your pet from practicing the undesirable behavior while you work on training her to perform the desirable behavior.

### **Mechanics**

Just like any other acquired skill, training your pet involves learning some new techniques. You don't have to be perfect to be successful, but the better your technique becomes, the better your training will be. Sometimes the difference between success and failure can be something as simple as the order in which you are doing things or



how quickly you respond. For this reason, tiny adjustments in technique may bring about the results you are looking for.

### **Stress level**

When you're training your pet, monitor the animal's stress level. If you try to train when your pet is stressed to the point that her ability to focus has shut down and her "fight or flight" response has taken over, you will only succeed in causing even more stress. It's better to wait until your pet is more relaxed and therefore more receptive to training.

### **No two are alike**

Keep in mind that just like humans, every animal is unique. Each pet has his or her own personality, history, genetic makeup and set of preferences. When training attempts fail, more often than not, we simply haven't found what motivates our pets, or haven't found a way to use what motivates them as a reward for desired behavior. The cost-benefit ratio doesn't make sense to them.

Additionally, each individual pet learns at a different pace and has a certain skill set. What may be easy for Buster to learn may be challenging for Sadie, so Sadie will do better with taking smaller steps toward the end goal or being taught a different way. A particular pet may need shorter or longer training sessions, or more or less varied sessions. Finding out how each individual learns and what motivates him or her is crucial to training success.

### **Getting help**

If you're stumped about why your training attempts aren't working, [consider hiring a qualified professional](#) to help you figure it out. When deciding who to hire, look for the following traits:

- **Level of education:** You'll want someone who has a thorough background in behavior science and ethology (the study of animal behavior). Knowledgeable trainers don't need to use all the available tools because they can proficiently use only the right ones.
- **Integrity:** Look for someone who does not misrepresent his or her skills, background, education or affiliations.
- **Patience:** The person you hire should be patient with not only your pet, but you, too.
- **Persistence:** Training is rarely a linear process. Find a trainer who is willing to try different approaches until he or she finds the solution that works best for you and your pet. You want to avoid someone with a "my way or the highway" attitude.
- **Humility:** Look for a trainer who is willing to refer you to someone else if she ultimately concludes that she doesn't know how to help you and your pet.

One good way to explore whether a trainer has these traits is to ask if you can observe a training session.

Finally, don't give up. If the professional you hired hasn't been able to meet your needs, don't be afraid to get a second opinion. The solution is out there; it's just a matter of finding someone who can help you help your pet.



## How to Proof Behaviors

Have you had the following experience with your dog? You've trained her to sit on cue, and she does it perfectly every time at home. But when you're out in public, not so much. People are often puzzled about why their dogs, who appear to have been trained to respond to a cue (like "sit" or "stay" or "come") perform the behavior in one situation but not in another.

The problem is that the behavior has not been proofed. "Proofing," in dog training parlance, means practicing a behavior in different environments and situations, until your dog generalizes the desired behavior and can do it anywhere, even with distractions.



### Why proof a behavior?

Most dogs can easily learn and perform behaviors at home or in places that are familiar to them. When we take them out into the rest of the world, however, there are novel sights and sounds. Dogs are very good at discrimination, but they don't generalize all that well. Your dog will recognize, for instance, that the front door is different from the back door. But if presented with a new, unfamiliar door (say, at a neighbor's house), he may not initially know that it's a door.

When learning a behavior, dogs take note of their entire environment and associate the behavior with that environment. But when that environment changes, they are no longer sure of the behavior that is being asked of them. That's why you need to proof the behavior.

### How do you proof a behavior?

Before you can start proofing a behavior, you need to teach your dog the behavior and make sure he is fluent in it. Your dog is fluent in the behavior if:

- He does the behavior immediately upon getting the cue.
- He does not offer the behavior without being cued.
- He does not offer the behavior in response to some other cue.
- He does not offer any other behavior in response to the cue.

Once your dog is fluent in a particular behavior, you can start proofing it. This is considered the generalization stage of the learning process because the dog is learning to perform the behavior in all settings. When you proof a behavior, think about applying the three D's, as appropriate for the specific behavior you are training:

- Duration: Can the dog perform the behavior for an extended period of time or different periods of time?
- Distance: Can the dog perform the behavior with the handler 6, 10 or 20 feet away?
- Distraction: Can the dog perform the behavior when there are new and interesting objects or activities around him?

You can think of different ways to proof a behavior by asking yourself this question: “Can my dog do the behavior if ...?”

### Tips for successful proofing

Here are some ways to help make proofing more effective:

- **When you are proofing a behavior, only change one variable at a time.** For example, if you decide to proof the behavior of “sit-stay” using the variable of distance, work only on increasing the distance with your dog during that training session. Don’t also change the handler or the environment. Changing several variables at a time can make it too hard for your dog to learn effectively.
- **Use higher-value treats, especially when introducing distractions.** To keep your dog’s attention, you will need to be more interesting and inviting than the world around you. If you don’t know what treats your dog would find especially enticing, experiment to see what she likes best. Lunchmeat, cheese and peanut butter are all popular choices.
- **When you get the behavior you want, be generous with treats and praise.** Your dog will be more motivated to learn and find training more fun if she is continually being reinforced.
- **To set your dog up for success, be realistic with your expectations.** Failure to do a behavior is OK, but if it happens too many times, your dog may become frustrated. Go slowly, stay relaxed and only increase the challenge once your dog can do a behavior correctly about 80 percent of the time in that particular scenario.
- **Don’t forget to proof the handler.** Change up handlers and handler positions. Will your dog do the behavior for someone else? Will she do the behavior if you are sitting down rather than standing?

One great benefit of proofing is that your dog is learning to learn. You’ll find that once a dog has generalized a few behaviors through proofing, subsequent behaviors are typically generalized quicker.

Remember, practice makes perfect, and with enough practice in different contexts, you can be confident that your dog has fully learned the behavior and can perform it in any environment. In short, taking the time to proof behaviors will give you confidence that your dog will perform the desired behavior when it really counts.

Want some additional ideas for proofing specific behaviors? Check out the training plans in the [Basic Training and Socialization](#) section of our website. We have training plans for grooming and medical handling, muzzle training, name recognition, teaching “sit” and “off,” and many more.

## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Come’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** Recall (getting your dog to come when called) is the most important behavior you can teach your dog. Although no recall on cue is 100 percent guaranteed, it could get your dog to come back to you if he dashes out the door or slips his collar. And getting him back to you could save his life.

**End behavior:** The dog comes when called, regardless of the environment or situation.

**Step 1:** Start the training in a quiet area with few distractions. With the dog on leash and using a lure (something that the dog really likes, such as a treat), walk backward, and as the dog walks with you, say “come.” Click while the dog is walking, grab his collar and give him a treat. Repeat 3-5 times.

- If the dog is uncomfortable with having his collar grabbed, play “gotcha” with him. While you are sitting next to him, reach out and grab his collar. As soon as you grab his collar, give him a delicious treat and let go. Keep practicing in short increments (5 or 10 times in a session) until he is comfortable with having his collar grabbed.
- If the dog isn’t interested in moving with you or is moving slowly, try jogging backward instead of walking.

**Step 2:** Stand a few feet away from the dog and say his name. Once he is attentive, say “come” and praise him as he is coming to you. Click while the dog is coming to you, grab his collar and give him a treat. Then praise and pet him. Repeat 3-5 times.

- If the dog doesn’t know his name, see “Training Plan: Teaching Name Recognition” and teach him his name before you move on.
- Make sure to grab the dog’s collar to prevent “fly-bys.”

**Step 3:** Move a little farther away from the dog. If possible, have someone else hold him. Say the dog’s name and when he looks at you, say “come.” Praise him as he comes to you and click while he is moving toward you. Grab his collar and give him a treat. Repeat five times.

**Step 4:** Increase the distance a bit between you and the dog and repeat the exercise. Have the dog come to you at ever greater distances.

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Locations and distractions:** Practice someplace with few distractions (e.g., in your backyard), then in different places with steadily increasing distractions (e.g., other people, other dogs, loud sounds) until the dog will come to you no matter where you are. If needed, go back to Step 2 to make sure he still knows the cue.

**Handler:** Have other people work with the dog on “come,” starting from Step 2.

## **Notes**

Teaching a dog to come is generally easy, but it can be difficult to maintain consistently. Be careful not to “poison” the cue. If the cue “come” always means that the fun stops, the dog will stop coming! So, more often than not, let him go back to whatever he was doing before you gave the “come” cue. Also, make sure you are using the same cue consistently (i.e., always say “come” rather than variations of it such as “come here” or “c’mon”).

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. For example, if you are having trouble going from Step 1 to Step 2, try standing a few feet away and then walk backward (to prompt your dog to move forward) and say “come.” Don’t rush: Take it at the dog’s speed.

## Training Plan: Teaching Name Recognition

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** Teaching a dog to pay attention (i.e., give you eye contact) when you say his name can be convenient and very practical in many situations.

**End behavior:** The dog looks at you when you say his or her name.

**Step 1:** Start with your dog on leash in a place with few distractions. Say the dog's name, click, and then quickly give her a treat. Repeat 10 times. Give her a treat regardless of whether she is looking at you.

**Step 2:** Wait until the dog looks away from you, then say her name. When she looks at you, click and reward with a treat (C&R). Repeat until she looks at you 4 or 5 times out of 5 when you call her name.

Tip: If she doesn't look at you, repeat Step 1, making sure that you are saying her name in an excited tone to get her attention. If that doesn't work, say her name, put the treat in front of her nose so she sees it and then move the treat up to your eyes. When she looks at your face, C&R.

**Step 3:** In this step, your dog will learn to respond to her name when there are more distractions. With the dog on leash, go to a place that has a bit more distraction. Whenever she is not looking at you, say her name. When she turns to look at you, C&R.

**Step 4:** In this step, your dog will learn to respond to her name at a greater distance. Go to a place with few distractions. Wait until she is a few feet away from you, then say her name. When she looks at you, click and give her a treat when she comes to you.

Tip: If she doesn't come to you, that's OK. Toss the treat to her. Remember, you want her to learn that it's good to look at you when you say her name.

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

Practice name recognition often and everywhere. Practice when your dog is right next to you and when she is several feet away. You'll also want to practice inside and outside, with cars going by, around other dogs and around other people. You can also get other people to play the "name game"; when they say her name and she looks at them, she gets a treat.

### Notes

You want your dog to learn that when she hears her name, good things happen. So, don't ever say your dog's name in an angry or frustrated way. You want your dog to look happily toward you whenever you call her name.

**If you get stuck** between steps, create an intermediate step with duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.

## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Sit’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** You can ask your dog to sit whenever he is doing something rude, such as jumping up on you or counter surfing. If he’s doing something you don’t like, it’s much better to give him a clear directive to do something else, rather than just saying “no.”

**End behavior:** The dog sits for a hand signal and the verbal cue “sit.”

**Step 1:** Stand in front of the dog. Hold a treat between your thumb and index finger. Put your hand near the dog’s nose (but don’t let him get the treat). Slowly move your hand up in front of the dog’s face and over the dog’s head. As his head goes up, his rear will go down. When his rear touches the ground, click your clicker and reward (C&R) with the treat. Repeat in short sessions until he sits quickly, every time.

- If the dog won’t sit, C&R when he tracks his head up to get the treat. Repeat this until you see his rear end start to go down. C&R for his rear end going down successively until the dog is sitting.
- If the dog backs up without sitting, do the training with a wall or other barrier behind him so he can’t back up.

**Step 2:** Switch to a hand signal: Palm up (without a treat in your hand), bring your hand from waist high upward toward your body. When the dog sits, C&R. When he is sitting consistently with just the hand signal, go to Step 3.

- If dog won’t sit for a hand signal alone, use a food lure but bury it deep in your hand, and then feed him a treat from the other hand when he sits. When he’s sitting consistently, eliminate the food lure.

**Step 3:** Say “sit,” do the hand signal, and when he sits, C&R. Do this 5-10 times. Then say “sit” (wait patiently; do not repeat) and when he sits, C&R.

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Handler:** Have other people start from Step 2.

**Distractions:** Practice sit inside with another person moving around slowly, then more quickly. Add available distractions (kids, other dogs, etc.). Then move to other locations.

**Locations:** Practice someplace with few distractions (e.g., in your backyard), then in different places with steadily increasing distractions until your dog will sit on cue no matter where you are.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don’t rush: Take it at the dog’s speed.

## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Sit’ to Prevent Guarding

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** Guarding resources (food, toys, locations, etc.) is a common and natural behavior in many dogs. They do it because they are afraid they’ll lose the resource. A lot of dog bites happen as a result of guarding. Implementing this training plan can help to prevent a dog from guarding, keeping him and everyone around him safe.

**End behavior:** While the dog has food or a high-value object, he sits when a human approaches, and allows the human to take the food or object.

**Prerequisite:** The dog should be able to sit consistently in response to a verbal cue (see the [training plan for teaching “sit”](#)).

**Step 1:** Tether the dog to a secure fixture so he’ll stay in place. Start with a neutral object — one that the dog has no interest in, such as a book. Place the object directly in front of the dog (so he sees it as “his”). Approach the dog from 10-15 feet away and tell him to sit. Pick up the object, [click with a clicker](#) (or give a verbal marker) and give the dog a high-value treat. Put the object back down in front of the dog, and walk away. Repeat.

When the dog is sitting consistently (at least 4 out of 5 times), proceed to the next step.

Tip: If at any point during this training plan you notice any signs of guarding, stop training. Trade for the guarded object by distracting the dog with something else of higher value, then remove the guarded object. Remember that signs of guarding can be very subtle, including freezing, staring, eating faster and avoiding. In your next training session, start with the previous step. If you’re unable to avoid the guarding behavior, contact a relationship-based behavior professional for help.

**Step 2:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that the dog likes but does not guard. For many dogs, this could be a low-value toy.

**Step 3:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has moderate value to the dog. An example might be an empty Kong.

**Step 4:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has slightly more value to the dog. An example is a Kong with a bully stick inside but not protruding at all.

**Step 5:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has moderate-to-high value to the dog. An example might be a Kong with a bully stick protruding one quarter of an inch.

**Step 6:** Repeat Step 1 with a high-value object — for example, the bully stick with no Kong.



## Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Resource:** Repeat Step 5, then Step 6, with different items that have high value to the dog.

**Handler:** Have other people start at the beginning of this training plan and work all the way through it. Try to get as many people as possible to participate in the training so that the dog can generalize the concept to all people and objects. You will probably observe that the more people the dog has practiced with, the faster they'll be able to work through the plan.

**Note:** **New people must always start at the beginning of the training plan.**

**Location:** Practice the exercise yourself in different locations with the dog, then have other people practice in as many locations as possible, and with as many items as possible.

**Practice:** Maintain the behavior by practicing it on a regular basis. Remember to give the dog a high-value reward every time something that he values is taken away from him.

## Notes

- **If your dog is a severe resource guarder, or you feel at all unsure that you can implement this plan safely, please contact an experienced behavior professional.**
- Until this training is complete, make sure that the dog never gets access to any high-value object that he should not have. If he does get something that you need to get away from him, distract him with treats first, far enough away from the object that you can take the object away without fearing for your safety. Wait until the dog is eating the treats before removing the object.
- Teach children not to go near any dog who is eating or has any object (even a toy).

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.



## Training Plan: Teaching Trades

**Why this is useful for your dog to know:** Guarding resources (food, toys, locations, etc.) is a common and natural behavior in many dogs. They do it because they are afraid they'll lose the resource. A lot of dog bites happen as a result of guarding. Practicing trades can help a dog feel better about having his stuff taken away. Implementing this training plan can reduce or eliminate a dog's guarding, keeping him and everyone around him safe.

**End behavior:** The dog reacts happily to having food or high-value objects taken away from him.

### Method 1

**Step 1:** Tether the dog to a secure fixture so he'll stay in place. Start with a neutral object (one that the dog has no interest in, such as a book). Place the object directly in front of the dog (so it's "his").

Approach him from 10-15 feet away, and look for a "yippee" response — a relaxed, happy face, perky ears, tail wag. If he does not react with the "yippee" response (i.e., if he looks like he'll guard the object), stop and look for a lower-value object. If you're not sure about the dog's response, contact a behavior professional.

When he reacts with the "yippee" response to your approach, pick up the object, give him a reward and some praise, and then put the object back in the same place, right in front of him, and walk away.

Practice this exercise from different directions and distances, and at varying time intervals, for 5 minutes a day, ideally at different times.

**Step 2:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that the dog likes but does not guard. For many dogs, this could be a low-value toy.

**Step 3:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has moderate value to the dog. An example of this might be an empty Kong.

**Step 4:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has slightly more value to the dog. An example is a Kong with a bully stick inside but not protruding at all.

**Step 5:** Repeat Step 1 with an object that has moderate to high value to the dog. An example of this might be a Kong with a bully stick protruding one quarter of an inch.

**Step 6:** Repeat Step 1 with a high-value object (e.g., the bully stick, with no Kong).

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Resource:** Repeat Step 5, then Step 6, with different items that have high value to the dog.

**Handler:** Have other people start at the beginning of this training plan and work all the way through it. Try to get as many people as possible to do these trades with the dog so that he can generalize the trading concept to all people and objects. You will probably observe that the more people the dog has practiced with, the faster they'll be able to work through the plan. **Note: New people must always start at the beginning of the training plan.**

**Location:** Practice the exercise yourself in different locations with the dog, then have other people practice in as many locations as possible, and with as many items as possible.

Maintain the behavior by practicing it on a regular basis. Remember to give the dog a high-value reward every time something that he values is taken away from him.

## Notes

- **If your dog is a severe resource guarder, or you feel at all unsure that you can implement this plan safely, please contact an experienced behavior professional.**
- Until this training is complete, make sure that the dog never gets access to any high-value object that he should not have. If he does get something that you need to get away from him, distract him with treats first, far enough away from the object that you can take the object away without fearing for your safety. Wait until the dog is eating the treats before removing the object.
- Teach children never to go near any dog who is eating or has any object (even a toy).

## Method 2

Some dogs go from zero to sixty when it comes to the value they place on objects; they go from having no interest to having extreme interest in an object. With these dogs, it can be difficult to find low- and medium-value items. If that's the case with your dog, or you're working with a dog who has a guarding history and you feel unsafe taking any object from him, use this method instead.

**Step 1:** Give the treats first, far enough away from the object that you can take the object away without fearing for your safety. Wait until the dog is eating the treats before removing the object. As soon as the dog is done with the treats, give the object back. Repeat this step *only a few times*, just long enough for the dog and you to get comfortable playing this game.

**Step 2:** Take the object and give the treats at the same time: keep the trades simultaneous. As soon as the dog is done with the treats, give the object back. Again, repeat this step *only a few times*, just long enough for the dog and you to get comfortable playing this game.

**Note: These two steps should happen very quickly – within the same training session.**

**Step 3:** Proceed to Step 1 of Method 1 above.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.



## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Wait at the Door’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** This training plan will teach your dog not to bolt out of a door when it’s opened. It will help keep your dog safe and allow him to be more polite, and almost every dog can benefit from learning some self-control.

**End behavior:** The dog will not move through a door until the handler gives a release cue. The “wait” cue tells a dog not to move forward. The dog can change positions during a wait (e.g., going from a sit to a stand or a down into a sit) but should not move forward toward the door until you give a release cue. You can choose your own release cue. At Best Friends, our release cue is “free.” Other possibilities are “OK” and “go ahead.”

**Step 1:** At a door, with the dog on leash, say “wait.” Open the door briefly and only a small amount (just one or two inches, not wide enough for the dog to stick his nose in). If the dog immediately tries to move forward through the door, close it quickly. Be careful not to close the door on the dog’s nose. You’ll probably have to do this step a few times before the dog does not move forward when the door opens.

**Step 2:** When the door opens and the dog does not move forward for even a very brief time (less than a second), use your release word, open the door wider and let the dog through the door. When the dog is waiting for one second without moving forward through the open door at least four out of five times, proceed to Step 3.

### Tips:

- If the dog continues to try to move through the door, reduce even more the width of the door opening and the time it is open.
- Every time you tell the dog “wait,” use your release word (e.g., “free,” “OK”) afterward to let the dog know when it’s OK to stop waiting and move through the door.
- It is not necessary for you to move through the door before your dog.
- “Wait” uses a functional reward. Instead of marking the behavior and then providing a treat to reinforce the behavior, the dog’s reward for waiting at the door is that he gets to go through it.

