

## Helpful Ideas for Dog Management



Living with dogs is very similar to living with children. We provide them with shelter, nutrition, playtime and we keep them safe. But when it comes dealing with problem behaviors, most pet-parents are at a loss, because they often try some of the same techniques with the dog as they would with a 2 year old child, which typically consists of “No, don’t do that!”, followed by, especially in the dog’s case a lot of yelling out of frustration!

While dogs and 2 year old children are capable of understanding a limited vocabulary, the frequently used, “No” may startle the dog or child, but much more important, it does NOT tell the child or dog what you’d like him to do, therefore it is so much better to approach all training and behavior in a systematic way.

Just like having a toddler in your home, you must “dog proof” the home. This is the first tier in preventing all sorts of issues. So for example:

Pick up valuable or hazardous items so the dog cannot chew them.

Close off access to areas that you do not want the dog to be (especially if they are not toilet trained, or have regressed in their training).

Limit the dog’s living area with [baby gates](#) to an area where they can be safe when someone is not around to supervise them as well as when you have visitors who “frighten” the dog.

Some dogs can regress in their potty training or they’ve never been reliable. In either case, especially when a behavior suddenly changes, a veterinary visit should be in order to rule out another reason for the new behavior. That said and if the dog is healthy, then here are some tips

Keep the dog on a consistent schedule of food and potty time.

If you let dog into your backyard, make sure you accompany them and have very high-value food in your pocket to reinforce them **immediately** after they potty. Waiting until they come back into the house to get rewarded, only reinforces coming back indoors. They need feedback **when** the behavior happens or doesn’t, and not minutes later. It is physiologically reinforcing for dogs (and humans) to relieve themselves, however we add a bonus of a high-value reinforcer to show them **WHERE** to potty and in some cases it motivates them to potty quicker and not pay attention to other distractions in the yard.

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Go around your house with a black light to find areas where your dog has soiled. You may not see or smell it, but your dog has a superior sense of smell and he will continue to target these areas. Once you've located the areas clean or have them cleaned using a powerful enzyme remover. Regular "detergent" cleaners will NOT work! Try products like [Nature's Miracle](#) or others that say "enzyme remover".

Keep your dog away from these trigger areas. Even if the odor has been removed, your dogs could also be attracted to the visual trigger as well as the tactile trigger.

Dogs need so much more than just the basics of food and shelter, and just like raising children, their brains need to be enriched with problem solving activities. Dogs who live in an "impoverished" environment may sleep all day out of boredom, gain weight and or decide to take up some destructive or annoying behavior. So here are just a sample of things to do at scheduled times. I say scheduled because it predicts something to the dog and therefore he's more likely to settle down during the "off times", knowing that , for example, a fun activity is scheduled for 2:00 pm.

Be creative at meal times and feed the dog out of a [puzzle toy](#). This enriches the dog's experiences and having been successfully challenged, the dog will settle down for the morning/evening. Puzzle toys, unless they're appropriately sized [Kongs](#), need supervision, as most puzzles are made of plastic or fiberboard and could be hazardous if chewed.

Get a [treat pouch](#) and load it up with your dogs' kibble and as an alternative to puzzle toys, use the behaviors your dogs know (SIT, DOWN, COME, SHAKE PAW etc.) and use his meal as a reward for responding to your cues.

Find some safe chew-toys that can be given to also occupy their time. Many dogs after an enjoyable "chew bone" will nap.

Schedule some playtime in the afternoon and play a game of tuggie, fetch, or save cereal boxes and hide treats inside and have the dogs hunt for the food, letting them rip open the boxes (also great fun when supervised) to get at their treasure. Experiment with the kinds of games and activities that your dogs likes.

All these things are meant to provide the dogs with a reliable schedule of food, potty and playtime which should change some of the undesirable behaviors. Notice that we're not yelling, "NO!" but rather showing the dogs what we'd like him to do such as potty outdoors, play a game instead of developing annoying behaviors and settle down in a safe secure area that has been provided with beds or mats and access to water.

As for appropriate behavior around children, this is where the STRICTEST of management must be implemented. Dogs, unless they have been raised with positive experiences around infants, toddlers, children of all ages, can be suspicious of them which can translate to fear/aggression. And while it may seem logical to punish the dog

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for growling at children, it is dangerous for all concerned and it will NOT make the dog friendly! You would no more punish a frightened child for being afraid of the dark and expect that he'll now find the darkness a fun place, so it doesn't make sense to punish a dog for being afraid of children. The dog's fear will manifest itself in many ways , among them barking, lunging, growling, biting and or leaving the room to escape. Pet-parents and parents of children MUST keep dogs and kids separate and safe. There are many protocols to change the dog's emotional response to kids, but that must be done by an educated professional who can implement a plan. But regardless of the behavior-changing plan, the first step is to make sure that the child cannot make contact with the dog. When you have children visiting, the dog should be in a safe place with toys to occupy him as well as keeping him on the potty schedule and the children also kept in a safe area with something to occupy them.

Following these three tips will make living with your dog so much more enjoyable:

1. PREVENT undesirable behaviors from being practiced with the use of gates, or other barriers and supervision.
2. TRAIN the dog to do desirable behaviors by rewarding these behaviors, with food, play or activities and give dogs their meal from a puzzle-solving toy.
3. CHANGE his emotions with the help of a qualified, knowledgeable professional when the dog is displaying fearful/aggressive postures.

Happy Training!