

GUIDELINES TOWARDS A WELL-BEHAVED DOG

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WHY IS TRAINING IMPORTANT?

As a domesticated dog lives with its human (pack) members in a human society it needs to adjust itself to the human conditions. Much of the dog's own natural behavior, such as digging, chewing, jumping up, barking, growling or biting, does not fit in our society and lives. It can cause nuisance, or worse, damage to people and their properties.

To develop regular and good behavior a dog needs to be made understood what it could and cannot do. For this it needs proper socialization and training. Only then, a dog learns:

- its' owner is the boss,
- to accept and respect the rules set up its owner
- to respect the commands given by its owner,
- to behave well in and around the house, without showing aggressive or destructive behavior nor excessive barking,
- to adjust in between all kinds of people, other dogs and animals.

WHEN TO START THE TRAINING?

A dog is capable to learn from very early age on, whether it is with or without people. In fact, most behavior problems later in life (such as aggression, chewing, digging, not coming when called) can be prevented. If only the dog, as a puppy, will be properly disciplined and made familiar with all things it can come across in its life such as other people, dogs and animals, all kinds of environments, sound and smells, transport and traffic, etc. For example, aggressive behavior towards people or other dogs has often its roots in early puppy-hood, when the puppy was restraint to meet strange people and dogs, or due to lack of discipline. Therefore, it is wise to start socialization and training as soon as it enters its new home at the age of 6-8 weeks. However, no dog is too old to learn. It is just that older dogs already have gained experience and developed habits, and to teach new habits takes less time than change bad habits into good ones.

TRAINING PRINCIPLES

For a successfully trained dog there are certain elementary principles to be observed. Most important is the relationship between the owner (or trainer) and the dog. A happy dog that trusts and respects its owner/trainer will learn quicker and is more willing to obey.

A dog learns through associating cause and effect: when it does something that gives a pleasurable experience the chance it will do it again increases. On the contrary, if the dog's action brings a nasty experience the chance on repeating decreases. Most habit -good or bad- of a grown up dog has developed during puppy-hood. For example: a puppy that always was allowed to jump up will show this habit also once it grows up. If it never was allowed to jump, it will also not do so later in life. Therefore, it is very important to set rules for what the dog is allowed to do and what not. The rules itself vary according to each owner's individual preferences. However once the rules are set everybody in the household needs to stick to it!

The basic commands each dog should learn are 'COME' when called, 'SIT', 'DOWN', 'STAY' and "HEEL' without pulling the leash. The commands should be given in a friendly but firm voice, so the dog will understand who's the boss without being scared of him/her. When training your puppy be patience, friendly and fair. Some dogs learn quickly, others need some more time, depending on the breed and the individual.

A WELL-BEHAVED AND -ADJUSTED DOG IS THE REWARD

A well-mannered and well-adjusted dog is a dog that knows how to behave itself at home and wherever you would like to take your dog to, without being a nuisance or danger towards others. The road towards such a dog may take some time and effort on the part of the owner. But with the right attitude, timing and method of training you will benefit of a dog that respects and obeys you.

GOLDEN RULES TOWARDS A WELL-BEHAVED DOG

1. Start socialization and training early -the puppy has not established bad habits yet and learns more easily than an older dog.
2. Before taking the puppy outside make sure it is fully vaccinated.
3. Know your dog:
 - What are the specifics of the breed.
 - How do a dogs learn and think.
 - How do dogs communicate
4. Establish a dog-owner relationship based on mutual trust and respect.
5. As soon as the puppy enters its new home set rules in what the dog is allowed to do and what not.
6. Everybody in the household (people and dogs) should follow these rules consequently.
7. Teach the basic commands: come, sit, down, stay, heel.
8. Command with a friendly but firm voice.
9. A dog learns quicker through praise than through punishment.
10. Training should be fun for both owner and dog.