**Step 3:** Repeat Step 2, but open the door slightly wider. Repeat the exercise until you can open the door all the way and your dog won’t move until you give the release cue.

Tip: You can also use a crate to train a dog to wait. With the dog inside the crate, use the same technique described above: Open the crate door a small amount very briefly. If the dog immediately starts to move toward the door, close it quickly.

## Proofing

Proofing means practicing a behavior in different situations, with various distractions. Start proofing once your dog has completed the training plan above (at a door or in a crate).

**Duration:** In small steps, increase the amount of time your dog will wait at the open door without moving through, until he can wait for 10 seconds.

**Distraction:** Start small. For example, hold up a toy, raise your arms or knock softly on a wall while practicing “wait at the door.” Then slowly increase the intensity of each distraction.

**Location:** Practice in different locations, at different types of doors.

**Handler:** Have other people practice “wait” with your dog.

Introduce only one of the above proofing parameters at a time, and reduce the width of the door opening and the time that it’s open. Then, in small steps, work back up to opening the door all the way while incorporating the distraction, longer duration, new location or new handler.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don’t rush: Take it at the dog’s speed.



## Training Plan: Crate Training a Dog

**Why this is useful for your dog to know:** Teaching your dog to be comfortable in a crate will have many benefits for both you and your dog. The crate can be a place of comfort and security for dogs, as well as a tool to help with potty training or prevention of destructive behaviors. When trained correctly, many dogs enjoy their crate time. Dogs are often required to live in crates for a time if there is an emergency, such as an evacuation, or an injury.

**End behavior:** The dog will happily and comfortably enter his crate on cue, and stay in the crate for up to four hours with or without people at home.

### Method 1: Food lures and puzzles

**Step 1:** Place a few treats in the rear of the crate and leave the crate door open. When the dog is freely going in and out of the crate, go to Step 2. Tips:

- If he needs more encouragement, drop a trail of treats leading into the crate.
- If the dog won't enter the crate for any treats, proceed to Method 2 below.

**Step 2:** In one motion, point to the crate and toss a treat from your pointing hand into the crate so that the dog goes into the crate to get it. Practice this 10 times and then go to Step 3.

**Step 3:** Do the same pointing motion, but this time don't toss a treat from that hand. If the dog goes into the crate, praise him and give him a treat from your other (non-pointing) hand. Practice this 10 times.

Tip: If he doesn't go in when you merely point, go back and repeat Step 2.

**Step 4:** Standing next to the crate, say "crate" and then make the pointing motion to the crate. When the dog enters, praise him and give treats from the non-pointing hand. Practice this 10 times.

**Step 5:** Standing next to the crate, say "crate" and don't make the pointing motion. Wait for the dog to go into the crate for the verbal cue only. Practice this 10 times. When the dog is going into his crate for the "crate" cue only, go to Step 6.

Tip: If he doesn't go in for the "crate" cue only, make the pointing motion to the crate. Keep working with him this way until you see that he's starting to go in for the "crate" cue only and isn't waiting for the pointing motion.

**Step 6:** When the dog enters the crate, briefly shut the door, then toss an extra-special treat (EST) into the crate. When the dog has finished eating it, toss another EST into the crate, open the door, and allow the dog to exit.

**Step 7:** Gradually increase the time that the dog is in the crate with the door closed. The easiest way to accomplish this is by giving the dog a food puzzle or frozen, stuffed Kong to occupy him while he's in the crate. Always use an EST to reward the dog for going into the crate and right before coming out of the crate. When the dog can spend 15 minutes in the crate, go to Step 8.

**Step 8:** While the dog is in the crate, begin leaving the room for short periods of time. As in Step 7, give the dog a frozen Kong or food puzzle. You can also add a favorite toy or two to the crate, as well as blankets or other comfort items. Increase the amount of time until the dog can spend 30 minutes comfortably in the crate without someone there.

## **Method 2: Feeding meals in the crate**

**Step 1:** Begin by placing the dog's meal in a bowl as near to the crate as he will go.

**Step 2:** Gradually move the bowl closer to the crate over the course of a few meals.

**Step 3:** When the dog is relaxed about eating near the crate, begin placing the meal just inside the crate.

**Step 4:** Gradually move the meal toward the back of the crate.

**Step 5:** When the dog is entering the crate with his entire body, proceed to Step 1 of Method 1.

## **Proofing**

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Handler:** Have different people give the dog the "crate" cue and reward him for going into the crate. If initially he doesn't go in for the "crate" cue only, they should make the pointing motion after they give the cue.

**Duration:** Gradually increase the amount of time the dog spends in the crate, including leaving the house for a short period while the dog is in his crate working on his Kong or food puzzle. Do not crate a dog for more than four hours at a time, except at night.

**Distractions:** While the dog is in the crate, talk quietly in an adjoining room, and then gradually increase the volume and the number of people talking. You can also play music, turn on the TV or run appliances.

**Location:** If you will be traveling with your dog and his crate, when he is staying in the crate comfortably for hours, move it to other rooms of the house and have him stay in it there. If possible, bring your dog and his crate to a friend's house and have him spend short periods in it there, then increase the duration. Repeat in other locations until your dog is comfortable in his crate wherever you take him.

## **Notes**

Never force a dog into the crate. The goal of crate training is to make the crate a safe, happy place where the dog will want to go and spend time. If the dog appears anxious or unhappy about being in the crate at any point during training, back up in the plan to the previous step.

Don't ever put the dog in the crate as punishment. Doing so may make the dog afraid of his crate, or it may even seem like a reward (since the crate is a place that he should love to go).

**If you get stuck** between steps, create an intermediate step with duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.

## Training Plan: Grooming and Medical Handling

**Why this is useful for your dog to know:** Regular visits to the veterinarian and the groomer are an important part of caring for dogs. During these visits, your dog will be handled by strangers. If your dog learns to feel safe and happy about this handling, there will be a much lower risk that he might get upset by it.

**End behavior:** The dog accepts and even enjoys being groomed and receiving medical care.

**Step 1:** Familiarize yourself with your dog's body language, so that you know what indicates that the dog is uncomfortable. Throughout this training, never go beyond the dog's threshold. If at any point, he shows signals of stress or anxiety (e.g., lip licking, whale eye, pursed lips, yawning), back up to a previous step.

**Step 2:** Find an extra-special treat (EST) that the dog likes and will get at no other time. This treat can even be junk food. Whatever it is, cut or break it into small, pea-sized pieces (unless it's a lickable treat, of course).

Find a comfortable, quiet place with few distractions where you and the dog can work. The area should be large enough so that the dog can move away from you if she chooses, but not so big that she can get to a place where she can't see or hear you.

**Step 3:** Have an ample amount of the EST with you. Sit at an angle so that you are not facing the dog directly, which can seem threatening to dogs. Before trying to approach or touch the dog, talk softly to her and observe her body language. Some dogs are soothed by the human voice; if that seems to be the case with your dog, you can talk softly throughout the session. Otherwise, remain silent while you work with the dog.

**Step 4:** Hold your ESTs in one hand and leave the other hand clean and dry. Reach out and touch a part of your dog's body, a spot where she is already comfortable being touched. As soon as you touch her, give her an EST, then withdraw both hands.

Tip: The best place to start touching most dogs is on the chest or shoulder. Most dogs don't like being touched on the face or having someone reach over the head when they are first getting used to handling. Likewise, most dogs are uncomfortable with having their feet touched. Remember, though, every dog is an individual and has different preferences. It is up to you to pay attention to where the dog seems most comfortable starting the touching process.

**Step 5:** Wait a few seconds and repeat Step 4.

Tip: Go slow. Moving too fast can overwhelm the dog, or make it difficult for her to make the association between getting touched and getting an EST.

Repeat the process of pairing the touch with the ESTs until the dog has made the association between being touched and getting the EST. You can tell she has made the association when



you touch her and she immediately looks at your treat hand and/or gives a “yippee” response (happy face, ears relaxed, tail wag, etc.).

**Step 6:** Gradually, a couple of inches at a time, start to touch the dog’s body closer to your end-goal location (moving up to the head, down to the feet, back across the torso to the tail, etc.).

**Step 7:** When the dog is readily accepting touch all over her body (she may even be leaning into the touch), start handling body parts rather than just touching them. For example, lift and hold her ears, lift her lips, pick up and hold her paws, hold her tail, scratch her sides.

Tip: Remember to always pair touching and handling with the ESTs and never go beyond the dog’s threshold. Always go at the dog’s pace, progressing to the next step only when she gives the “yippee” response at the current step.

**Step 8:** When the dog is readily accepting handling all over her body, begin to introduce whatever grooming or medical equipment is necessary for achieving your end-goal. Here are some examples:

To get your dog comfortable with brushing:

- Touch a brush to her shoulder and pair it with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, gradually move the brush toward your end-goal location on her body (as described in the steps above), pairing with ESTs, of course.
- When she’s comfortable with that, pair one short brush stroke with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, pair one long brush stroke with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, pair two long brush strokes with ESTs, working your way up to multiple brush strokes.

To get your dog comfortable with nail trimming:

- Touch the nail trimmers to one toenail and pair with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, tap the nail trimmers against a toenail and pair with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, hold a nail in the trimmers and pair with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, trim one nail and pair with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, trim two nails and pair with ESTs.
- When she’s comfortable with that, trim three nails and pair with ESTs, working your way up to trimming all her nails.

Whatever activity you’re trying to get her comfortable with (e.g., restraint hold, ear cleaning, tooth brushing, holding off veins for blood tests and injections), use a similar progression as described in the above examples, starting at very low intensity and building slowly, giving ESTs at each step.

**Step 9:** When the dog is comfortable and happy with the handling procedures, start to introduce her to locations where the handling will take place and to the equipment that will be used. This is technically part of the proofing process (see below), but since grooming and medical procedures are so frequently done at specific locations and with specific equipment, this step is necessary as part of the foundation of this training plan. As with the handling procedures, introduce new

places and equipment slowly and at an intensity (distance) at which the dog feels comfortable, pairing each with ESTs for the entire process.

- Examples of locations: clinic lobby, exam room, grooming facility. Take the dog to each location without having a procedure done. Just take her there to have ESTs and to have fun, and then leave.
- Examples of equipment: clippers, stethoscope, gauze, syringe. For scales and groomers' tables, practice having the dog get on and off, and then staying on.

## **Proofing**

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts. Start the proofing process after the dog is comfortable with being touched and handled all over her body.

**Handler:** Practice handling in different positions — while you're squatting, standing, bending over the dog, and immediately after walking up to her. Then have other people practice handling with her.

**Location:** Practice handling in different locations.

**Distractions:** Practice handling in areas of higher energy and distractions.

Finally, begin combining all of the above scenarios: other people handling the dog in new places, coming from different angles surrounded by activity and distraction.

## **Notes**

Every dog is different, and therefore will progress at his or her own pace. Some dogs may progress rapidly, being able to accept the final stage of handling after only a few days. Other dogs may take months or years to complete this training plan.

Whatever the case, there may be times when handling needs to be done whether or not the dog is ready (e.g., vet visits, grooming). These scenarios are unavoidable, but they do not have to cause a huge setback in training. If you are taking the lead on implementing the above training plan, try not to be involved in the scenarios when handling is necessary. Instead, ask for help from other people. Also, ask the veterinary or grooming staff to use minimal restraint and low-stress handling techniques in order to minimize the dog's traumatic experiences during these necessary procedures. By taking these simple steps, you can avoid huge setbacks and continue to make steady progress despite those necessary but unpleasant experiences.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.

## Training Plan: Look At That (LAT)

**Why this is useful for your dog to know:** Some dogs go ballistic (barking, lunging and generally freaking out) on leash when they see something exciting or scary. Although a lot of dogs display reactive behavior, it can be embarrassing at best and dangerous at worst. Implementing this “look at that” training plan will help dogs stay calm and safe in these situations.

**End behavior:** The dog will look at the trigger (whatever she is reactive toward) and then look back at the handler.

**Step 1:** Decide on a sound, word or visual marker that you’ll use to indicate to your dog that she’s doing something great and a treat will follow. Clickers and a verbal “yes” or “good” are popular markers.

**Step 2:** To teach your dog that the marker always means a treat is coming, click the clicker or say the word and then give her a treat immediately. Do this repeatedly, until she looks expectantly at you whenever you use the marker.

**Step 3:** Next, with the dog on leash, stand at a distance from the trigger. You should be far enough away that your dog sees her trigger but isn’t reacting. As soon as she looks at the trigger, use your marker. She should turn toward you in anticipation of the treat. When she does, give her the treat. Repeat 10-15 times.

Tip: If she does not turn toward you, either go back to Step 2 or increase the distance between her and the trigger.

**Step 4:** When she consistently looks at her trigger without reacting, test to see if she’ll look back at you in anticipation of the marker and treat after she looks at her trigger. If so, mark and then treat. If not, repeat the previous step.

**Step 5:** Gradually, one foot at a time, decrease the distance between your dog and the trigger. Continue using your marker and treats if she doesn’t react. You may have to shift between Steps 3 and 4 as the distance decreases.

Tip: If your dog starts reacting, simply increase the distance between her and the trigger until she’s no longer upset and continue training.

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

It’s important to practice LAT often with your dog. When you first start, you will want to practice in the same environment, someplace that is low-stress for your dog. If your dog is reactive toward other dogs, make sure that you are practicing with a calm, non-reactive dog as the trigger.

Once your dog is consistently doing LAT successfully with the other dog, practice with dogs who are progressively more reactive. Here's the continuum of behavior from non-reactive to reactive:

- Calm, ignoring your dog
- Calm, occasionally looking at your dog
- Calm, looking at your dog
- Calm, staring at your dog
- Pulling toward your dog
- Barking at your dog
- Lunging at your dog

You'll also want to proof the behavior:

- With different people handling the dog
- With different levels of distraction
- In different places
- With different triggers (e.g., cars, trucks, men, women)

## Notes

Here are some troubleshooting tips:

- As mentioned above, when you start training LAT, you'll want to position your dog far enough away from the trigger so that she sees the trigger but doesn't react to it. This is called being under threshold and it may take a little experimenting to find that place. So, start farther away than you think necessary and gradually move closer to the trigger.
- If your dog is extremely reactive and you can't find a distance from which she won't react, ask your trainer about teaching the cue "look" indoors first.
- If a trigger comes upon you unexpectedly while you're training, and your dog starts to bark or lunge, say "let's go" and do a U-turn, moving away from the trigger until she's no longer upset. Once she's at a distance where she's not reacting, start doing LAT again or ask for behaviors she already knows until you have regained her attention.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed. Keep in mind that it can take a long time to change deep-seated fears, so be patient.

## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Go to Your Place’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** Teaching a dog to go to a specific place can be helpful at those times when you need your dog to settle down or stay in a particular spot for a while. Your dog can be out of the way, but also in a comfortable and safe area. This is a great cue to use when someone comes to the door, you are making dinner, or you just need to not have your dog underfoot.

**End behavior:** When given a cue, the dog will go to his bed or a mat and settle there in a sit or down position until released. (Prerequisite: The dog must already be trained in “sit” or “down.”)

**Step 1:** Get a mat, blanket, dog bed or towel and put it on the floor next to you. Stand next to the mat with your dog paying attention to you. With the arm that is closest to the mat, toss a treat onto it. As soon as the dog steps onto the mat, use a clicker or say your marker word (e.g., “yes”). Once the dog has eaten the treat, get his attention, say your release word (e.g., “free”) and toss another treat, this time off the mat. When he gets off the mat, there is no need to use a clicker or a marker word. Repeat 10 times. Then move on to Step 2.

- Why do you need to use a release word? The release word is your dog’s cue that he can end the behavior. With certain behaviors (including go to your place, wait and stay), we want the dog to continue doing them until we tell him otherwise. You can use whatever release word you wish; just make sure you’re consistent. Examples of release words are “free” and “OK.”
- For now, make sure that you pick up the mat whenever you are not actively training. If you are using your dog’s bed to train, put a towel or blanket on top of the bed during your training sessions and remove it when you are done.

**Step 2:** After doing 10 repetitions of Step 1, point to the mat next to you. If the dog goes over to the mat, click and toss a treat onto the mat. Then say your release word and toss a treat away from the mat. Repeat four more times. If the dog goes to the mat for four or five of the repetitions, move on to Step 3. If he goes to the mat three or fewer times, go back to Step 1.

Tip: The hand that you use to point to the mat should be the same hand that you were using to toss treats onto the mat.

**Step 3:** Decide on a verbal cue. The cue can be any word you wish (e.g., “go,” “bed,” “place,” “mat”). Whatever word you pick, make sure you use that word consistently. Next, stand near the mat, give the verbal cue, and point to the mat. As soon as your dog steps onto the mat, mark the behavior (with a click or marker word) and give him a treat. Say your release word and toss a treat away from the mat. Do this 10 times and then move on to Step 4.

**Step 4:** Now that your dog is going to the mat with a verbal cue, it’s time to ask him for the behavior you want on the mat. Once he is on the mat, ask him to sit or lie down. When he does,

mark the behavior (with a click or marker word) and give him a treat. Once he has eaten it, release him from the mat using your release word. Do this exercise nine more times.

**Step 5:** Next, cue the dog to go to the mat and see if he sits or lies down on his own once he's on the mat. If he does, click and give him a treat, and then release him. Do this exercise five times. If he sits or lies down three or fewer times, repeat Step 4. If he sits or lies down four or five times, move on to Step 6.

Tip: Whether you choose to have him sit or lie down, just make sure you are consistent. Don't ask him to sit one time and lie down another time. If you want your dog to stay on the mat for a longer amount of time, you might want to teach him to lie down on it, which is more comfortable for him.

**Step 6:** After the dog is consistently going to the mat and taking the position that you want him to be in (sitting or lying down), it's time to teach him how to stay there for longer periods. Here's how to do it, using sit as the desired position: Mark the behavior (with a click or marker word) as soon as he sits on the mat. A moment later, while he is still sitting, click and treat him again. The idea is to mark the behavior as fast as necessary, but as slow as possible. So, click and treat the dog every second for sitting, for five continuous seconds. Then release him. Let him move around a bit before asking him to repeat the exercise.

Tip: Pretty quickly, you'll want to vary how frequently you are treating (e.g., click after one second, then two seconds, then one second, then three seconds, then four seconds, then one second) and slowly work up to a longer continuous time of sitting on the mat.

**Step 7:** If you want, you can change the dog's cue to go to his place from a word to a sound in the environment. For example, if you would like your dog to go to his place when people come to the house, you can train him to go to his bed when he hears the doorbell or someone knocking. To do this, present your new cue (e.g., have someone ring the doorbell), then give the dog the verbal cue (e.g., "place"). When the dog goes to his place, click and treat. Repeat 10 times, and then just give the new cue (e.g., the doorbell sound). If the dog goes to his place, click and treat. If not, do the exercise using both cues a few more times.

Tip: If your dog gets too excited at the sound of the doorbell (or someone knocking) to respond to the verbal cue, do the following before starting this step: Ring the doorbell or knock on the door (without opening the door or having any other excitement) enough times in succession that he starts to get used to it.

## Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts — in different areas, with different distractions and handlers, and for longer periods of time.

**Longer times:** Following Step 6 instructions, slowly work up to 10 seconds on the mat, then 15 seconds, 30 seconds, 45 seconds and a minute. When your dog can stay on the mat for a full minute, you can start working on distractions.

**Distractions:** Here are some distractions you can introduce:

- Squeaky toys
- Other dogs
- You moving around
- Another person moving around

- A familiar person entering the house after the doorbell rings
- An unfamiliar person entering the house after the doorbell rings

**Distances:** Ask your dog to go to his bed when he's at different distances from the bed (e.g., a foot away from the bed, three feet from the bed, across the room from the bed).

**Handler position:** After asking your dog to go to his bed, move a couple steps away, then several feet away, then all the way across the room. You can also assume different positions. Try asking him to go to his place when you're sitting down, with your back slightly turned from him, and any other position you can think of.

## Notes

Here are some additional tips:

- In the beginning, make it a party every time your dog goes to the mat. Whenever he is on the mat, praise and treat him profusely. As soon as he gets off, ignore him.
- Make sure you give a release cue so your dog knows when to get off the mat.
- There are many different ways to train this behavior. If your dog is already familiar with shaping, you can use that technique.

**If you get stuck** between steps, create an intermediate step with duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.

## Training Plan: Muzzle Training

**Why this is useful for your dog to know:** Like a bike helmet, a muzzle is a piece of safety equipment. A muzzle protects the dog as much as the people around him. Every dog can benefit from muzzle training, since any dog may need to wear a muzzle in the case of high stress or injury. Proper training makes it much less stressful (and maybe even pleasant) for a dog to wear a muzzle.

