

FIVE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR DOG HAPPY

Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D. and Dan Estep, Ph.D.

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists

www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com

303-932-9095 phone 303-932-2298 fax

info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com

1. Let your dog know when he's being good.

If you are like many dog owners, your attention is more likely to be focused on your dog when he's misbehaving rather than when he's doing what you want. You may find yourself yelling at your dog when he's chewing on the couch, but ignoring him if he's chewing on his toy.

Dogs, like children, need frequent feedback about when they are doing the right thing. Too often, they don't get it. Make it a point to praise, pet, and even give your dog a treat the next time he watches the squirrels from the window without barking at them, he doesn't jump on you or your guests, or he's resting quietly on his bed while the family eats dinner.

To give your dog some extra help, help him to do the right thing before he has a chance to do something bad. When he looks like he may start chasing the cat, before he has the chance, call him to you, have him sit and reward him. Before he has a chance to jump up on your guest, tell him to sit, and give him a biscuit when he does.

Make it a family game to see who can remember to reward your dog the most each day, and who can think of the best ways to help your dog do the right thing before he has a chance to misbehave.

2. Stimulate your dog's mind

Over and over again we hear people say how smart their dogs are. That being the case, then it's easy to understand why dogs need to exercise their minds. In addition to basic training classes, there are all kinds of fun sports you can do with your dog, including flyball, agility and a great new one - Rally™ -where you and your dog are judged on the execution of a single, continuous performance of numbered exercises on a course. Go to the American Kennel Club's

Copyright Animal Behavior Associates, Inc., 2004. Permission is granted to reproduce this material **in its entirety**, for **free** distribution (NOT for resale) which must include source, authorship and all contact information for ABA, Inc. Excerpts are prohibited without specific permission from ABA, Inc.

website (www.akc.org) and look for Companion Dog Events for more information about these and other options.

Help your dog occupy her time when she's left alone. While perhaps not directly mentally stimulation, dogs enjoy chewing on things. Toys that can be stuffed with food are great choices. Goodie Ships™, Goodie Bones™, and Busy Buddy™ toys are all available from our website (Go to Products for Pet Owners, training and enrichment).

3. Reserve time for daily play and exercise

While dogs can adapt to "couch potato" time, they need both physical activity and social time with you. Make it a priority to carve out even 10 minutes every day to play with your dog. Include your dog in your family's activities as much as possible.

Consistent play helps build your relationship with your dog. Fetch, hide and seek, tug-of-war (as long as your dog isn't possessive) are fun for both you and your dog. You can use play times to work on 'give', 'sit', 'wait', and 'OK'. Teach your dog to 'give' the toy, have her 'sit' and 'wait' while you throw it, then tell her it's 'OK' to go get the toy.

Daily walks or runs are good exercise and can be great socialization experiences for your dog. Prevent aggression problems from developing by taking treats along. Teach your dog to sit for a treat when greeting new people.

If your dog plays well with others, a romp in a designated off-leash dog park could be a weekly treat. Or consider a day at doggie day care.

4. Show affection to your dog

Well-socialized dogs love to be close to people and be touched and petted. While individual dogs vary with how much petting and time with you they need, most dogs are like sponges, soaking up whatever you can give them.

Petting and body massage can be a great way to help your dog learn to enjoy handling, grooming, and mild restraint. As you pet and stroke your dog, make it a point to touch his feet, lift up his lips, fondle his ears, and touch his "privates". As you touch sensitive areas, give your dog a

Copyright Animal Behavior Associates, Inc., 2004. Permission is granted to reproduce this material **in its entirety**, for **free** distribution (NOT for resale) which must include source, authorship and all contact information for ABA, Inc. Excerpts are prohibited without specific permission from ABA, Inc.

special tidbit. If your dog learns from a young age to enjoy having any part of his body touched, it will make veterinary care and grooming both easier for your dog and safer for his care-givers.

Teach your dog what you want her to do when he wants to be petted. Your dog needs to have a way of politely asking for your attention. Rather than giving into barking, pawing or jumping up, teach your dog to sit quietly when he wants attention. Ignore unwanted pestering, but pet and cuddle your dog when he sits or lies down near you.

5. Spare the rod

Physical punishments are not good choices for discipline. Hitting your dog damages your relationship, can result in your dog being hand shy, or make your dog fearful or aggressive to you and others. We don't recommend 'popping' your dog on the nose, holding her muzzle closed, scruff shaking, pinning, jamming your hand in your dog's mouth, or throwing objects at her.

Rather than thinking of how you can get your dog to stop misbehaving, think instead of how you can get her to do what you want so you can reward her. If punishment is necessary, think of what your dog wants that you can take away as a result of misbehavior.

If your dog is pulling on the leash, stop moving forward. Your dog is pulling because she wants to go faster. If pulling takes away the chance to do so, she'll learn she can't pull if she wants the walk to continue. If your dog jumps on you, walk away from her. She's jumping because she wants your attention. When she keeps all four feet on the ground, give her the petting she wants. While the 'take-away' method isn't the answer for every situation, you should try using it before you consider other options.

Visit www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com to learn much more about your dog's behavior. Start with our booklets "What Dogs Need and How They Think", or "76 Ways to Get Your Dog to do What You Want". You'll be amazed how our two-week telecourse "Just Behave", will improve your relationship with your dog. Let us help you become the pet parent your dog deserves!



Copyright Animal Behavior Associates, Inc., 2004. Permission is granted to reproduce this material **in its entirety**, for **free** distribution (NOT for resale) which must include source, authorship and all contact information for ABA, Inc. Excerpts are prohibited without specific permission from ABA, Inc.