**End behavior:** The dog will comfortably and happily wear a properly fitted muzzle for up to 30 minutes.

**Step 1:** Show the dog the muzzle from a foot away; reward him with food whenever he looks at it. Do this 2-5 times. Gradually move closer to the dog until the muzzle is within touching distance.

Tip: If the dog retreats from the muzzle, start from farther away. Hold it at a distance where he can see it but doesn't try to move away. Toss him the food while the muzzle is in view, then take the muzzle out of his view (e.g., put it behind your back) and stop feeding him. Show him the muzzle again and start feeding, then take it away and stop feeding. Gradually move the muzzle closer until it is within touching distance.

**Step 2:** Wipe some wet food, peanut butter or soft cheese around the inside edge of the muzzle. As the dog approaches, let him lick the muzzle. When he will comfortably approach the muzzle and touch it, go to Step 3.

**Step 3:** Place high-value treats in the muzzle and allow the dog to eat the treats from the muzzle. Cup your hand under the muzzle to hold in the treats. Let the dog place his nose in the muzzle to get the treats. Slowly pull the muzzle away from the dog as he eats the treats, so that he wants to follow and push his mouth into the muzzle. Do not force the muzzle on to the dog. Gently remove the muzzle before the dog has a chance to remove his nose. This step will ensure that the dog does not develop a habit of taking the food and pulling away from the muzzle. When the dog will keep his nose in the muzzle for 30 seconds, go to Step 4.

Tip: If treats fall out of the muzzle as you're working on this step, try putting some duct tape inside the bottom of the muzzle to hold them in.

**Step 4:** Gradually require the dog to keep his nose in the muzzle for longer periods. For this and all following steps, use treats (e.g., jerky and Pup-Peroni) that you can easily give the dog through the muzzle. Even better, use tasty foods with paste consistency, such as soft cheese (e.g., Cheez Whiz), Kong filler and peanut butter, to squeeze rewards through the muzzle into the dog's mouth. When the dog will wear the muzzle for 2 to 3 minutes, go to Step 5.

Tip: If your muzzle does not allow for easy delivery of treats to the dog's mouth, consider cutting out one small section of bars from the front.



**Step 5:** Allow the dog to place his nose in the muzzle and reward him with treats. Begin to fumble with the straps and clips, and attempt to touch the straps together. When you can hold the straps for 10 seconds, go to Step 6.

**Step 6:** Allow the dog to place his nose in the muzzle and reward him with treats, then clip the muzzle straps around his neck. Make sure the muzzle is snug enough that he can't pull it off, but also not too tight. Give him treats quickly and constantly for the entire time the muzzle is on. Keep the sessions short — 20 seconds to start. When you can easily place the muzzle on the dog, and clip it, go to Step 7.

Tip: If you notice that the muzzle seems to be chafing or looks uncomfortable, check to be sure that you are using the right size. If you are, then consider applying adhesive foam padding to the chafing points on the inside to make it more comfortable for the dog.

**Step 7:** Put the muzzle on the dog and immediately begin to reward him with treats while he is wearing it. Then, while he's wearing the muzzle, take the dog for a brief walk inside the run or kennel. Keep giving treats frequently (every few steps). It's helpful to have two people to do this at first: one to keep the dog moving and one to reward. Do this exercise a few times and then go to Step 8.

**Step 8:** Put the muzzle on the dog and immediately begin to reward him with treats while he is wearing it. Take the dog for a short walk (outside, this time) while he's wearing the muzzle. Click and reward at regular intervals. Do not remove the muzzle until the dog is back in his run.

Tip: If the dog starts to paw at the muzzle, keep him moving and reward more often. Do not remove the muzzle while the dog is pawing at it. If he gets very uncomfortable, wait until he stops pawing at it for a few seconds (feed him treats to distract him if necessary), and then remove it and end the session. In the next session, reduce the amount of time he wears the muzzle.

**Step 9:** Have the dog wear the muzzle for all walks. He should look forward to being muzzled at this point, because it predicts a walk. Give the dog treats frequently during walks.

## Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Location:** Have the dog wear the muzzle for short periods in places where he'll be likely to need it. If you are training him to wear the muzzle for grooming or medical purposes, make several visits to the vet's office or the groomer before the actual appointments. Put the muzzle on the dog and give him lots of treats. During the actual appointments, continue to reward the dog periodically while he's muzzled. Make sure he wears the muzzle for walks or other enjoyable activities more often than he wears it for medical reasons.

**Handler:** Have different people practice putting the muzzle on the dog.

## Notes

The goal of muzzle training is to make wearing the muzzle a safe, happy game that the dog loves to play. If at any time during muzzle training the dog appears anxious or unhappy about the muzzle, back up in the plan to the previous step.

**If you get stuck** on any step (e.g., the dog becomes uncomfortable and won't stop pawing at the muzzle), stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.



## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Off’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** You can teach “off” to get your dog to move when you want his spot on the couch. It’s easier — and kinder — to have the dog jump off the couch (or chair or bed) on cue than to lift or push him off. Teaching “off” is also a great way to work around dogs who might guard their spot.

**End behavior:** On cue, the dog will remove his paws (or his entire body) from the item, person or surface he is currently on.

**Step 1:** When the dog has his paws or his body up on something (such as a counter or table), say “off” and use a treat in front of his nose to lure him off of the item. As soon as all paws are back on the ground, click and give him the treat. Repeat the next four times he gets up on something. Then, test your cue: Say “off” and see if he gets off. If he does, move on to the next step. If he does not, repeat Step 1 five more times and test again.

Tip: If the dog won’t follow the treat as you try to lure him off, you need a higher-value treat. It’s important to use a treat or food item that your dog really likes, so that getting off of the thing he is on is much more rewarding than staying on it.

**Step 2:** As soon as he gets off of the item when you say “off,” click and treat. Once he is reliably getting off when you cue him, you can start fading the click and treat part by starting to praise him or giving him treats randomly.

### Proofing

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

**Items:** Practice with different items, such as a couch, a bed, a kitchen counter and a coffee table. If the dog jumps up on people, practice with different people. For each item or person, start with Step 1.

**Handler:** Get other people to practice “off” with the dog.

**Distractions:** Practice with the dog in different locations with varying distractions. For example, practice both when the kitchen counter is empty and when there is a tasty snack on it.

**If you get stuck** on any step, stop and take a break. When you try again, go back to the previous step in the plan. If necessary, create intermediate steps with intensity and duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don’t rush: Take it at the dog’s speed.

## Training Plan: Teaching ‘Back Up’

**Why this cue is useful for your dog to know:** Walking backward or backing up doesn’t come naturally to dogs, so it’s a skill they have to learn. It can come in handy when navigating tight spaces. It’s also a way to help dogs who do agility become more aware of their hind end.

**End behavior:** The dog walks backward on cue until he’s released.

**Step 1:** Stand directly in front of the dog, then prompt him to back up by taking a step toward him. As soon as he takes a step backward, click and reward him with a treat (C&R). Repeat this 4 more times and then move on to Step 2.

Tip: If he sits down or moves to the side instead of walking directly backward, arrange some tables, chairs or other objects into a narrow chute so that the only direction he can move is backward.

**Step 2:** Step toward the dog, and as soon as he takes a step backward, offer your hand cue, then C&R. Repeat 4 more times.

Tip: The Dogtown hand cue for “back up” is to hold your forearms straight out with your hands bent at a 90-degree angle at the wrist and fingertips pointed toward the ground. Then flick your fingers forward, in a “shooing” motion.

**Step 3:** Offer the hand cue without stepping toward the dog. If he backs up without the prompt, C&R. Repeat until he backs up on cue (without the prompt) 4 or 5 times out of 5 repetitions.

Tip: Some dogs do better with gradually fading the prompt rather than suddenly dropping it. To fade the prompt, take increasingly smaller steps toward the dog, then just lean toward him, then don’t move at all and use only the hand cue.

**Step 4:** Offer the hand cue, but don’t C&R when the dog backs up one step. Instead, keeping offering the cue until he takes a second step back, then C&R. When the dog is reliably taking two steps back 4-5 out of 5 times, continue offering the hand cue until the dog takes three steps back, then C&R. When the dog is reliably taking three steps back 4-5 out of 5 times, continue offering the hand cue until the dog takes four steps back, then C&R.

**Step 5:** Once the dog is reliably taking four steps back, begin C&R for varying distances of backing up. For example, C&R for four steps back, then one step back, then three steps back, then two steps back, then five steps back, then two steps back. As the dog becomes consistent at the current distance you ask for, periodically ask for one step more than he’s done before.

**Step 6:** Continue practicing varying distances until the dog will reliably continue to back up until you stop cueing and C&R. Offer your verbal cue (“back” or “back up”) immediately before your hand cue 10 times in a row, then offer the verbal cue alone without the hand cue. If the dog responds, hooray! If not, pair the verbal cue with the hand cue 5 more times, then try again.

## **Proofing**

Proofing means teaching the dog to generalize the behavior in different contexts.

Just because your dog can back up on cue in a quiet room in your house doesn't mean he'll be able to do it in a busy vet office. So, start practicing it with him in different places and with different people. Start off with the two of you in a slightly more distracting place than your home and gradually work up to practicing in more distracting environments. Then, you can have other people work on the behavior with the dog, too. By practicing in different places with different people, the dog can learn to back up for anyone, anywhere.

**If you get stuck** between steps, create an intermediate step with duration that your dog is comfortable with. Don't rush: Take it at the dog's speed.



## Adopting a Puppy

You're thinking about taking the plunge and adopting a wriggly bundle of joy, otherwise known as a puppy. Before you do, here are a few things to consider.

Adopting a puppy is a huge commitment; for one thing, you can't leave a puppy home alone all day. Most young puppies need to eliminate approximately every two hours, so someone needs to be available to take the puppy outside to do his business. If the puppy you adopt hasn't been house-trained, he'll have to be taught that skill.



You'll also want to consider how well caring for a puppy will fit into your lifestyle. Puppies are generally pretty rambunctious and require a lot of attention, playtime and exercise. If you're exhausted at the end of your workday and just want to take a relaxing walk, you might want to think about adopting a more mature dog. On the other hand, a puppy could be perfect for you if you have a sedentary job, some spare time and energy to burn.

Also, puppies need to be socialized to the big wide world so that they won't be afraid of new situations, objects, sounds, people and other animals. Dogs should be thoroughly socialized when they are puppies because it's critical to their lifelong well-being and their ability to be comfortable in the world. To have a happy, well-adjusted dog, you'll need to have the time and patience to socialize your pup in a positive way. What sort of things does a puppy need to be introduced to? Here's a partial list:

- Different types of people, including male and female, young and old, tall and short, loud and quiet
- People wearing hats, glasses or sunglasses, helmets, coats or capes with hoods up, gloves and masks
- Household items and sounds, such as the sound and movement of the vacuum cleaner and other electrical appliances
- Handling and grooming, including touching of all the puppy's body parts
- Car rides, so he'll be a good traveler from an early age
- Walks in the neighborhood or to the park

To enhance your dog's social skills, you'll need to commit to basic training, teaching your puppy to walk nicely on lead, take treats gently, play with his toys (not your hands), refrain from jumping up on people, and respond to basic cues, such as "sit," "down," "come" and "stay." Again, time and patience will be required. Being conscientious about

socializing and training your puppy will result in a dog who is happier, more relaxed and welcome in more places. For both training and socialization, we strongly recommend taking all puppies to a socialization class with a relationship-based behavior consultant.

Before adopting a puppy, you'll want to make sure the other human members of your household are enthusiastic about the decision and understand the commitment involved. One of the keys to successful training is consistency, so everyone in the house must work with the puppy in the same way. If you have young children, you'll need to monitor them when they're interacting with the puppy to ensure the safety of both them and the dog, and to prevent them from teaching the puppy bad habits.

Finally, consider how a puppy will affect your other pets, since they are part of the family, too. If you have an older cat who doesn't like dogs, for example, having an inquisitive puppy around may be stressful for your kitty. By contrast, a puppy might put a spring in the step of a dog who's been pining for a canine companion.

For more information about raising a puppy, Best Friends animal behavior consultant Sherry Woodard recommends the books *Before You Get Your Puppy* and *After You Get Your Puppy* by Ian Dunbar and *The Puppy Primer* by Patricia McConnell and Brenda Scidmore.



## Puppy Development

To help puppies grow up happy and healthy, it's important to be aware of what they need at each phase in their development. Here is a brief summary of the stages of puppy development, starting at birth up to two years old.

### Birth to 2 weeks

From birth to two weeks, puppies are completely dependent on mom for food and care, such as keeping themselves clean. The senses of touch and taste are present at birth. Neonatal puppies have limited movement and are capable of only a slow crawl.



### 2–4 weeks

From two to four weeks, puppies become aware of and interact with their litter mates as well as their mother. Their eyes open and their sight is well developed by five weeks. The senses of hearing and smell are developing; their baby teeth start emerging. During this stage, puppies begin to walk, bark and wag their tails. By the end of this period, puppies are able to eliminate without their mother's stimulation.

Weaning from the mother also begins during this phase. At around three weeks, puppies should be started on solid food. Offer the puppies small amounts of soft food in a shallow dish. By the time the puppies are eight weeks old, they should be eating solid food and no longer nursing.

### 3–16 weeks

From four to six weeks, puppies continue to be influenced by their mother and litter mates. They learn to play, gaining needed social skills from litter mates, such as inhibited biting (biting to play, not to hurt). The puppies also learn the ins and outs of group structure and ranking within the group. Puppies become much more vocal during this period, with the appearance of play barking and growling.

At this point, if mom is aggressive or fearful of people, the puppies may be affected by her attitude. To socialize your puppies to humans, have a variety of people interacting with them — young (with supervision) and old, male and female. During the socialization period, it's also very important to expose your puppy to other normal experiences, such as car rides, crate-training, vacuum-cleaning, ringing doorbells, and a variety of objects and sounds. Also, handling of the feet and body parts is a good thing for a puppy to experience at an early age.

Training and socialization can begin very early, from the beginning of this socialization



period, but do not permanently separate a puppy from his mother and siblings before eight weeks of age. House-training can begin as early as five weeks, when puppies will follow their mother through a dog door or can be taken out for elimination lessons.

At approximately six weeks, puppies can begin in-home training. You should handle all parts of the puppy, introduce his first collar and lead, encourage him to come using his name, and reward him with praise and treats. At this age, you can also start training puppies with positive reinforcement methods: using a clicker, praise and rewards.

At about eight weeks, puppies start experiencing fear; everyday objects and experiences can alarm them. This is a perfectly normal reaction — it doesn't mean that you will have a fearful dog.

You don't want to socialize your puppies with other dogs and cats until the puppies have been vaccinated, since they may pick up diseases (such as parvo, distemper, and hepatitis) that can be fatal to puppies. In general, about a week after the second parvo/distemper vaccination, it is reasonably safe for your puppy to play with other similarly vaccinated puppies, in a class with a relationship-based trainer. Ask your veterinarian for information pertaining to your individual puppy and whether she or he knows of any parvo or distemper outbreaks in your area.

Puppies can socialize with other species of animals as well — horses, cats, whatever animals you would like your puppy to be comfortable around. Of course, you'll need to use caution and make sure that the other animals are friendly.

## **4–6 months**

During this period, puppies grow rapidly and you may notice daily changes. Even though puppies are very energetic, don't exercise your puppy too much, since he can overdo it. Among themselves, puppies begin to use ranking in their group structure — that is, they start testing where they fit in. Puppies may experience another fear phase that lasts about a month and seems to come from nowhere. Again, this is a perfectly normal part of puppy development and is nothing to be alarmed about.

## **6–12 months**

Like most adolescents, puppies are very rambunctious, so continue the process of training and socializing your dog during this phase. Socialization and training are necessary if you want your puppy to be comfortable and act acceptably in public places such as dog parks and beaches, or anywhere that she will meet new dogs and new people.

## **1–2 years**

By this age, your dog has reached adulthood, but changes in social preferences and habits can occur up to two years of age. Ongoing training will ensure a respectful and fun relationship between your dog and all human family members, which makes having an animal in the family a daily pleasure.



## Neonatal Care for Orphaned Puppies

Raising orphaned puppies can be very rewarding. It is, however, a serious responsibility that requires some time, money and work on your part if you want to help the little ones grow up healthy and happy. Close observation and prompt attention if any problems develop are especially important. If you have not raised orphans before, you should have a veterinarian examine the pups before you get started. Don't be disappointed if you are unable to save all the puppies; you can only give it your best effort.



### Basic care for newborn puppies

Here's some basic information about what's normal and what's not, and how to care for orphaned puppies.

**Temperature.** A normal rectal temperature for a newborn puppy is 95 to 99 degrees Fahrenheit for the first week, and 97 to 100 for the second week. By the fourth week, the puppy's temperature should reach the normal temperature of an adult dog: 100 to 102 degrees. Puppies under the age of about 38 days have a reduced ability to regulate their body temperature and will need a temperature-controlled environment. (See the section on warmth below.)

**Weight.** Weighing the puppies daily to check for weight gain can reassure you that they are doing well. If a puppy is failing to gain weight or losing weight, you should consult with your veterinarian.

**Vision.** Puppies' eyes open when they are 10 to 14 days old. Because their eyes are very sensitive to light, they should be kept out of direct sunlight until four weeks of age.

**Hearing.** The ear canals of puppies open between five and eight days.

**Warmth.** A puppy burns far more body heat per pound of body weight than an adult dog. To stay warm, puppies depend on radiant heat from their mother. In her absence, they need constant temperature control, so you'll have to provide your puppies with a draft-free nesting area. Heat lamps or hot water bottles can be used to control the temperature.

During the first four or five days of life, puppies should be kept in an environment that is between 85 and 90 degrees. The temperature may gradually be decreased to 80 degrees by the seventh to tenth day, and may be reduced to 70-75 degrees by the end of the fourth week.

Provide necessary warmth or cooling to the puppies gradually. If you have a large litter, they will huddle together, which means they won't require as much help with external

heat from you. Take care not to overheat the puppies; newborns cannot move away from the heat on their own.

**Stimulation for elimination.** For the first two weeks of life, puppies are stimulated by their mother to encourage urination and defecation. In the absence of their mother, you will have to provide the stimulation. Massage your puppies' genital area with a moist cloth to stimulate bladder and bowel action. After two weeks, puppies should urinate and defecate on their own. Watch them carefully to make sure that happens.

**Diarrhea.** Diarrhea is common in puppies and may be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes (e.g., formula that is too concentrated, a new brand of formula), stress, overfeeding and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the puppy is otherwise alert and vigorous, you can try giving less food more often and monitor the pup closely.

Also, make sure that the puppy gets a lot of fluid, as they are prone to dehydration if they don't get enough. This can be done by diluting the formula with extra water, or giving the puppy clean warm water in a bottle or syringe. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than three or four feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call a veterinarian (and also bring a sample of feces).

**Dehydration.** The lack of normal parental care may mean that you receive puppies who are dehydrated. They may also become dehydrated from other causes, such as diarrhea, vomiting or by being chilled. Newborns can't nurse if they are too cold, because their energy is spent trying to stay warm.

One sign of dehydration is loss of elasticity in the skin. If you pick up the pup's scruff with two fingers, it will stay up, looking pinched. Another way to test for dehydration is to look at the puppy's gums (mucous membranes). The gums should be moist and shiny; if you touch them, they should not be sticky.

**Hypoglycemia.** Hypoglycemia, an abnormal decrease of sugar in the blood, can also happen to orphaned puppies. The signs to look for are lack of strength, lethargy (lack of movement), and muscle twitching (sometimes with convulsions). If a puppy shows signs of hypoglycemia, place a few drops of corn syrup under his tongue and on the gums, and call your veterinarian immediately for further assistance.

**Internal parasites.** If a puppy is developing very slowly, has an extremely large bloated belly or has blood in his stool, he may have internal parasites. A stool sample should be taken to your veterinarian for examination.

**Nail trimming.** The puppies will need nail trims often, so if you have not trimmed toenails on dogs, ask someone to show you how to do it safely. Human nail clippers work well on small puppies.

## Living space

If the puppies were being cared for by their mother, she would choose a place that is soft, warm and away from full sunlight. In the absence of their mother, you must provide this type of environment. A box may be large enough for a first home for the family. Put the box in a warm, sheltered space. (See the section above on temperature.) If the litter is a big one, you may need to buy a child-size plastic pool. As the puppies grow, watch to see whether they can climb out of the box or pool. Once puppies start to move, they can climb well within a surprisingly short period of time.

For bedding, use clean packing paper (newspaper without print) or newspaper layered on top of a flat towel for the first week or so. Newborn puppies can get caught up in soft cloth and can die if they can't breathe. After they are able to lift their heads and move around a bit, you can use a towel, sheet or blanket. When the puppies start crawling, and then walking, they'll use the cloth for traction.

## **Feeding the puppies**

Newborns will need food every two to three hours, around the clock. Six or eight meals, equally spaced over 24 hours, are sufficient for most puppies; small or weak puppies may need more feedings.

You can give your orphans complete nutrition by buying a commercial puppy milk replacer (such as Esbilac), which can be purchased through your veterinarian or a pet supply store. Commercial milk replacers have feeding directions on the label and should be given at the puppy's body temperature (about 100 degrees). Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours. When the puppies are 3-4 weeks old, you can start feeding them milk replacer at room temperature.

When feeding orphaned puppies, it's best to use commercial animal baby bottles; you can use an eyedropper in an emergency, but it does not allow normal sucking as well as a nipple. The size of the hole in the nipple is crucial. If you turn the bottle upside down and the milk drips freely, the hole is too large. The bottle should require a light squeeze (simulating a puppy suckling) for milk to drip out. If you need to make the hole bigger, you can heat a needle with a lighter and use it to enlarge the hole.

Here are the steps for feeding:

1. Position the puppy on his stomach with his head level, as though he is nursing from mom. Puppies do not have a well-developed gag reflex, so you must be very careful that fluid does not go down the windpipe into the pup's lungs. For this reason, do not feed the puppy on his back.
2. Open the puppy's mouth gently with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him.
3. Tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the puppy from inhaling too much air. Do not force the puppy to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast.
4. After each feeding, the puppy should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently pat his back.

Tube-feeding may be necessary if a puppy refuses to nurse well with the bottle method. You will need to work with your veterinarian to make certain that you understand the technique and can safely perform tube feeding. (If done improperly, it can result in life-threatening aspiration pneumonia from formula accidentally entering the lungs.)

During the third week, begin offering the puppies a dish of water. The dish should be one that isn't too large and cannot be tipped over, since the pups may attempt to climb into it instead of drinking from it. Then, introduce the puppies to gruel. Make a gruel by blending a good-quality dry puppy food with commercial milk replacer. Put the gruel (warmed up and not too thick) in a low pan. As the puppies discover how to lap up the

gruel, you can gradually thicken the mixture. Feed gruel four times a day. By week six, most puppies can eat a diet of dry puppy food. Don't forget to give them a constant supply of fresh water.

### **Disease prevention**

Puppies are very vulnerable to disease, so disease prevention is really important. Always wash your hands before touching the puppies. If you work with other animals or visit shelters or dog parks (anyplace where you come into contact with other dogs), always change your clothes and shoes before entering the area where the puppies are kept and before handling the puppies.

You should limit the number of visitors and the number of people who handle the pups until the puppies are a few weeks old. Hand-washing before handling the puppies is always recommended. Limit interaction if the visitors have been in contact with sick animals or have been to a shelter just before visiting. Use caution: Gentle handling and disease control will continue to be concerns for many weeks.

### **Veterinary checkup and spay/neuter**

During the puppies' third week, a visit to your veterinarian for a checkup is a good idea. The puppies' eyes are still sensitive at this stage, so don't expose them to direct sunlight on this first outing. Ask your veterinarian about diet, deworming and vaccinations. Puppies in a foster or sheltering situation should start receiving vaccinations at 4-6 weeks of age and every two weeks thereafter until 18 weeks of age.

You should also talk to the vet about spay/neuter, since this procedure should be done before the puppies leave your care. (Spay/neuter can be done as early as eight weeks; the puppies must weigh at least two pounds.) The vet may want to evaluate each puppy and start individual records for their future human families.

### **Socializing puppies**

In your role of dog parent, you will have the challenge of safely socializing the pups to other canines and the rest of the world. They have much to learn — things that mom would normally teach them. Invite fully vaccinated friendly dog guests over to visit, and introduce the puppies to dog-friendly cats as well. Be careful to protect the puppies from any harm, keeping in mind that not all other animals like puppies.

When children visit, supervision is absolutely necessary. Puppies can scratch and bite; children sometimes get too rough in their handling of them. Both children and puppies can benefit from learning the proper manners required for human-animal relationships to be safe and harmonious. The puppies should also encounter a variety of people, objects, sounds and smells — anything you can think of that is commonplace out in the world. To prevent them from becoming fearful of noises, for instance, you can play thunderstorm sounds, run the vacuum and turn on the TV.

When it's time to find homes for the puppies, please try to place them in homes where they will be considered valued family members. Emphasize the social needs of dogs and recommend to each puppy's new family that they invest in some relationship-based training as the puppy gets older.



## Puppy Socialization

Puppies and dogs need to be socialized to the big wide world so that they won't be afraid of new situations, objects, sounds, people and other animals. Dogs should be socialized when they are puppies. It's critical to their lifelong emotional well-being and their ability to be comfortable in the world.

There are a few guidelines to follow, however. Until the puppy has been vaccinated, you don't want him to be around other unvaccinated animals, since he may pick up diseases (such as parvo, distemper, and hepatitis) that can be fatal to puppies. Consult your veterinarian about when and how to safely introduce your puppy to other animals.

Even before vaccinations are complete, however, you can begin socializing your pup. Puppies can safely be around other vaccinated animals in your home. It can be fun to introduce the new addition to your family by having friends over for a small party. Your puppy can become accustomed to people who are loud or quiet, young or old, tall or short, active or inactive. Introduce your puppy to people wearing hats, glasses or sunglasses, helmets, coats or capes with hoods up, gloves and masks. You can also take the puppy on short car rides, so she'll be a good traveler from an early age.



Be careful to make all of your puppy's socialization experiences positive. If something or someone seems to frighten your pet, introduce that object or person more slowly, and associate the object or person with positive things. For example, if your puppy is afraid of someone wearing a big hat, have the person with the scary hat offer treats to the puppy. Soon, the puppy will associate the hat with something good instead of something scary.

You should also gradually introduce your puppy to a variety of household items and sounds, such as:

- The sound and movement of the vacuum cleaner, broom or mop
- TV and radio noise (play a variety of types of music)
- The noises made by whistles and children's toys
- The sound of electrical appliances, like a blender, fan or hair dryer
- The sound and motion of a kite or a plastic bag rippling in the breeze
- The sound of a balloon as air is allowed to escape
- Storm sounds (played at low volume)

Start early with getting your puppy comfortable with handling and grooming. Touch all

her body parts: Open her mouth, look in her ears, hold her tail for a moment, wiggle your fingers between her toes. Hold the pup on your lap and hug her for 10 seconds. To help her practice being calm, massage her whole body and have the puppy relax with you until she falls asleep. Friends and family can help by handling the puppy, too.

Using positive reinforcement (treats and praise), introduce a brush, comb, and dog nail clippers. If you plan to use a professional groomer, introduce your puppy to the sound of electric hair clippers at home first.

When the puppy is eight weeks old, other animals who are healthy, vaccinated and friendly can come to your home, and you can work on socializing your puppy to them. After you have your veterinarian's blessing to take the puppy out into the world, you can introduce the pup to the delights of going for walks in the neighborhood or to the park, and visiting other people's homes, where the puppy can get used to different types of flooring and stairs. Your puppy also needs to learn not to be startled by bikes, skateboards, shopping carts and wheelchairs.

If you have more than one pet, make a point to spend time with your puppy one-on-one. The individual attention can prevent the pup from becoming codependent on another animal in the household. To be emotionally healthy, a dog needs to form his/her own personality.

Finally, to enhance your dog's socialization skills, do basic training. Teach your puppy to take treats gently, and to play with his toys (not your hands). You can make walks fun for both you and your dog by teaching him to walk nicely on lead. He should also be taught to respond to basic cues, such as "sit," "down" and "stay." If you are conscientious about socializing and training your puppy, he will be happier, more welcome, and more comfortable in our busy, often chaotic human world.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## Accommodating Pets' Natural Behaviors

“Just relax and act naturally,” they say. This often-heard piece of advice is frequently given to humans, but it’s not something that animals need to be reminded of. All animals have natural, instinctive behavior that doesn’t require any learning, since they are born knowing how to do it. This makes a lot of sense, because nearly all of these behaviors are survival skills.

When animals are discouraged from exhibiting these instinctual behaviors, their stress increases, and the result is often anxiety and depression. There is a huge body of research on this topic — on species from tigers and bears to birds and rodents — with universal agreement that regular opportunities to rehearse instinctive behavior results in improved physical and behavioral health for animals.



Our pets aren’t an exception to this rule. In fact, many of the behaviors that we call “problems” in our pets are simply expressions of instinctive behaviors. Giving them ample opportunities to indulge their instincts can therefore not only reduce their stress, but also make our lives with them easier and more pleasant.

### Foraging and chewing

Dogs and cats are both natural predators, and wild versions of our pets get their food through foraging and hunting. So while eating from a bowl may be easier for them, it can seem boring when compared to the more instinctive alternatives. Using [food puzzles](#) to feed your cats and dogs is a great way to encourage them to forage a bit for their meals. Another simple option is to scatter the kibble on the floor or hide it in small portions around the house, allowing your furry friends to hunt for their dinner.

Dogs have a natural tendency to chew, so household items such as shoes and TV remotes can become targets. To redirect your dog to something more appropriate and still fulfill his desire to chew, stuff his meal into a Kong and freeze it. Cats also like to chew, but their target is most frequently houseplants — some varieties of which are poisonous to both cats and dogs. To keep your cats satisfied on this front, consider having trays of live cat grass and catnip for them to graze on.

### Pouncing, chasing and running

Playing with cats and dogs lets them practice other types of natural predatory behaviors. For cats, use toys such as the Cat Dancer to get them to stalk, chase and pounce. For



dogs, games of fetch satisfy the need to chase, and tug-of-war simulates the grab-and-hold portion of the predatory sequence. (Remember to always play tug using strict rules, for the added benefit of teaching impulse control.) And encourage games of chase and “zoomies” at appropriate times and places.

### **Hiding, climbing and scratching**

As most cat people know, cats like their space. Especially in multiple-cat households, each cat needs plenty of territory, including hiding spots that they can claim as their own. This preference also figures in placement of litter boxes. Ideally, they should be in convenient locations and not simply relegated to the basement or garage, as well as in different parts of the house. The same is true for food. Cats aren't social eaters, so give each cat her own special place to eat.

Cats also like to scratch, climb and hide. Scratching posts, pads and cat trees made of wood, cardboard, carpet or sisal are wonderful ways for cats to indulge their scratching instinct. Regarding climbing and hiding, some cats like high places, while others like boxes and tunnels on the floor, so provide a variety of these options.

### **Digging**

Digging is an instinctive behavior in dogs that can be a problem for their people. In many cases, digging is a sign of boredom, so outlets like food puzzles and games of fetch can help to burn energy that would otherwise be spent digging. For especially enthusiastic diggers, try designating a specific spot where digging is not only allowed, but encouraged. Turn some earth in a corner of your yard or create a sandbox and entice your dog to dig by burying some toys and food puzzles there. If your dog starts to dig in an off-limits area, put some fresh toys in his sandbox and direct him to it.

### **Vocalizing**

Another natural behavior for cats and dogs is vocalizing. The decibel level of cats' meowing is frequently low enough that it's not an issue, but dogs, on the other hand, can be loud. Barking and howling are instinctive means for dogs to communicate, but these vocalizations don't always fit the schedules of the surrounding humans. As a way of sounding an alarm, barking can be a welcome behavior, so most humans don't discourage it completely. But if it gets to be too much, you can use high-value rewards to [train your dog to stop barking](#) after it has served its purpose.

There are plenty of other ways to give your cats and dogs opportunities to practice their instinctive behaviors. Use your imagination and remember that when you encourage your pets to channel these behaviors in controlled and safe ways, you are helping them to feel happier, less stressed and anxious, all while preventing “problem” behaviors.



## Mouthing and Chewing in Dogs

Chewing and mouthing are normal canine behaviors, especially for puppies who are exploring the world around them and learning how to use their mouths appropriately.



What exactly is mouthing? If you watch dogs play together, they often mouth each other in a sort of mock bite. Many dogs play with people in the same way — by mouthing our hands or other body parts. Though mouthing is not biting, it can become too aggressive to be acceptable.

To discourage mouthing, always use a toy to play with your dog. If you inadvertently become the toy, say “Ouch!” in a loud, surprised tone and remove your hand from the dog’s mouth. Wait just one second, then offer your hand for licking. If the dog mouths your hand again, repeat the steps above until the mouthing stops. When she does not mouth your hand, praise her and introduce a toy. You can then throw the toy and say “get the toy” to start a game of fetch. For her to get the idea that mouthing is not acceptable, your dog will need lots of practice with this technique. As with other training techniques, consistency is key, so try to make sure that anyone who plays with your dog knows how to discourage mouthing.

If your dog is chewing on your stuff, instead of punishing your dog for this behavior, refocus his attention to more appropriate objects. Start by having an abundance of items around that are OK for your dog to chew on. To keep your dog interested in chewing on these items, try to have a variety of textures and shapes. If he starts chewing on an inappropriate item, simply offer him an appropriate one. When he begins to chew on it, give him lavish praise. You shouldn’t allow your dog to chew on any of your possessions (even the ones that you don’t mind him chewing up), since he can’t distinguish between an old worn-out shoe and a brand-new one.

There are plenty of products on the market that are healthy and fun for your dog to chew on. Pet supply stores have a wide variety of durable rubber or nylon toys that satisfy a dog’s urge to chew. Dog food puzzles that you can stuff treats into (like Kongs and Buster Cubes) can keep him occupied for a while and not only satisfy the urge to chew, but also offer brain work in the form of helping him to develop problem-solving skills.

You can fill the Kong (or other durable chew toy) with peanut butter, wet dog food mixed with dry, or a piece of cheese. If your dog empties the toy too quickly, experiment with different fillers. You can try filling the Kong with wet dog food and freezing it, or wedging a piece of hard cheese tightly inside the toy.

To prevent your dog from becoming bored, give him a variety of items to chew that offer different tastes, odors, textures and challenges. You can rotate the items — putting some away for a while and then bringing them out again — to keep up the novelty factor.

Occasionally add new items to your dog's choices. Besides the above suggestions, many dogs love frozen carrots, cow hooves, bully sticks and Nylabones.

If your dog is very enthusiastic about chewing, make sure chew toys are available to him all the time, to prevent him from finding something else to chomp on that may be inappropriate. For example, put chew toys outside whenever you leave your dog in the yard for more than a few minutes. If you leave your dog unattended, make sure the objects he's chewing (or pieces of it) can't be ingested. You'll want to purchase high-quality chew items and avoid anything that is dyed or contains potentially hazardous materials.

In some cases, a dog will start guarding an object that he values very highly. For information on how to avoid and manage resource guarding, see [Dog Food Aggression: Prevention](#) and [Food Aggression in Dogs: Management](#). Finally, keep in mind that dogs will chew out of boredom, so make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and interaction with you on a daily basis.



## Coping with Dog Barking

By Sherry Woodard

Dogs bark for different reasons: There's watchdog barking, request barking, "spooky" barking, and boredom barking. Though people find barking annoying and want to stop barking dogs, it isn't annoying to dogs. Rather, it's one of a variety of ways that dogs express themselves. To other dogs and some people, each bark has a tone that communicates something specific and significant.



Controlling excessive barking with training is more than possible. In fact, it can and should be fun. We'll go through each type of barking and describe how best to keep it to a minimum.

**Watchdog barking.** Many dogs consider it their job to warn you that someone dangerous is at the door. Rather than trying to take your dog's job away, you can teach him to bark just once (with a cue like "bark" or "who's there"), and then leave it for something more fun. Practice by stationing a training helper outside to knock on the door. After one bark comes out of the dog's mouth, give another cue (like "enough" or "okay"), then get him involved in fetching a favorite toy, which you can keep near the door. If your dog does not enjoy retrieving, then use food rewards. Here's how to do it:

1. Give the cue: "Who's there?"
2. Have the person knock on the door.
3. When the dog barks, give the next cue ("enough" or "okay") and show the dog the toy or treat.
4. Start playing with the toy or give the dog the treat.

Repeat many times until the dog knows the game. The toy you pick should be used exclusively for practicing this behavior. Soon, the dog will bark with the cue "Who's there?" (no knock needed) and he will stop on the cue "okay" and wait for you to play or offer a treat. If he starts to bark again after you use the cue "okay," do not reward him. Practice this routine many times to reinforce the desired behavior. Real-life situations, of course, are the real test. You might want to put a note on your door (dog in training!), explaining that you will answer after a short delay.

If your dog starts barking the minute someone pulls into the driveway, use the same sequence as above, except have your training helper drive up in a car (instead of knocking at the door).

**Request barking.** Dogs often bark when they are excited, perhaps anticipating a walk or meal. If you have a dog that does too much of this “request” barking, do not reward the dog by fulfilling his request until after the barking has stopped. Ignore all barking as though you have lost your hearing. When the dog stops barking, you can come up with a meal or a walk. At first, your dog may stop barking for only a second or two, but as your dog improves you will be able to increase the duration of the quiet time. In so doing, you teach your dog that being quiet has its rewards. To reinforce this behavior, you can give him praise or something to chew on if he is lying down quietly.

**“Spooky” barking.** This type of barking is provoked by fear and it normally comes with some body language. To scare off the source of her fear, she may have her hair up and her tail between her legs. She may be very rigid and bounce on her front legs. Your dog may be fearful if she is under-socialized; the solution may be more exposure to the world. A dog training class can be a helpful way to introduce her to new people, places and sounds. Try to make socializing fun; new people can offer treats and trips to town can include treats for being brave. Remember not to reward your dog while she is barking. Reward her only when she has relaxed.

If your dog still has difficulty even after basic socialization training, or if her spooky barking is severe, you may also want to teach her the “Look at That” game. These strategies may take some time, but a happy, well-adjusted dog is a joy to be around.

**Boredom barking.** This type of barking is common when dogs are not receiving enough interaction with their family. If your dog is alone all day, every day, she will need a significant amount of attention once you come home. To help relieve her boredom during the day, you can supply her with durable rubber and nylon toys to chew on, like Kongs or Nylabones, as well as a variety of food puzzles. Outside dogs who have very little interaction with their families often become boredom barkers. If you have an outside dog, please allow her to move inside and become part of your family. Because dogs are social animals, it is stressful for them to be alone all the time. Dogs do not need space as much as they need our time and our love.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*

*Rev 11/15*



## Dog Digging

By Sherry Woodard

Digging is a natural canine behavior. Many dogs do it. Dogs dig for many reasons: Some simply enjoy digging; some are looking for a cool spot if it's hot out; some like to bury things to save for later. If your dog is left out in the yard alone for hours, she may be digging holes out of boredom. She may also dig under fencing in order to find an escape route. Some dogs "dig" inside the house in an attempt to create a bed. If your dog scrapes the floor with her paw and circles around, put an old blanket or a square of carpet in that spot to make a bed.



Since digging is an enjoyable activity for dogs, it's tough to get them to stop. With that said, you can train your dog to dig in an acceptable spot. Here's how to do it: Pick a place in your yard where a wooden dirt box or sandbox, or a child-size pool, can be set up — preferably in a location where your dog already has a tendency to dig. For a 50-pound dog, the dirt box should be at least 12 inches deep.

After you fill the box with dirt or sand, moisten the soil and hide some toys in it. Provide a variety of treasures for your dog to dig up: new toys, her favorite toys and long-lasting things to chew. Then, encourage your dog to dig in the box. Watch your dog for a while. If you see her digging anywhere else in the yard, take her back to her designated digging zone. If you're someone who enjoys playing in the dirt, you might try actually digging with her. In some cases, you may be what your dog would like to play with most in the sandbox!

To minimize digging behavior, make sure your dog's physical and social needs are met. In hot weather, dogs must have shade and clean, cool water to drink. Some dogs enjoy a child-size pool filled with water to splash around in. Remember, too, that dogs will dig out of boredom, so make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise and interaction with you on a daily basis.

If your dog likes to play with other dogs, try to ensure that she gets the chance to do that. Besides keeping her occupied for a time, playing with other dogs will use up some of her excess energy. For dogs who persistently dig even when their needs are being met and they are getting plenty of exercise and social interaction, the best strategy may be to just keep them indoors when unsupervised. In general, however, when dogs have enough exercise, they are more relaxed and more likely to happily lie around instead of digging in your garden.

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## Coping with Counter Surfing

You put food on the kitchen counter and turn your back for a few minutes. Moments later, the food has vanished and your dog is standing next to the counter. He looks innocent enough, but he's licking his lips. Has this scenario happened in your house? If so, it doesn't take a detective to determine that you have a pooch who's a counter surfer.



### What is counter surfing?

It's called counter surfing when your dog jumps up onto the kitchen counter and steals food. Smaller, more agile dogs may jump up with all four paws on the counter, while other dogs, those who are tall enough, prop just their front legs on the counter tops to reach any food left out.

### Why does my dog counter surf?

Dogs counter surf because they have learned that kitchen counters are an easy source of yummy snacks. When a dog (or any animal, for that matter) behaves in a certain way and that behavior is rewarded or reinforced, he's more likely to repeat that behavior in the future. Finding food on the counter when he jumps up is a great reward. Dogs are optimists and opportunists, so even if your dog has only found food on the counter once or twice, he will keep on jumping up to look for it.

### How can I prevent counter surfing?

The simplest solution, of course, is to manage the situation so that your dog doesn't have access to food on the counters. Here are some tips:

- Never keep food on your counters. If your dog doesn't find any food when he jumps up, he's not getting rewarded for counter surfing.
- Wipe the counter tops thoroughly when you are done cooking so that there's no delicious residue for the dog to lick up. Licking something tasty on a counter can be just as rewarding as finding a piece of food to snack on.
- Crate your dog during meal preparation. The process of cooking tends to involve food spread out on the counters, making it easy for your dog to snag a morsel when you're not looking. If you don't have a crate, you can use a baby gate in the doorway to restrict access to the kitchen or put the dog in another room while you cook.

The main objective here is to arrange your environment (the kitchen and counter tops) so that the dog does not have the opportunity for reinforcement (finding food), which makes him more likely to jump up on the counter in the future.

## How can I teach my dog not to counter surf?

To discourage counter surfing, there are a couple behaviors you can teach your dog. “Leave it” is a useful cue for many situations, not the least of which is managing counter surfing. To start training your dog to leave it, go somewhere quiet and less exciting to the dog than the kitchen. Here are the steps to follow:

1. With a treat in both hands, place your hands behind your back.
2. Make a fist with one hand and offer that hand to your dog, letting him sniff your fist.
3. Say “Leave it” and wait until he is done sniffing. As soon as he’s done sniffing, say “Yes,” or click with a clicker, and offer him the treat from the other hand.
4. Keep doing this until your dog immediately stops sniffing your hand when you say “Leave it.” When this happens consistently, you are ready to move on to the next step.
5. Start by leashing the dog and then toss a treat outside of his reach. Say “Leave it” and wait until he stops sniffing and pulling toward the treat.
6. When he stops sniffing and pulling, say “Yes” (or click) and give him a treat that he likes even more than the one on the floor. Over time, by practicing this exercise, your dog should stop pulling as soon as you give the “Leave it” cue.

Make sure the treats with which you are rewarding him are especially tasty, not just plain old kibble. By doing so, you are teaching him that asking him to leave it doesn’t mean he won’t get anything. (On the contrary, he might get something more delicious instead.) When trying to dissuade a counter surfer, you need to help him learn that leaving the human food alone is more rewarding than counter surfing.

“Off” is another useful cue to teach your counter surfer. Here’s how to do it:

1. When he jumps up onto the counter in search of food, put a dog treat in front of his nose. When you have his attention, use the treat as a lure to guide him off the counter and onto the floor, saying “Off.”
2. When his feet hit the ground, say “Yes” (or click) and give him the treat.
3. After practicing this exercise three or four times, say “Off” instead of placing a treat in front of his nose to lure him off. If he jumps off the counter, praise him, say “Yes” (or click) and give him a treat.
4. If he doesn’t jump off, you might need to lure him off the counter with treats a few more times before he figures out that “Off” means that his paws should come off the counter and go back on the floor. Some dogs learn the cue quickly while others take a little more time. Your dog is an individual and will learn at his own pace.

You can also train your dog to go to his bed or special place while you cook or prepare food. This cue is useful when he is hanging out in the kitchen with you and starts getting a little too interested in the food, but your hands are busy so you can’t put him in the crate or relocate him. If you train him to go to his place on cue, he relocates himself. Here are the steps:

1. Begin by tossing some treats onto a dog bed or mat and when your dog goes over to investigate, say “Yes” (or click).



2. After you do this several times, your dog will probably start going over to his bed without any treats to prompt him. When he starts walking over to his bed, say whatever cue you want to use (for example, "Bed") and then when he gets there, mark it with a "Yes" or click, and give him some treats.

Obviously, these strategies only work when you are there to give the cue. When you're not going to be around, make sure you remove temptation either by blocking off access to the kitchen or by keeping the counters clear of food. Remember, dogs are opportunists, so it's unfair to expect your dog to ignore that delicious loaf of bread you just baked and left cooling on the counter while you run to the grocery store.

*Rev. 10/16*



## Preventing Your Dog from Jumping Up

By Sherry Woodard

Most puppies are so cute (and so short) that we allow them to jump up on us. By the time they reach adulthood, however, jumping up to say hello can be unpleasant or even dangerous.



A dog who jumps up on people to greet them most likely does it because he gets attention for it. Pushing the dog away and/or shouting at him often seems like part of the game to the dog. It is attention, after all. Of course, some people actually enjoy and encourage the jumping up, by laughing and playing with the dog when he does it. It's important to ask these people not to encourage the dog to jump up, as hard as it may be for them. Remind them that everyone has to play a part in teaching the dog good manners.

The best way to teach a dog to stop jumping up is to teach and practice proper greetings. Dogs can easily learn to sit every time they greet a person, even when they are very happy to see that person. When they are trained to associate meeting a person with a sit cue and a treat, soon they will sit and wait for a treat without a cue.

The first step is to prevent the dog from "rehearsing" the jumping-up behavior, so that he doesn't get a chance to receive any kind of attention for it. Whenever you have guests coming to your home, keep the dog in a separate room, behind a gate or in an exercise pen when the guests enter. Confining the dog will also spare your visitors from enduring the jumping-up behavior.

The next step is to teach your dog the sit cue: Hold a treat in front of the dog's nose, just out of the dog's reach. Raise the treat toward the top of the dog's head. When his head follows the treat up, his rear end will go down. When the dog's rear hits the floor, use a marker (click a clicker or say a word like "yes"), give the dog the treat and praise him. If the dog jumps up rather than sits, you are holding the treat too high. If the dog backs up, try teaching the cue with a wall behind the dog.

When your dog is consistently sitting for a treat, start practicing with yourself as the visitor. Place a mat or dog bed inside the entryway of your house, on the spot where the dog will be situated when the door opens. (Since many entryways are tile or wood, a dog will be more willing to sit or lie on something more comfortable and less slippery.) Place a treat jar outside your door.

Go outside, pick up a treat and, as you enter the house, ask the dog to sit. Use your

body to position the dog on the mat as you walk in. Do not give the treat or praise until the dog sits. You may need to be patient, since this is the greeting scenario that the dog has trouble with. As always, avoid using an angry tone if your dog doesn't do what you want. Just say "sit" once and wait. If necessary, lure the dog into a sit with the treat.

If you have practiced the sit cue enough before you start practicing as the visitor, your dog will eventually sit in the greeting situation. If he doesn't, practice some more without exiting and entering, and use higher-value (more enticing) treats. When he is consistently sitting for a treat, try the exit-and-entry routine again.

When your dog is greeting you with a good sit as you open the door, you can start adding a knock or ring of the doorbell. When she is doing well with that, practice with friends. Have friends come to the door, knock and ask for a sit as they enter. Leave the treat jar outside the door so that everyone who enters can be prepared to reward your dog for a polite greeting.

While he is learning, it's important to reward the dog with food for polite greetings every time. After lots of practice and success, you can start using praise only sometimes, but continue to use food frequently enough to maintain the polite greetings.

In addition, when you start practicing with new people, use the gate or exercise pen as necessary to prevent the jumping-up behavior. Reward the dog when he sits behind the barrier. After he is sitting consistently, you can stop using the barrier, but if your dog ever shows any lapses in politeness, back up in your training.

The last step is to take it on the road, getting your dog to greet other people politely when leashed and on walks, when visiting other people's homes and otherwise out in the world. If someone wants to meet your dog, ask the person not to approach him unless he is in a sit. If necessary, lure your dog into a sit with a treat.

Finally, remember to reward the sit with a treat every time while the dog is learning. You want to make it as easy as possible for him to succeed.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Pulling on the Leash

By Sherry Woodard

Most dogs want to go out for walks and get very excited when the leash is brought out. But, do you have one of those dogs who is so enthusiastic that he literally pulls you out the door?

Walking should be fun for both you and your dog — and there are some things you can do to make it so. Start by checking your dog's collar. It should be snug enough so she cannot pull out of it, but not so tight that you can't put a finger or two between the collar and her neck.



If your dog is especially rambunctious, one strategy you can try is playing with her in your yard first to release some of her excess energy. You will find that a tired dog can focus and will learn more easily than a wired dog.

### Strategies to try

There are several different ways to teach a dog how to walk nicely on leash. One way is the “red light, green light” game. Here's how it works: Do the training initially in your home or yard, someplace without a lot of distractions. Put a four- to six-foot lead on your dog's collar and start to walk with her. If she walks without pulling, praise her and continue walking. If she pulls on the lead, stop and wait until she stops pulling. As soon as the tension on the lead is released, praise her, offer a quick treat and then continue walking.

Consistency is important when teaching loose-leash walking. If you stop when your dog pulls four out of five times (rather than every time), she'll learn that pulling can still result in the intended reward — moving forward. She's thinking, “If it worked once, it will probably work again.” Be patient: If your dog has learned to pull on the leash, it might take her a while to stop pulling forward, even if you are stopped.

Here's another strategy to try: If your dog continues to pull after you stop walking, turn and walk the other way. A change in direction will cause her to be behind you. Then, as she comes by, you can get her to focus on you with praise and a treat. Don't yank the leash when you change directions. You can also try a lot of random changes of direction, so the dog gets used to focusing attention on you and moves with you. This technique is called “crazy walking” because instead of walking in a straight line to get from point A to point B, you are moving in crazy, unpredictable directions.

In addition, whenever your dog walks next to you, reward her for “being in position” or for simply walking with a loose leash near you. The more you reward her, the more she’ll want to hang out near you. The reward doesn’t have to be a treat; praise, petting and attention are also rewarding to your dog.

## What not to do

If your dog is pulling or not listening to you while you’re walking together, please do not use leash corrections (e.g., jerk or popping the leash, forcefully pulling the dog in the other direction) and avoid using pinch or prong collars or chain collars (aka “choke chains”). These methods can physically harm your dog, can make pulling on the leash worse and can even exacerbate behavioral issues, such as lunging at another dog while on leash. Walking should be a fun experience for your dog. Leash corrections and punitive collars can make it scary and unpleasant instead.

## Tools that can help

To teach our dogs how to walk nicely on leash, sometimes we need a bit more help. Perhaps your dog is strong or large and no matter how hard you try to successfully implement the strategies mentioned above, she continues to pull. What to do? Here are some training tools that can help:

**Head halter.** A dog head halter is similar to a horse halter: There are straps around the nose and behind the ears. The dog’s lead is attached to a ring at the bottom of the nose strap. Head halters operate on the simple principle that a dog will follow where his head leads him. Dogs can eat, drink, pant and bark while wearing a halter, and these devices will not choke or pinch your dog. Popular brands of head halters are Halti and Gentle Leader.

**Training harness.** A typical dog harness has a clip in the back to which the leash attaches. On a training harness, the leash attaches in the front, at the dog’s chest, which allows you to have more control when your dog pulls. When pressure is applied on the leash, the dog’s shoulders are turned and forward momentum stops. Brand names of training harnesses include PetSafe’s Easy Walk, Halti, SENSE-ation and Freedom.

There are many different versions and brands of head halters and training harnesses. The size of your dog, the strength with which your dog pulls and the fit of the device itself all need to be taken into account when choosing one of these tools. Generally speaking, head halters are nice for larger, stronger dogs because the lead attaches to the nose loop instead of the neck, allowing you to gently guide the dog’s direction and giving you more control. However, for smaller dogs, dogs who’ve had neck injuries or those with a short muzzle, a harness might be the better option.

No matter which device you buy, make sure you fit it properly to your dog. On head halters, the neck strap sits just behind the ears, high on the neck. The configuration of the nose strap may differ slightly, depending on the brand, but it should be adjusted so that it cannot slide off the end of the dog’s nose. Make sure the attachment ring (to which you attach the lead) is under the dog’s chin. The instructions that come with the halter

will give you more tips on fitting it. The same is true for training harnesses: Each harness is constructed and fits a little differently, so make sure that you read the instructions.

How will your dog react when you put one of these devices on her? Most dogs are OK with wearing a harness. Wearing a head halter, however, can be a strange experience for dogs who have not worn one before. When you put the halter on her for the first time, your dog will probably try to get it off by pawing at it. To divert her attention from the foreign object on her head, get her moving. Start walking and keep her walking, praising her and offering small treats to distract her from pawing at and rubbing the halter. Soon, you'll be enjoying a nice walk without pulling.

When using a head halter, make sure that you don't pop or jerk on the leash, since it can cause neck injuries. In fact, avoid any form of leash corrections while walking your dog, whether she's wearing a flat collar, a head halter or a harness. Finally, do not leave a head halter or harness on your dog if she is unsupervised. She might catch the halter on something and injure herself or she might attempt to chew through the harness.

To sum up: Be patient and persistent while training your dog to walk on a loose lead, and keep in mind that she will improve with practice. She'll gradually learn what to expect, and both of you can enjoy daily exercise outdoors. Your efforts to train your dog in this and other aspects of good behavior will be rewarded, and you'll have a polite, well-socialized animal who is welcome in many places.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Harnesses and Halters

“Let’s go for a walk!” This suggestion delights dogs of all ages and sizes. While the idea of strolling along in the fresh air with your dog at your side sounds perfectly pleasant, the reality of it may not measure up if your dog pulls you down the road or trail at breakneck speed. Changing this behavior will take some training, of course, but luckily there are some products on the market that can help as your dog learns to walk more politely while leashed up.

Leash-pulling is not only annoying, it can be harmful to the dog. Many dogs have reportedly sustained injuries (e.g., to the muscles and nerves of the neck, spine and front limbs) from pulling on the leash. Wearing a harness or halter may help prevent those problems. Not all types of harnesses are designed to help stop a dog from pulling, but some are made to do exactly that. Below are four options and some details about how they work so you can decide which one might be most useful for your dog.



### 1. Front-clip harness

With the leash connecting at the chest (rather than at the neck), front-clip harnesses work by having leash pressure direct the dog to the side instead of allowing him to lean into the harness and pull forward. Front-clip harnesses come in a variety of sizes and fit most dogs. Fit is important with this type of harness, so make sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions when selecting and sizing. The downside to this type of harness is that it can cause chafing if fitted incorrectly. The PetSafe Easy Walk, the Halti and the Ruffwear Front Range harnesses are examples of front-clip harnesses that we recommend.

### 2. Around-the-torso harness

Harnesses that wrap around the chest or under the front legs and clip at the dog’s back can also be helpful when teaching a dog to walk on a loose leash. These harnesses give some control over the dog pulling forward and are useful for dogs with neck or back issues since they don’t apply any pressure to the neck or spine. These harnesses work well with many shapes and sizes of dogs. Also,



because the leash is clipped above the dog's body, it's hard for him to chew on it, and it doesn't easily tangle under his legs. The Sporn harness is an example of this type of harness.

### 3. Combo harness

If you have a dog who pulls really hard, you might want to try a combo harness, which combines a front-clip harness with one that wraps around the dog's body. When you use it with a double-ended leash (with clips at each end) and a handle that allows the leash pressure to float between the clips, you can alternate pressure between the front clip and back clip, or put some pressure on both. This arrangement also keeps the leash short and less likely to get tangled up in a dog's legs. This type of harness fits great on dogs with deep chests. One example is the 2 Hounds Design Freedom Harness, which is sold with or without the double-ended leash.



### 4. Head halter

A head halter (aka head collar or head harness) goes around the dog's muzzle and clips behind the dog's ears. To some people, it looks like a muzzle, but it's not, since it does not restrict a dog's ability to open his mouth. When teaching dogs not to pull on leash, head harnesses can be useful tools, but they do require some additional training to get the dog comfortable with wearing the harness.

If fitted and used correctly, a head halter employs gentle leash pressure to direct the dog's head to the side, which can encourage the dog's body to follow. You must use gentle pressure, if any, with these devices, since they can cause a dog to panic if pulled tight suddenly. We recommend the PetSafe Gentle Leader and the Halti Headcollar. For more information, read [Dog Head Halters](#).



### Training dogs to stop pulling on leash

While each of these types of harnesses can assist you with teaching your dog to walk on a loose leash, they won't stop the dog from pulling without some training. For information about training dogs to walk nicely on lead, read [Dog Pulling on Leash](#).

With a little time, patience and practice, you will find that your dog gets the picture and you can enjoy your walks together, whether it's a leisurely stroll around the neighborhood or a brisk hike in the woods. Eventually, the words "Let's go for a walk!" will conjure images of calm, not chaos.



## Urine Marking in Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

### Why do dogs engage in urine marking?

Among dogs, urine marking is territorial behavior. An intact (uncastrated) male dog will instinctively mark his territory with his urine. A well-trained dog may not mark indoors in familiar surroundings, but as soon as he is moved to a new place, the behavior will resurface. Some female dogs are highly territorial and they will also urine-mark.

Dogs may feel threatened and consequently feel the need to mark their territory because:

- A new pet moves into your home.
- A new human baby comes home.
- A new adult starts spending time at your house.
- You move to a new place that may or may not have smells from other dogs.



### What can I do to eliminate urine marking?

The best way to prevent a male dog from urine marking is to have him neutered before he develops territorial behavior. If the dog is an adult and the behavior is already well established, then neutering may not help. If your dog does urine-mark in your home, it's important to neutralize the spot with an enzymatic cleaner to completely get rid of the odor. Otherwise, the smell is an invitation to the dog to mark the same spot again. The enzymes in the cleaner (Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two brands) digest the odor-causing protein in organic materials.

Spots where marking has happened can be covered with two-sided sticky tape or vinyl carpet runners turned upside down. If the dog simply moves to marking another spot, you may want to limit what areas the dog has access to while you attempt to change the marking behavior through counterconditioning.

You can counter-condition by using one spot that your dog has marked — now clean — as a site to place food treats. Many dogs will not mark a place where they eat. If your dog has marked in several spots, you might want to cover the other spots with upside-down carpet runner or furniture. Your dog will need supervision while he's in the house and regular trips outdoors to urinate. Remember to praise your dog every time she eliminates in an appropriate place.

If your neutered dog is still marking after you have tried the above suggestions, seek professional help from a behaviorist in your area.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## Submissive and Excitement Urination

By Sherry Woodard

Note: Although advances in behavior science\* have led to the debunking of using words such as “submissive” and “dominant” to describe a dog’s personality or emotional state, the term “submissive urination” is still widely used to refer to this particular behavior. “Appeasement” is a more accurate word, so we’ll be calling it “appeasement urination” in this article.



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Sometimes dogs pee at inappropriate times. They may urinate when someone greets them or when they get really excited. In some cases, it’s just a few drops, while in others it’s a lot more. Dogs will do this in any body position. In fact, you may not even notice that the dog urinated until you see the pee on the floor.

This type of urination is fairly common puppy behavior in relation to an adult dog, so it’s not anything abnormal. If you have an adult dog, however, who suddenly starts urinating inappropriately (or has any other type of incontinence), you should see your veterinarian because there could be a medical cause.

### Strategies for dealing with appeasement or excitement urination

To minimize the possibility of this type of urination, avoid getting the dog over-excited. For example, when you arrive home and greet your dog, he will already be very excited to see you. The best strategy is just to ignore him, at first. Act calmly, don’t talk or move in an excited manner, don’t pet him and, if necessary, don’t make eye contact. Take him outside, let him urinate and, after he’s calmed down, greet him affectionately but calmly. When you have visitors, ask them to ignore the dog when they arrive.

Some dogs will also urinate when they feel anxious or threatened. In cases like this, avoid using postures or gestures that the dog might view as threatening, such as:

- Making direct eye contact with the dog
- Bending over the dog
- Reaching toward the dog with your hands, especially over the dog’s head
- Hugging the dog
- Approaching the dog head-on

A less-threatening greeting would be as follows:

- When approaching the dog, look off to the side rather than directly at her.
- Bend down on your haunches or sit, so that you appear smaller to the dog.

- Wait quietly, without moving, for the dog to approach you and smell you.
- If the dog approaches you, reach slowly with one hand to pet her under the chin.
- If the dog doesn't approach, offer a small treat.

Keep in mind that punishment of any kind, even harsh tones, can cause inappropriate urination. Try to engage in quiet, non-threatening forms of play, and reward the dog when playtime doesn't end in urination.

### **Cleaning up accidents**

If an accident does happen, clean it up with an enzymatic cleaner (such as Nature's Miracle or Simple Solution), which neutralizes the odor, and some paper towels. To encourage the dog to urinate in a more appropriate place, take the urine-soaked paper towels to the desired spot outside. Don't ever punish or raise your voice at a dog for urinating in the house.

### **Consulting a professional**

Management of appeasement or excitement urination requires patience and time. If the inappropriate urination continues, consider seeking help from a qualified behavior professional. Inappropriate urination can also be a result of fear, separation anxiety, incomplete house-training, or an unneutered male dog's natural tendency to mark his territory.

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\*For more information, read the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior's *Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of Animals*.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Fear of Thunder and Other Loud Noises

Many dogs have a fear of loud noises, such as thunder, firecrackers, and cap guns. Often, a dog will try to run from a frightening sound or, if unable to run, will become destructive trying to escape. If you do not help to calm your dog's fear, she may injure herself, run away, or wreak havoc on your home in her desperation to get away from the fearful noise.



### What can I do to reassure my dog during a storm?

If you know that a storm is coming, turn on some music or your TV to muffle the sound of the thunder. Create a safe place in your home for the dog. Let your dog show you where: If he goes to a favorite spot, make a nice bed there. Encourage him to rest there with you and, if he does relax, offer him a food-filled Kong or bone. Allow him to leave that spot and return to it if he wants.

Do not put a frightened dog in a crate and leave. Though his crate may normally be a safe place for him, he may feel trapped in there if he's frightened during a storm. He could injure himself badly trying to get out of the crate.

As the thunder gets louder, he may not be able to stay relaxed with his treat. You can try to play a favorite game with him or hand-feed him a really special treat. If he does not calm down, just be with him and try to reassure him. There are several products you can buy that may help reduce your dog's anxiety. Try a Thundershirt ([thundershirt.com](http://thundershirt.com)) or BlackWing Farms remedies ([blackwingfarms.com](http://blackwingfarms.com)).

### How can I help my dog overcome her fear?

If your dog's fear is not extreme, you may want to try behavior modification. Here's how it works: Get a recording of storm sounds (or whatever the offending noise is) and play it at very low volume while you engage your dog in activities she likes. You can play games with her, groom her, hand-feed her, or practice commands she knows in return for treats. If she is fine with that volume, practice the next day with the volume turned up a bit. Continue raising the volume a little each day as you involve her in pleasurable activities.

This method gradually desensitizes the dog and, over time, she finds the noise less fearful. If she becomes fearful at any point, lower the volume to a level where she is comfortable and proceed more slowly. If your dog's fearfulness is severe, you may need help from your veterinarian and a behavior specialist.



## Separation Anxiety in Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

### What is separation anxiety?

It is anxiety that manifests itself as visible stress within 30 minutes of the departure of the dog's person. The anxiety can vary from mild to severe. Separation anxiety is preventable and responds well when treated.



### What causes separation anxiety?

By nature, dogs are social animals; they don't like being alone. Many dogs who are in stable, structured homes will never suffer from separation anxiety, even if their people go off to work every day. In some dogs, however, separation anxiety might be triggered if there's a change in the dog's routine or the family's daily life. But, a dog will often accept change in his human family more easily if he is not the only pet.

### Are there specific times when separation anxiety can begin?

Here are some circumstances that may result in separation anxiety:

- A new home (a move for the dog to a new family)
- A change in the amount of time you are absent
- A move to a different house (with the same family)
- The death of a family member (human or otherwise)
- A new baby
- Time spent in a boarding kennel or away from you
- Time spent at the veterinary clinic

### What are the signs of separation anxiety?

If you are making preparations to leave, the dog may follow you from room to room. Other signs are pacing, excessive salivating, vomiting, barking, howling or whining. During your absence, your dog may engage in destructive behavior, often directed at the exits (windows and doors) or clothing or other items that have your scent. An otherwise house-trained dog may eliminate inappropriately. In severe cases, the dog may have a panic attack and hurt herself by breaking through windows or attempting to get out of her crate. (Crating dogs with separation anxiety is not recommended, since they often become even more stressed.)

## Could these symptoms mean something else?

A visit to the veterinarian to check your dog's health is always recommended if your dog's behavior changes suddenly. Your vet can help diagnose whether your dog's problem is truly separation anxiety. The above symptoms could be a sign of a medical problem, such as seizures, diabetes, Cushing's disease, renal disease, cystitis, or gastrointestinal distress. Dogs who are unable to control their bladder and bowel functions may become destructive trying to get outside to eliminate.

Behavioral or training issues should also be ruled out. The above symptoms could be a sign of one of the following:

- A need for house-training
- A marking habit
- Submissive or excitement urination
- Teething
- Boredom chewing or digging
- Cognitive dysfunction
- A phobia about thunderstorms or other sounds

## What can I do about separation anxiety?

If you have been told that your dog has mild to moderate separation anxiety, there are some strategies you can try to break the cycle of escalating anxiety. First, practice leaving without opening the door. Put on your shoes, pick up your keys, and walk to the door, but don't leave. You may need to do this 10 times per day for weeks or months to quell your dog's anxiety.

Another strategy is to walk into closets and close the door behind you. Wait one minute and then reappear. You can also exit via an outside door that you normally don't leave through. Wait one minute and then walk back in. If your dog doesn't appear anxious, try two minutes and add time if the dog continues to be comfortable with it. Back off on your time, however, if the dog becomes stressed.

Once your dog is comfortable with you leaving through the back door, you can start working on walking out the main door and returning after a short period of time. Again, gradually increase the time according to how your dog handles it. Practice as many absences as possible that last less than 10 minutes.

Here are some additional tips to improve your chances of success:

- Make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise. Being physically tired helps everyone to relax.
- Offer the dog a Kong toy stuffed with treats before practicing the leaving-and-returning exercises.
- Ignore the dog before and during the exercises.
- Provide background noise (the radio or television) during the exercises. The background sounds may provide a reassuring cue that you will return soon.

- You can also use a word as a cue. Say the words (“I’ll be back” or “Later”) every time you exit.
- Keep your arrivals and departures as quiet and calm as possible. Don’t indulge in long goodbyes or excited greetings.

Depending on how severe your dog’s case is, you may not be able to leave the dog alone at all during treatment. If you do have to leave, minimize the time that the dog is alone. Use a dog sitter, dog walker, or doggie day-care; have the dog stay with a friend or family member at their home. Inquire about the possibility of your dog going to work with you.

If your dog is suffering from severe separation anxiety, an individual evaluation with a behavior specialist is recommended. Together, you can create a plan to relieve your dog’s anxiety and keep him safe. Resolving separation anxiety may require months of work from you, but please don’t give up on your dog. Most of the time, this condition responds to treatment. If your dog is not improving or you are feeling frustrated, seek professional help from a behavior specialist.

### **How can I prevent separation anxiety in the first place?**

After you bring your dog or puppy home for the first time, acclimate him to periods of time away from you by practicing departures and brief absences. If you get in the habit of providing your dog with a loaded Kong, your dog may even look forward to you leaving! Only give treats as you leave, however, not upon your arrival home.

As mentioned above, make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise. To help her learn to relax after playing, give her gentle massages. You should also challenge your dog mentally by working on training in basic manners and problem solving (such as a game of hide-and-seek). All of these activities, both physical and mental, help to build the dog’s confidence and make her less anxious in general.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*

## Eliminating Barrier Frustration

By Sherry Woodard

*Note: Please use caution at all times when working on behavior modification. It's important to establish a positive relationship with the dog; once you have that, you will be able to make good progress with behavior modification techniques.*

Many dogs are reactive and will exhibit aggressive behaviors when they are behind a barrier, such as a gate, fence, crate or car window. The following technique can be used to eliminate this undesirable behavior, called barrier aggression or barrier frustration. It is not intended for use with a dog who is reactive on lead. For your own safety, do the exercise through a barrier with an opening just large enough for a treat to pass through.

To begin changing the undesirable behavior, you will need to change the dog's negative association with being behind the barrier to a positive association. The easiest and most effective way is with yummy food treats.



Use these steps:

1. Prepare yourself with food rewards. For safety, long stick treats are recommended. Put the rewards in a pouch around your waist so that your hands are free.
2. Take the dog to an area where you can use food rewards without interference from other dogs. If you have to work in a run, remove the other dogs until you've finished. Situate yourself so there is a barrier between you and the dog.
3. Begin by giving a treat through the barrier regardless of what the dog is doing. Even if the dog is barking or reacting to you, you can throw a treat to him through the barrier. Give another treat as soon as the first has been eaten; repeat until you've given the dog five treats.
4. Then, stop and wait for 3 to 5 seconds; if the dog remains calm, give him five more treats. If he becomes reactive, say nothing to him; just turn and walk away.
5. If the dog became reactive, move him to another area (behind another barrier) where he hasn't been practicing the unwanted behavior. Give him five treats; if he remains calm, give him five more.
6. Repeat this process each session and gradually increase the time you ask the dog to stay calm.



As you work with a dog, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Always use a calm, gentle tone.
- Keep sessions short: five minutes or less at first.
- Remember to take breaks. Stop and take the dog out for a walk or think of another activity your dog might enjoy, such as playing catch or sniffing around the yard.
- Be patient, but optimistic. Progress may be slow, but it will happen. Keep a journal of your training sessions to track your progress.



Once progress has been made with one handler, start introducing different handlers in different locations to help the dog generalize about the positive associations.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Dealing with Collar Sensitivity

By Sherry Woodard

*Note: Please use caution at all times when training your dog to be comfortable with anything that she may be anxious about. It's important to establish a trusting relationship with your dog; once you have that, you will be able to make good progress with training.*

Some dogs are sensitive to their collars being touched and react anxiously to being led by the collar. However, there are times when you may need to lead her by the collar, to keep her safe.



You can use the following exercise to change a dog's unpleasant association to her collar being touched into a more comfortable association. Make the training sessions into a game that the dog gets excited about and loves to play. Follow these steps:

1. Equip yourself with food rewards that you know the dog will work for. Put the rewards in a pouch worn around your waist so that your hands are free.
2. Take her to a quiet area where you can use food rewards without interference from other dogs.
3. Begin by giving several small rewards to the dog without touching her collar.
4. Then, touch the dog's head with one hand and, while you are still touching her head, give her a reward with your other hand. Repeat until she shows a clearly happy response when you touch her head.
5. Touch under her chin with one hand and, while you are still touching her chin, reward with the other hand. Continue touching and rewarding, gradually moving closer to the collar area, until you are rubbing under the collar. If at any point the dog shows signs of avoidance or anxiety, go back to touching a spot she's comfortable with.
6. Once the dog is comfortable with being rubbed under the collar, start to move the collar while you are rubbing and rewarding.
7. When you are able to handle the collar, put a short (two-foot) trail of treats on the floor and hold the dog's collar as she moves to pick them up. Gradually extend the length of the treat trail until you are moving across the room, then extend the distance between each treat in the trail.

Limit the sessions to no more than three minutes each, with a total of three or four sessions per day. Remember, make it a game that your dog loves to play. Let her get a good rest between sessions.

Do not lead the dog by the collar until you have built a relationship and done the steps above to change the association from something undesirable to a wanted reward. Why? There's a difference between being able to hold the dog's collar and being able to lead her by the collar. Some dogs are much more sensitive to the latter, so you should work on simply holding the dog's collar first.

After the work is done, the dog can be led out by the collar for walks, and given a food reward after she has exited the house. Soon, no food reward will be necessary, although a cookie upon returning from a walk is always welcome!

Once progress has been made with one handler, start introducing different handlers in different locations to help the dog generalize her comfort with collar handling.

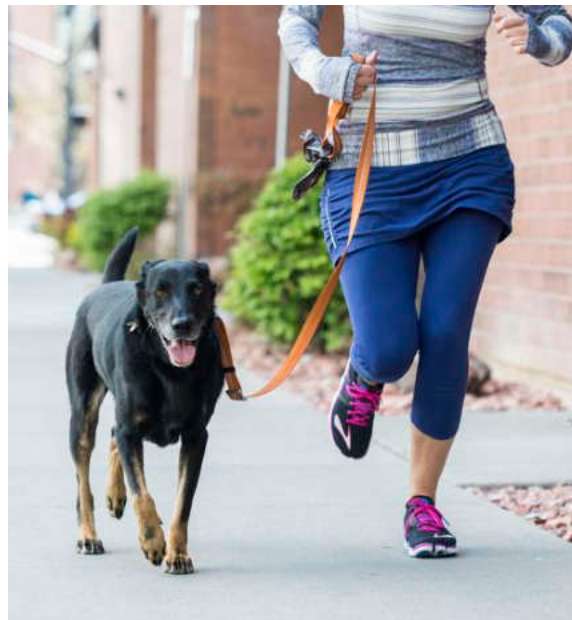
*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Dealing with Leash Reactivity

Does your dog lunge, growl and bark at the end of his leash when he sees an unfamiliar person, dog or object? If so, he is displaying something called “leash reactivity.” This behavior can be pretty scary if you’re experiencing it for the first (or even hundredth) time; watching your sweet dog go from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde is unnerving. Fortunately, you can do something about this behavior.



### Why is my dog acting this way?

There are two main reasons why dogs display leash reactivity: fear or frustration. A fearful dog wants to get away from the thing she’s afraid of, so she displays distance-increasing body language, such as snarling and growling. It’s her way of saying, “Hey, you! You make me uncomfortable! Stay away from me!” A frustrated dog, on the other hand, displays distance-decreasing body language, such as playful barking and bounciness. It’s his way of saying, “Hey, you look fun! Come meet me!”

The first step in working with your dog’s reactivity is to determine the underlying cause behind the behavior through his body language. Is he fearful or frustrated? The answer to that question can shape the behavior modification approach you use.

### What does the leash have to do with my dog’s reactive behavior?

The leash plays a big role here. Because of a perceived threat in the environment, a fearful dog’s body is undergoing a physiological phenomenon called “fight or flight.” The leash creates an inability to flee and without that ability, a fearful dog will instead try to create distance through “fight” (e.g., snarling and growling) behaviors. For a frustrated dog, the leash is keeping her from doing what she wants, adding to the frustration.

Also, your stress can be communicated to your dog via the leash, which can add to her stress. So, try to keep the leash loose rather than taut, and take slow, deep and even breaths in order to help yourself feel calmer.

Keep in mind that leash reactivity doesn’t necessarily mean that your dog is aggressive toward people or other dogs. In fact, many dogs who show leash reactivity do not show these behaviors off-leash.

### What else do I need to determine before working on this behavior?

After determining the cause (fear or frustration) behind your dog’s leash reactivity, you need to identify the triggers. A trigger is something in the environment that elicits a

change in behavior. Common triggers include strangers, dogs and bicycles. Triggers can be very specific, such as men with beards, strangers who make eye contact, or dogs larger than your dog. Keeping a journal is a helpful way to pinpoint your dog's triggers.

The next step is to figure out your dog's threshold, the point at which a trigger produces an effect or behavior change. As an example, let's take a person who's afraid of spiders. A spider 20 feet away doesn't elicit a response, but a spider one foot away is scary and elicits a fearful response. While distance is a key factor in determining threshold, there are other factors to consider. For instance, a small spider a foot away may be OK, but a large spider a foot away could be scary to the spider-phobic person.

Your dog can also experience "trigger stacking," which means there are a lot of little triggers that accumulate over a period of time. Each small trigger on its own may not send him over his threshold into reactivity, but when piled on top of each other, they do. To use our spider-phobic person as an example again: Seeing a small spider one foot away is OK, but if she sees a small spider one foot away every 5 minutes for the next hour, she'll be on edge and the next one may cause her to react. Think of trigger stacking like a staircase: Each trigger is a step that brings your dog closer to his threshold.

Finally, you'll need to decide on a marker to use, something that marks a behavior and says to the dog, "At the exact moment you hear this, you're doing something I like and a treat will follow." Common markers include clickers or verbal markers such as "good" or "yes." For instance, every time your dog sits, you say "yes" and give him a treat. The word "yes" marks the behavior you like: the sit.

The marker is a contract: You must reward your dog if you use it (even if you use it accidentally). Markers help us communicate more effectively with our dogs. It takes us a few seconds to hand our dogs a treat so they may have moved onto another behavior by the time the reward comes. The marker instantly pinpoints the behavior as something desirable.

### **How do I modify this behavior?**

Now that you have the cause, the trigger (or triggers) and the threshold, you can start working on your dog's leash reactivity. The method will differ depending on the cause.

***Fear-based reactivity.*** To effectively change the behavior, you'll need to change how your dog feels about the trigger. For instance, if he is fearful of other dogs, you have to teach him that dogs aren't scary and there's no need to be afraid. You can do this by having the trigger (in this example, other dogs) predict that something great is about to happen, like he'll get his favorite treat. If you pair the sight of other dogs with the dispensing of treats enough times, he'll learn that other dogs aren't so scary. In fact, seeing another dog means that a treat is coming. Once you change how he feels, you can taper off the treats so he doesn't need them every time.

There are several training techniques that you can use. At Best Friends, we use a training game called Look at That (LAT). Here are the steps:

1. Start under the dog's threshold: In other words, your dog sees the trigger but doesn't react. As soon as he spots a trigger (and doesn't react), use your marker and give a treat. He should turn toward you in anticipation of the treat you're about to give. If he does that, repeat the exercise 10-15 times.

2. If your dog doesn't turn toward you in anticipation of the treat, he might not know what the marker means in that environment or you might be too close to his threshold. If the former, practice using the marker and then treating in quick succession in a non-threatening environment until he responds consistently to the marker. If the latter, adjust the threshold (e.g., increase the distance between the dog and the trigger).
3. When your dog is consistently looking at the trigger without reacting, test to see if he'll look back at you in anticipation of the marker and treat when he sees his trigger. Mark him giving you eye contact, give him a treat, and then go to step 4. If he's not doing this consistently, repeat step 1.
4. Gradually decrease the distance between your dog and the trigger one foot at a time. Continue using the marker and giving treats if the dog doesn't react. You may have to go back to marking him looking at the trigger and work up to marking his eye contact with you.
5. Uh oh! He went over his threshold and is now reacting. No worries: Simply increase the distance from the trigger with an "emergency U-turn" until he's no longer upset and continue training.

This game rewards your dog for calmly looking at a trigger and looking back at you instead of reacting. It also is changing the way he feels because the trigger morphs from something scary into something great: Seeing the trigger means something good is about to happen.

While doing the exercises, keep in mind that it can take a long time to change deep-seated fears (think of the fears you had as a child that still exist). Be patient: Even baby steps are signs of progress. Also, it's a good idea to refrain from petting your dog during the training. While you cannot reinforce fear by petting and coddling, it may make your dog feel more trapped or he might redirect his fear onto you in the form of a bite.

***Frustration-based reactivity.*** The LAT game can also be helpful for this type of reactivity because it teaches a more appropriate response. During the training, avoid physically holding back your dog as this can increase his frustration and may lead to a redirection bite.

You can add this element to the game: If your dog is calm, he gets to meet whatever he's excited about. Making sure he gets to spend plenty of time with his trigger in an appropriate manner can help curb this behavior, too. For example, if he gets excited every time he sees another dog on leash because he wants to play, investigate doggy daycare services in your area to find an appropriate outlet for him. In addition, making sure he lives a physically and mentally enriching life can calm him down in many aspects of his behavior, including leash reactivity.

### **Do you have tips for managing this behavior?**

Employing management in conjunction with training can help set you up for success. Try to avoid triggers when you and your dog are not prepared to train, and avoid situations, such as large events, that may cause trigger stacking.

Sometimes, of course, it is impossible to avoid a trigger — for example, if your dog is reactive toward other dogs and you have an appointment at your vet's office. Many vets

will allow you to wait in your car with your dog until they are ready for you so you can avoid reactive behaviors. If that's not possible, consider trying a calming cap, a hood that goes over the dog's head and eyes. He's still able to see, but the effect is calming, like when you put a blanket over your head. Wearing a calming cap can take the edge off, so your dog can make it through the lobby of a vet clinic peacefully. The calming cap will not change how he feels about his trigger, however, so training should still be done.

### **Are there training techniques I should steer clear of for modifying this behavior?**

Yes. Training techniques and tools (including choke chains, prong or pinch collars, and shock or electronic collars) that rely on inducing fear, pain or punishment should be avoided when working on leash reactivity. If your dog has fear-based reactivity, adding to his fear will only make it worse. If he's punished each time he sees his trigger and starts reacting, he'll start associating the punishment with his trigger, which can make the behavior even worse. If your dog has frustration-based reactivity, these techniques may increase his frustration (think trigger stacking) and cause him to lash out at the nearest thing: you. The increased adrenaline due to excitement can easily tip over to the aggressive side.

Sometimes we see these training techniques being used with fear-based reactivity and the behavior stops instead of increasing. What's really going on? In these instances, the dog is so fearful that he shuts down and doesn't display any behavior at all, for fear of what may happen to him. While this seems to fix the behavior in the short term, it usually leads to other (often worse) behavior issues in the future because the underlying cause of the behavior hasn't been addressed. It's similar to someone chewing gum as his only strategy for maintaining dental health. To others, this person might appear to have a healthy mouth, since his breath is fresh, but in reality he has tooth decay and gum disease that could cause problems later on.

In addition to causing other issues, we don't want our dogs to live a life of fear. That's not the way we would want to live ourselves.

### **Will leash reactivity ever go away?**

Yes and no. Behavior modification doesn't come with a 100 percent guarantee; there is always the possibility that a dog will revert back to leash reactivity under a perfect storm of circumstances. In general, however, a leash-reactive dog can be brought to the point where most of the time he doesn't show those behaviors. As mentioned above, achieving success can take a while, so be patient, diligent and consistent in your training.

### **How can I learn more?**

Finding a trainer to work with you and your dog can be beneficial for both of you. A trainer or behavior consultant may catch elusive triggers and can help with implementing training techniques effectively. Below are some websites listing trainers and/or behavior consultants:

- International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: [iaabc.org/consultants](http://iaabc.org/consultants)
- Animal Behavior Society:  
[animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php](http://animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php)

- Karen Pryor Academy: [karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer](http://karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer)
- Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: [ccpdt.org](http://ccpdt.org)

For more information on canine body language:

- *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals* by Turid Rugaas
- *Canine Behavior: A Photo Illustrated Book* by Barbara Handelman
- *Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide* by Brenda Aloff

For more information on reactivity:

- *Feisty Fido* by Patricia McConnell
- *Click to Calm: Healing the Aggressive Dog* by Emma Parsons
- [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com)

Rev. 7/15





## Managing a Dog Willing to Bite

By Sherry Woodard

Having a dog with behavior problems can be difficult. In this article, we help you learn more about your dog, manage your dog, and then work on the current challenges with your dog. If your dog has shown a willingness to bite, this information may help you keep him safe and happy.



First, if the dog's aggressive behavior is something new, make an appointment with your veterinarian to rule out a medical cause. A dog who isn't feeling well or is in pain may react in a seemingly aggressive manner.

Typically, the behaviors labeled "aggressive" are happening because the dog is afraid rather than aggressive. (For more information, see "[Dog Aggression](#)." ) There are various tools and techniques that can help dogs who are currently exhibiting dangerous behavior. To help your dog become less fearful and more comfortable in the world, read this resource (and the others mentioned below), work with a relationship-based behavior consultant and a veterinarian, and make sure your family and friends are included to make training consistent.

### Managing your dog

Management is an important part of working on changing a dog's behavior. "Managing" means doing what is required to prevent your dog from practicing undesirable behaviors or emotions, while offering him great quality of life. It involves getting to know your dog, helping him to be as social as possible, and supervising your dog when necessary — with the ultimate goal of keeping him comfortable and safe for life. It's about setting up the environment and potential situations for success.

You probably know that it's not acceptable to allow your dog to injure a person or another animal. It's also unacceptable to let your dog practice inappropriate or threatening behavior (such as lunging or nipping), even if that behavior hasn't led to injury. Every time your dog practices a behavior, he gets better at it.

If you allow your dog to continue practicing threatening behavior, you are putting yourself, the dog and others in danger. Don't wait for your dog to bite someone before getting help. Without help, a fearful dog might make a decision that could result in physical damage to someone. In some cases, that behavior could ultimately cost the dog his life. Don't take that chance: Learn how to manage your dog so everyone stays safe.

There are many different ways to manage a dog and his environment so he doesn't get the opportunity to behave in a way that could get him into trouble. Some examples of good management strategies include:

- Put signs around the house communicating current training protocols, to keep everyone in the family on the same page regarding the dog's training.
- Erect physical and visual barriers such as doors, X-pens and baby gates if necessary.
- Train your dog to use a crate as his safe place.
- When you are out in public with the dog, have him wear a vest that says "Dog in training" on it.
- Train the dog to wear a basket muzzle (see below).
- Use high-value treats (things the dog finds particularly yummy) that can be given through a muzzle.
- Use nutraceuticals (e.g., L-theanine) and aromatherapy (e.g., BlackWing Farms products) to help manage the dog's overall emotional state.

Every dog and every home is unique, of course, so management strategies for each family will vary. With that said, please train your dog to wear a basket muzzle. Some people are reluctant to consider using a muzzle, but it can be a great management tool to keep both your dog and others safe. Dogs are very good at picking up our emotional states, so if you are nervous about your dog biting, your dog will feel your anxiety and might be more likely to bite. By having your dog wear a muzzle during training, you will feel more calm, helping your dog to be calmer, which means training will progress more quickly.

It's important to teach your dog to look forward to wearing his muzzle because if he doesn't like wearing it, he'll be uncomfortable and distracted during training. For more details on muzzle training, read "[Muzzles: A Tool to Keep Everyone Safe.](#)"

### **Getting to know your dog**

By getting to know your dog, you will be able to identify his triggers (things that cause him to behave in that undesirable manner) and ways to avoid them. Just like people, dogs communicate using body language, so your dog is communicating with his entire body, not just his tail or his voice. To know how your dog is feeling, you'll need to learn to read your particular dog's body language. A dog normally gives other signals before escalating to growling, lunging or biting. Because some of this communication is subtle, you'll need to observe your dog's body language closely to learn what his signals are and what they mean. For more information, read "[Dog Body Language.](#)"

Many people chastise a dog for growling, thinking that the dog is being "bad" and telling him not to growl will stop the behavior and fix the problem. However, growling is your dog's way to communicate that he is feeling threatened by something or someone. If you punish your dog for growling, next time he may give you less warning before a possible bite. The dog learns that you don't want him to tell you how he feels. Punishing the growling does not change the underlying emotional state that causes the behavior, but it does teach him not to communicate with you. Frequently, when a dog bite occurs seemingly out of nowhere, that dog has a history of being punished or having his warning signals ignored.

## Working with your dog

Dogs are often fearful because they have had bad experiences or a lack of experience with whatever makes them uncomfortable. If you work with your dog gently and consistently, most likely you can help him feel better about what has historically made him uncomfortable.

After ruling out a medical cause for the behavior, start the training by teaching basic cues using relationship-based training methods. Basic cues help build a solid foundation for working with your dog (see [“Teaching Your Dog Basic Cues”](#)). Be a kind, gentle, patient teacher. Don’t expect your dog to know what you want; you’ll need to teach him to focus on and learn from you. At first, work with your dog at home, away from any distractions. Teaching him in your home is going to help him know what you are asking for when you need him to focus on you in all other situations. Once he has mastered basic manners, you can start working with him in other locations, including places that have more distractions.

In every interaction with your dog, think in terms of building a trusting relationship. Give plenty of rewards, but have the dog earn them. Ask the dog to give you a “sit” or a “down” before you give a treat. Remember, too, that even though training is a serious thing, learning should be fun for your dog.

If at any point during training you feel that your dog may injure you, stop! Think about what you were doing. Keep in mind that progress takes time; if you were pushing too far or too fast, slow down. Back up a step or two — to a place where the dog was having fun. Check your tone and emotion. Did you become frustrated or angry? Could the dog have felt threatened? Most medically sound dogs will respond to kind, gentle training by making steady progress.

If you do reach a plateau and your dog stops making progress, make an appointment with your veterinarian for another medical checkup. Any kind of pain, infection or injury may have a damaging effect on a dog’s behavior. Also consider seeing a relationship-based professional dog trainer or a certified animal behavior consultant (see [“Find a Dog Trainer”](#)). A qualified professional can help you work with your dog on his specific behavior challenges.

Finally, be aware that learning and using socialization skills is a lifelong process for the dog. Keep practicing and rewarding him for the rest of his life. Your goal is a relaxed dog who is comfortable in the world and can enjoy a wide variety of experiences — doing more while staying safe.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Muzzles: A Tool to Keep Everyone Safe

By Sherry Woodard

A muzzle can be a helpful tool to keep everyone safe while you're working to improve a dog's social skills or trying to manage aggressive tendencies. In particular, a muzzle protects the dog who's wearing it, since the fallout from a bite can include quarantine, legal action and euthanasia. I have used muzzles to safely help many dogs improve their social skills around people and other animals. With a muzzle on the dog, you can make even a scary situation a positive, successful learning experience.

Any dog can learn to wear a muzzle, and can potentially benefit from it. Every dog has a bite threshold, the point at which he or she is stressed enough to bite. For some dogs, this threshold is reached very easily; for others, it takes extraordinary circumstances. In all cases when reaching the bite threshold is possible, a dog wearing a muzzle is at much lower risk of hurting a human or another animal.

### Reasons for dog muzzles

The number one reason that I recommend muzzle use is for dogs who are so fearful that they become aggressive easily. (For more on this subject, see [“Dogs and Aggression.”](#)) Other reasons for teaching a dog to become comfortable wearing a muzzle are:

- To safely handle a terrified or injured dog (either a rescued animal or your own) in an emergency
- To safely do a medical exam or groom a dog who is likely to bite
- To prevent injury to other animals who are allowed to approach a dog who is likely to bite

Regarding the third reason: Many people are oblivious about aggression in dogs. They allow their dogs to run up to dogs on lead, not realizing that it's not always a safe thing to do. Even dogs with poor greeting skills are sometimes allowed to run up and then snap at the dog on lead.

A muzzle is a wonderful tool to show that you are being responsible — doing everything you can to keep everyone safe. You can then try to educate the people who have their dogs off-lead about the dangers of allowing their dogs to approach dogs they don't know.

### Types of muzzles

There are several types of muzzles:

- Plastic basket muzzle: This is the best all-around muzzle for protection, fit and training. It allows the dog to breathe and pant easily and drink water, so it can be worn for extended periods. And a dog wearing a basket muzzle can take treats for rewards during training.
- Leather muzzle: These vary in design, so be sure you choose the basket style so your dog can pant, drink and receive treats.



*Basket muzzle*

- Soft muzzle: This type is lighter than a basket muzzle and easy to put on, but doesn't allow for as much ventilation for breathing, and there are some reports of dogs being able to bite through the soft sides. (Two types are Tuffie and Softie by ProGuard.)
- \* Grooming (mesh or fabric) muzzle: The dog can't pant, drink or eat treats with this muzzle on, so it should only be used for very short periods. It's not safe to use for training.
- \* Metal basket muzzle: I don't recommend these because they can break at the welded spots, leaving sharp wire ends or edges that can injure the dog or you.
- \* Emergency muzzle: In an emergency, it's possible to create a muzzle out of gauze.



*Tuffie muzzle*



*Softie muzzle*

Getting a proper fit is critical. You want the dog to be comfortable wearing the muzzle, avoiding any chafing or irritation. Manufacturers of good muzzles provide a size chart and guide so that you can measure your dog to determine the fit. When a perfect fit isn't possible, you can add padding (moleskin, foam bandage, etc.) to protect the dog's fur and skin. A proper fit, using all the straps provided, will also minimize the risk that the dog will be able to get the muzzle off.



*Grooming muzzle*

Keep in mind that a muzzle reduces the risk of a dog biting, but does not completely eliminate it because a muzzle can sometimes come off in a scuffle. So, even if your dog is wearing a muzzle, you should be vigilant and keep him away from situations in which he may be likely to bite.

The Muzzle Up Project ([muzzleupproject.com](http://muzzleupproject.com)) is a great resource for people looking to outfit their dogs with muzzles. The website has comparisons of muzzle types, recommendations for fit and training, success stories and support. Once you've decided on the type and size of muzzle that's best for your dog, you can buy it from an online retailer or you can try your local pet supply store.



*Metal basket muzzle*

## Severity of dog bites

When it comes to dog bites, does the size of the dog matter? If a dog is willing to bite, a dog of any size can cause damage! Of course, a four-pound dog is not going to cause the same damage as a much bigger dog, but even a small dog can break the skin on a person.

I hear far too often that the bite was an accident caused by human error, but then I find out that it wasn't a first bite. If we don't help dogs who have these "accidents," we are being careless with their lives. Bites from dogs of any size to people's faces and bites to babies and small children are rarely excused. The consequences could be severe for a dog who

bites a child or a person's face. See the box below for a scale that's useful to trainers, animal behavior consultants and vets in judging the severity of a dog bite.

This standard scale was developed by Ian Dunbar to judge the severity of dog bites based on damage inflicted.

- **Level one:** Bark, lunge and no teeth on skin.
- **Level two:** Teeth touched skin, no puncture.
- **Level three:** One to four holes from a single bite; all holes less than half the length of a single canine tooth.
- **Level four:** Single bite, deep puncture (up to 1 1/2 times the depth of a single canine tooth).
- **Level five:** Multiple-bite attack or multiple attack incidents.
- **Level six:** Missing large portions of flesh.

Anyone with sensitive skin — such as babies, young children and elderly people — will have more damage.

## Wearing the muzzle

Before you start training a dog with a muzzle, you'll need to get the dog comfortable with wearing the muzzle. This takes a bit of time and patience, but when done correctly, it can make the dog actually enjoy wearing the muzzle by getting him to associate it with fun and happy things. You want to make wearing the muzzle a game that the dog likes to play. For a step-by-step training plan, see page 5. To watch an excellent video showing the process, [click here](#).

## Training with the muzzle

Dogs who are anxious or fearful around humans or other animals need help to change the emotional associations they have with them. Any dog who is likely to bite during training should wear a muzzle, to keep him and everyone around him safe.

With the dog comfortably wearing the muzzle and focusing on you, teach and/or practice basic cues, giving praise and treats generously. (See "[Teaching Your Dog Basic Cues.](#)") Do whatever else the dog enjoys — playing with toys, petting — so the dog continues to associate wearing the muzzle with positive things. Do this work in your home or someplace with no distractions.

When you've mastered basic cues, start taking the muzzled dog out walking on lead in a low-traffic area (few people or other animals, depending on what the dog reacts negatively to). Give lots of great treats through the muzzle and allow the dog to enjoy sniffing, marking, rolling — whatever makes it a great walk for the dog.

Keep the walks brief: Use this short distance daily in different locations. When the dog is able to focus on you without becoming overly excited or fearful, try moving closer to the source of the dog's fear or anxiety (people, other animals). Each dog will vary as to how quickly he or she can progress. Some dogs can move 10 feet closer at a time; for others, two feet is a big challenge. Be careful to keep the distance between the dog and the people or animals wide enough that the dog doesn't become overly excited or panicky.

If at any point the dog does become excited or fearful, move farther away from the people or animals and raise the value of your treats. For example, if you normally reward with dog biscuits, give bits of cheese or cooked chicken instead. It's a good idea to carry a variety of treats at all times, since it may help the dog to stay focused or return to focusing on you instead of reacting negatively to people or other animals being nearby. Also, by varying your treats, you can keep this daily activity interesting for the dog.

Next, build up the traffic by walking in places where more people or other animals are passing by. Recruit people that the dog is comfortable with and have them appear, approach and give treats. Even if the dog isn't afraid of new people, this is a great way to reinforce that good things happen when he's out and about wearing his muzzle.

The next step: Practice, practice and more practice! Every day, work at getting closer to the source of the dog's fear or anxiety — but do it at the dog's pace. If you try to progress too quickly, he will have a more difficult time focusing and changing his behavior and his emotions. Keep in mind that change will take time — and every dog is an individual. Genetics and life experience, or lack of experience, will be different for each dog.

**For dogs who are likely to bite strangers:** Strangers can become friends if you work slowly and carefully with the dog. Once the stranger can approach the dog safely, have the stranger start giving treats, then gradually move on to touching and petting the dog, holding the lead and walking with the dog. Don't remove the muzzle until the dog is clearly looking forward to spending time with this person. If you see any fear in the dog, slow down! Keep the dog muzzled while practicing in many different locations, including your home. Over time, you can build the dog's circle of friends for life.

**For dogs who are likely to bite other animals:** I have had lots of success with teaching these dogs to focus on me and walk past other dogs on lead, cats outside, and wildlife such as squirrels and rabbits. To be absolutely safe, always have a muzzle with you for emergencies.

To sum up: A muzzle is a valuable tool for keeping a dog and everyone around him safe, whenever there is any chance that he may bite. Any dog can benefit from being trained to wear a muzzle, but for dogs who are likely to bite, a muzzle is an essential tool for management and training. Remember to keep practicing and rewarding the dog daily. Your goal is a relaxed dog who is comfortable in the world and can enjoy a wide variety of experiences — doing more while staying safe.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*

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## Step by Step: Training Your Dog to Wear a Muzzle

1. Show your dog the muzzle from a foot away; reward him with food whenever he looks at it. Do this 2-5 times. Gradually move closer to the dog until the muzzle is within touching distance.
2. Wipe some wet food, peanut butter or soft cheese around the inside edge of the muzzle. As the dog approaches, let him lick the muzzle. When he will comfortably approach the muzzle and touch it, go to step 3.
3. Place high-value treats in the muzzle and allow the dog to eat the treats from the muzzle. (Putting duct tape on the inside bottom of the muzzle will keep most of the treats in, but allow rewarding on the go.) Let the dog place his nose in the muzzle and eat the treats by choice; do not force the muzzle on to the dog. Gently remove the muzzle before the dog has a chance to remove his nose. (Doing this will ensure that the dog does not develop the habit of taking the food and pulling away from the muzzle.) When the dog will keep his nose in the muzzle for 30 seconds, go to step 4.
4. Gradually require the dog to keep his nose in the muzzle for longer periods of time. Treats that the dog can easily access through the front of the muzzle (e.g., squeeze cheese, peanut butter and stick treats such as jerky) are helpful for this and the following steps. When the dog will wear the muzzle for 2-3 minutes, go to step 5.
5. While the dog is comfortably eating treats from the muzzle, begin to fumble with the straps and attempt to touch the straps together. When you can hold the straps together for 10 seconds, go to step 6.
6. Allow the dog to place his nose in the muzzle, then clip the muzzle on. Make sure the muzzle is snug enough that he can't pull it off, but not too tight. Give him treats quickly and constantly for the entire time the muzzle is on. Keep the session short: 20 seconds to start. When you can easily place the muzzle on the dog, and clip it, go to step 7.
7. Put the muzzle on the dog and immediately begin to reward him with treats while he is wearing it. Then take the dog for a brief walk indoors while he's wearing the muzzle. Keep giving treats frequently (every few steps). It's helpful to have two people do this at first — one to keep the dog moving and one to reward. Do this a few times and then go to step 8.
8. Put the muzzle on the dog and immediately begin to reward him with treats while he is wearing it. Take the dog for a short walk — outside this time — while he's wearing the muzzle and reward at regular intervals. Don't remove the muzzle until the dog is back in his run. If he starts to paw at the muzzle, keep him moving and reward more often.
9. Put the muzzle on the dog whenever you take him for a walk. The dog should look forward to being muzzled at this point, because it predicts a walk. Continue to give the dog treats frequently during the walks.
10. If you plan to have your dog wear the muzzle for grooming or medical appointments, make several visits to the vet's office or groomer before the actual appointments. During these "trial runs," put the muzzle on your dog and give him lots of treats. During the actual appointments, do the same. Make sure the dog wears the muzzle for walks, or other enjoyable activities, more often than he wears it for potentially unpleasant reasons (e.g., a vet visit).



## Helping Shy Dogs

“Shy” is a word that many people use to describe dogs who are fearful. Most often this “shyness” is a fear of strangers, but it can also be fear of new places, being handled, sudden movements or noises, other dogs or cats — or just about anything unfamiliar. The severity can range from mild (fear of a certain type of person) to very severe (fear of so many things that the animal is under constant stress).



It takes a special kind of person to adopt a shy dog. Nurturing a shy dog requires a lot of patience, since it may be months or even years before results are seen, but the rewards can be plentiful. Many shy dogs, once they bond with their people, are affectionate and loving with them, even if they remain shy in other contexts.

### Why they are shy

Fear can come from many different sources, including genetics and previous bad experiences. However, many dogs are shy simply because, as puppies, they did not have enough of the right kinds of experiences. Here’s what we mean: When puppies are very young, they go through a once-in-a-lifetime phase of learning. This period starts when they are around three weeks old and ends between four and five months of age. During this time, providing puppies with many safe, happy experiences with strangers, sounds, objects, places and other animals can go a long way toward preventing a lifetime of shyness.

As people loving and living with pets, we need to be able to read their body language to discern what they’re trying to communicate to us, but it’s especially important with shy pets. Most dogs who we consider shy will simply retreat and hide, but sometimes expressions of shyness can be quite subtle. Reading body language to tell how a dog is feeling is critical to being able to help him or her. Some shy dogs will freeze and “shut down,” while allowing someone to approach and handle them. Many people wrongly believe the animal is fine in this state, but he or she is actually experiencing a great deal of stress.

### How to work with shyness

There is one basic key to success when working with shy dogs: Let them progress at their own rate. Pushing shy pets into situations where they are afraid is not only very scary for the animal, but it can make the fear much worse, and also increase the risk that

they will reach a point where they are so afraid that they become aggressive. Some shy dogs will bite if they are pushed too far.

If you've just adopted a shy pet, give him his own space, away from any household activity. Set him up with a comfy bed and water, and serve him his meals there. Let him adjust to the sounds and smells of the household. It may take time, but eventually most shy dogs will venture out for short trips, which become longer as the pet's comfort level increases. If you have a shy dog who is so fearful that he won't come out of his hiding spot for any reason, consult a relationship-based behavior professional.

Once the animal is timidly venturing out, use food to help him form happy associations with new places, people, sounds and sights. If he won't take food from your hand, toss treats gently to him and work your way up to hand-feeding.

Other friendly members of their own species can be a big asset in helping shy pets. Some dogs who are shy with people may be comfortable and even playful with other dogs. Some shy dogs will happily go on a leash walk with a canine friend, but not alone.

## **A caution about escape**

People who adopt shy dogs must be especially careful about the possibility of escape, since a shy pet who gets away from his person can be very difficult to catch. So, a big part of keeping shy dogs safe is setting up the environment so they can't escape. It's a good idea to have "airlocks" around exterior doors, so that there is always a double barrier between the shy animal and the outside. If you don't have a foyer with two doors to function as an airlock, use baby gates or exercise pens to add an extra measure of safety. Make sure all the people in your household know the importance of keeping these barriers up. Windows can also be a potential escape route, so make sure they are kept closed when the animal is in the vicinity. Window screens are often not strong enough to contain dogs safely.

There's also a high risk of shy dogs escaping while transporting them, especially to a new home, so they should travel inside a closed crate. All pets, of course, should be microchipped and wear collars with proper ID, but it's advisable to fit a shy dog who is a particular flight risk with a GPS or other tracking device, to find the animal more easily if he escapes. In addition, when walking a shy pet on leash, use a very secure harness or restraint device with a back-up safety clip.

Having a shy dog is not for everyone. It can be a lot of work, and it often means having to adjust your schedule and lifestyle to accommodate the animal's special needs. However, as many adopters of shy dogs have found, offering a safe haven to a shy animal and seeing him make progress can be tremendously gratifying. And once you've gained their trust, you'll know that shy dogs can be just as loving as any other pets.



## Meeting Fearful Dogs Safely

By Sherry Woodard

When meeting new dogs, always use respect, caution, and attentive awareness. Think in terms of learning the dog's language. Be aware of your speed while approaching any dog you don't know. Slow your pace and use a gentle tone as you approach.

If you know the dog is shy or fearful, change your body language. Approach toward the side of the dog, not toward his head, and avoid direct eye contact. Watch the dog out of the corner of your eye for signs of fear or aggression, such as:

- Body that is still or frozen
- Hackles are up
- Looking away or lowering of the head while still sitting up, or raising the head way up while looking away
- Staring at you (if a defensive dog stares into your eyes, look away — to show respect and for your own safety)
- Growling
- Wrinkling of the lips without teeth showing
- Snarling with teeth showing



If the dog is snapping or lunging, proceed with extreme caution or find someone with more experience to help you. When you are close, begin to make your body “smaller.” Lower the shoulder that is closest to the dog. Start turning so that by the time you are beside the dog, you are almost facing away (but don't have your back turned completely to the dog).

Next, bend down next to the dog. (Do not bend down if the dog is snapping or lunging.) Keep your hands to yourself and give the dog a few seconds to sniff you or try to avoid you. Glance at the dog, but avoid extended eye contact. If the dog has not moved away, stay where you are and try to think about the message you are giving to the dog. Building a relationship with each dog you meet will require patience and a time commitment. I talk to the dogs when I am meeting them; if they are defensive, I tell them gently that I am not a threat. I tell them about Best Friends, about Dogtown.

I just keep talking as I try to get them to go for a walk with me. I loop a lead over the dog's head (even if he is snapping or lunging). I don't ever try to grab a defensive dog's collar to clip on a lead. Once the loop is around the dog's neck, I move away and wait to see if the dog will join me. If he does not walk, I wait; if he does walk, I just walk with

him. The simple act of moving helps many dogs to relax, since they feel less like they are being cornered.

As we walk, I watch his body language and allow him to stop, sniff, eliminate — whatever he wants to do. If he panics, I stop in my tracks and, as soon as he stops flailing about, I bend down and wait for him to realize he is okay. A walk can take 10 minutes or an hour. The goal is for the dog to begin to feel better about being with me (i.e., the relationship begins). I don't normally use treats during my introductions, but you can if you want to.

After that first walk, a dog will often greet me with less fear the next time she sees me coming. She'll be more willing to move toward me and walk away with me. Most dogs I meet who act defensively at first are still willing to have a relationship; as mentioned above, it just takes patience and time. You will find that the rewards of a relationship with a dog are well worth the investment.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.*



## Preventing Object Guarding and Food Aggression

By Sherry Woodard

### What is object guarding?

An object-guarding dog is one who guards objects that he considers to be valuable. Often, the object is food or a treat, but it can also be other objects such as a toy, a bone or an item picked out of the trash.

### Why is object guarding a problem?

It is not unusual for dogs to covet objects and guard them from each other. In a group, dogs often threaten each other, but then one of them backs down and everything's fine. In a home environment, however, object guarding can be dangerous if your dog sees you or other family members as someone he needs to guard against. You can easily get bitten trying to take something away from a dog who is a serious guarder.



Children can be especially vulnerable, since they are at eye level to the dog and may not understand personal space. Keep children away from a dog until the dog is willing to give up any item when you issue the cue “give it.”

### How can I prevent my dog from guarding food?

The following exercise should only be done by adults (not children) and it should be used to prevent serious guarding behavior from starting. If your dog is already guarding his food or other objects, read the [resource on managing food aggression](#).

Here's how to prevent guarding:

Place an empty food bowl on the floor. Sit or kneel on the floor near the bowl with a bag of kibble. With your hand, place a few pieces of kibble in the bowl. Say to the dog, “Take it,” and let the dog eat the kibble. After you and your dog practice this routine a few times, place a few more pieces in the bowl, but this time keep your hand on the bowl. If the dog is fine with your hand on the bowl, practice three more times.

Then, if there have been no signs of guarding (growling or stiffening), put a few pieces of kibble in the bowl, but this time, take the bowl away and add a treat to the kibble — something that your dog likes even more than kibble (such as 1/2 spoonful of wet food). Give the bowl back to the dog so she can eat. Practice this routine five times. Use just a few pieces of kibble each time, adding only a small amount of wet food or a small treat. (You don't want a sick dog or a fat one!)

If your dog has still shown no signs of guarding, move on to the next step. Stand up and remove the bowl from the floor. Add a morsel of wet food and return the bowl to the dog. Repeat five times. If you can complete all these steps without signs of guarding, you should be able to safely feed your dog. One thing to remember, though, is that she may be fine with you, but not with other people who attempt to feed her.

If the dog becomes uncomfortable at any point, back up to the step where she was relaxed and work forward from that step again. If your dog is a serious guarder already (growling or stiffening up when you try to take something from her), read the [resource on managing food aggression](#). In fact, you may want to get help from a reward-based trainer.

### **How can I train my dog not to guard other objects?**

Dogs who guard food may also guard other objects, such as a toy or bone. You can train your dog not to guard these objects by getting him to “trade up” for something better. If you practice with many levels of trades, your dog will always expect something better in return for what he’s giving up, and will gladly relinquish the guarded object. Here’s how it works:

First, do not have high-value items (things the dog values highly) lying around while you’re training. Start with something that your dog has very little interest in. Give him the object and say “take it.” Then, say “give it” and take the object back. Reward him with a treat from your pocket. Practice this routine five times, then walk away. Repeat three times the first day.

On the second day, move to a slightly more valuable item. As on day one, do five trades (accompanied by “take it” and “give it” cues) three times throughout the day.

On the third day, put a more valuable item on the floor and bring the dog’s attention to it. After he settles in for a chew, ask him to trade (“give it”) for a higher-value item. If he shows no signs of guarding, you can practice this routine a few times. Again, as with food, back up to the step before if your dog becomes uncomfortable.

Remember, be very careful. Do not include other adults in the training until you can trade up for the highest value item with ease.

### **How long do I have to practice these routines?**

If you have a dog with a tendency to guard food or objects, you should practice the above routines often to prevent any future problems.

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## Managing Object Guarding and Food Aggression

By Sherry Woodard

*Please use caution at all times when working on managing object guarding and food aggression. If you are at all uncomfortable with doing the techniques described below, ask a reward-based trainer for help in teaching your dog not to guard food or objects.*

Guarding (possessiveness) is a natural, normal behavior for dogs. Some dogs will guard any valued item or space — their food, food bowls, toys, treats, chewies, bones, beds, couches. But object guarding can be dangerous if a dog sees a person as someone he needs to guard against. You can easily get bitten trying to take something away from a dog who is a serious guarder.



Dogs who have shown guarding behaviors can be taught new associations to help keep them and their families safe. First, if guarding is a new behavior, visit a veterinarian for a health check. As with any sudden behavior change, the dog may have a medical issue that needs to be addressed.

To manage guarding behavior, you'll do two things: hand-feeding and practicing trades. Start hand-feeding and practicing trades at the same time. To hand-feed, stop using a food bowl and start hand-feeding all meals to the dog, giving him a few pieces of kibble at a time. By doing this, you'll change the association of hands near the dog's food from negative to positive. When you practice trades with the dog, you'll teach him to always expect something better, making it worth trading.

When doing the hand-feeding and trading exercises, work with only one dog at a time. No other dogs should be within sight of your guarder. To stay safe and for the best chance of success, work at the dog's pace. Do not move on to the next step if the dog is not improving.

If the dog becomes threatening (growling, stiffening up, etc.) toward you at any point, back up to the step where she was relaxed and work forward from that step again. If the dog is a serious guarder already when you start training, you must be very careful and pay close attention to the dog's body language to detect any signs of guarding. Again, if you become uncomfortable at any point while doing the exercises, stop and get help from a reward-based trainer.

Here are the steps for teaching trades:

1. Start by giving the dog something she has never cared enough about to guard (a “low-value item”). Tell the dog to give it up (say “give it” or “give”). Take the item and hand the dog a small yummy treat that you have tucked in your hand out of sight. Give the low-value item back and walk away. Wait two minutes. Then, approach again and repeat the exercise six times.
2. Practice for three days — doing six approaches daily. Each day, change the low-value item to a different low-value item.
3. After three days of practice, approach the dog and hold out an object that she has guarded in the past (a high-value item), but don’t allow her to take it. Say “give” as if you are asking for the item and take the item away while handing her a small yummy treat.
4. Again, practice six approaches each day for three days. Change the item each day to a different high-value item that the dog has guarded before.
5. After three days of practice, approach and hand her one of the high-value items that you have used before. Walk away (at least six feet) and wait two minutes. Then, take a deep breath, relax, smile and approach the dog. Say “give,” take the item, and hand her a small yummy treat.
6. Again, practice six approaches each day for three days. Remember to change the high-value item daily to other previously guarded items.
7. After three days of practice, lay all the high-value items on the floor and wait for the dog to settle on one. Then, approach with a small treat tucked in your hand. Practice six approaches, exchanging the high-value item for the small treat. Between approaches, remember to walk away and wait two minutes before approaching again.
8. If the dog is still doing well, leave the high-value items on the floor and practice the exercise at least three times each day for at least a week.

To reinforce the lesson, it’s a good idea to have other adults work with the dog. Start them off with the low-value items and have them work their way through the exercises. Supervise their interactions so you can see how the dog is doing. It also helps to practice in a variety of locations by taking high-value items and treats on outings.

If you have a dog who guards food or objects, you should practice the above routine often to prevent any future problems.

*Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.*





## Using Visual Barriers with Dogs

By Sherry Woodard

A visual barrier is a solid wall that prevents dogs from seeing what's on the other side (see photo at right). Most often, visual barriers are used so that dogs can't see other dogs, but occasionally they serve to block the dog's view of human neighbors.



There are several reasons why visual barriers might be used:

- To prevent injury to the dog from daily running, jumping and twisting
- To stop a dog from exercising too much, which could result in excessive weight loss
- For safety — to prevent bites from occurring through a fence
- To prevent a dog from being in an anxious, overly excited state

Visual barriers should only be used if other options have been tried without acceptable results. Dogs who are fence-line runners may be doing it partially because they are bored and/or don't get enough exercise. If you help the dog to improve his behavior, you'll enhance his daily quality of life, which doesn't happen if you simply put up a barrier.

So, here are some things to try before you start putting up walls:

- Spend time every day interacting with the dog.
- Shorten the amount of time the dog is out in the yard, so she's not out there for hours.
- Place the dog in a crate for a short period of time and let him calmly enjoy a treat-dispensing toy or a loaded Kong.
- Teach and practice basic cues.
- Teach and practice fun tricks.
- Take the dog for daily walks on lead.

Interacting with a social dog in any of the ways listed above may reduce fence-line running and, at the very least, will help him enjoy a bigger, better life.

If you are part of a rescue group and/or you're fostering the dog, send the dog on outings and sleepovers with other people. If possible, you can also change the dog's space — putting her in a



place with different dogs or neighbors on the other side of the fence.

Another thing to try: Set up path obstacles along the fence line (see bottom photo on page 1). The goal is to help the dog decide to run less on her own. Faced with path obstacles, many dogs decide that fence-line running is not as exciting as it once was.

If aggression at the fence line is the problem, you can attach an additional layer of fencing (creating a double fence) if your dog, or the neighbor's dog, is willing to bite through the fence (see photo at top right). Or, you could set up a freestanding run with no shared fence lines (see photo at right).

Here are a few other things to consider before putting up visual barriers:

- Visual barriers are not allowed everywhere.
- The cost of construction and maintenance could be considerable.
- Some dogs will continue to have the same behavior even with a barrier in place, or develop other undesirable behaviors that then need to be addressed.
- If you have a scenic view from your yard, you'll lose it.

For lots more information on how to train dogs and manage their behavior, check out the [resources on the Best Friends website](#).

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## Dog Behavior Help: Trainers, Behaviorists and Veterinarians

By Sherry Woodard

If you have tried to change your pet's problem behavior on your own and have been unsuccessful, consider getting some professional help. You could consult with a traditional or a holistic veterinarian, a pet trainer, a behavior counselor, a certified applied animal behaviorist, or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist.

How do you decide which professional to use? You should always start by taking your pet to a traditional veterinarian to determine if the behavior has a medical cause. Once that is ruled out, you could hire a trainer to see if the behavior can be altered with some simple training techniques. If the problem persists, you should try a behavior counselor, a certified applied animal behaviorist, or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist, depending on how severe the problem is and what types of professionals are available in your area.



Whoever you decide to work with, please be aware that changing the problem behavior will take time and patience on your part. You will need to work on the behavior at home with your pet, following the recommendations of the trainer, counselor or behaviorist. The professional needs to train *you*, as well as your pet, so you know how to reinforce the behavior that you want. Below is an explanation of the function of each of these professionals.

### Pet trainers

A trainer can help you discourage unwanted behavior in your pet and encourage desirable behavior. They teach the basics: house-training, crate training, and correcting behaviors like digging, barking, chewing, and pulling on lead. Trainers generally don't have medical knowledge or enough expertise to deal with severe behavior problems, but they are the least expensive option among the behavior professionals.

Anyone can claim to be a trainer, so ask questions like the following if you're thinking about hiring someone:

- **How were you trained?** Look for someone who has had life experience, someone who has been around animals, not just taken classes. If the person has trained different types of animals, so much the better. Ask about formal training, but keep in mind that many good trainers are self-taught through experience. Also, the best trainers keep themselves well-informed about new training methods and theories.

- **How much experience do you have?** The trainer should have at least six months of experience. Anything less and the person may not know how to work with problem behavior in a calm, confident manner. Animals can sense a lack of confidence, and the training will be less successful as a result.
- **What types of animals have you trained?** Some trainers work with a variety of animals and some only work with one type. It's most desirable for the trainer to have had experience working with a wide variety of animals, since you learn something different from training each type of animal.
- **Are you certified through a national certification program?** This applies mainly to dog trainers, since there are no national certification programs for those who train other animal species.

You might also want to visit during one of the trainer's sessions to see the style, techniques and tools being used. If the trainer does anything that you are uncomfortable with, keep looking. You want to find a trainer who uses humane training methods — someone who will give you and your pet a positive experience.

You can find a certified dog trainer through the website for the [Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers](#). If you are told by a trainer that he or she is not qualified for your case, ask for a referral to a behavior counselor or animal behaviorist.

## Behavior specialists

There are three different types of specialists who deal with animal behavior problems:

**Behavior counselor.** A behavior counselor is often a certified pet trainer, but he or she should also have more experience and knowledge, including a background in learning theory, awareness of the latest scientific knowledge, and hands-on training. A behavior counselor should be able to analyze and diagnose the problem, devise and explain a possible solution, and do necessary follow-up. Like trainers, some counselors are species-specific.

There is no certification for behavior counselors, but you can ask your veterinarian for a recommendation. Behavior counselors are generally listed in the Yellow Pages as trainers who work on behavioral issues.

**Certified applied animal behaviorist.** These are people who have been certified by the [Animal Behavior Society](#) (ABS) as either an applied or an associate applied animal behaviorist. Certification by ABS means that an individual meets certain educational, experiential and ethical standards required by the society.

**Board-certified veterinary behaviorist.** A veterinary behaviorist is a veterinarian who has completed an approved residency training program in veterinary animal behavior and passed a board exam. Veterinary behaviorists can rule out health problems and dispense medications, which are sometimes used to help change behavior in pets. You can think of animal behaviorists as the equivalent of psychologists, while veterinary behaviorists are the equivalent of psychiatrists. For help in finding a board-certified veterinary behaviorist, talk to your veterinarian.

## Veterinarians

**Traditional veterinarian.** There are many vets who are not certified as veterinary behaviorists, but they have a special interest in veterinary behavior and promote behavioral medicine in their practice. Ask your vet how much experience she or he has had with solving animal behavior problems. If your vet has limited experience, ask for a referral.

**Holistic veterinarian.** A holistic vet uses alternative means for diagnosing and treating health problems and, sometimes, behavioral problems. As with traditional vets, experience will vary, so you will need to talk to them about what they can offer. For help in finding a holistic veterinarian, visit the website for the [American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association](#).

## Recommended reading

If you want to learn more about dog behavior, we recommend the following books:

- *The Dog Who Loved Too Much* by Dr. Nicholas Dodman. Using examples from his own practice, Dodman intelligently and humorously talks about symptoms, treatment options and helpful tips for prevention.
- *Final Hope* by Stephen Joubert. This book offers a comprehensive approach to dealing with an aggressive dog. It has a helpful section on finding a professional to work with.

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