

# How To Raise a Well-Mannered Dog



# HOW TO RAISE A WELL-MANNERED DOG

If you're anything like us, the volunteers of Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue, you've heard all the stories, seen all the movies, read all the novels and believed the gospel: the dog is the most loyal, faithful, noble, eager-to-please creature on earth. So you decided to get one. And now you're asking, how come *mine* is a little bit *nuts*?

Well, as they say, welcome to the real world. Dogs, like people, arrive on Earth uncivilized; so, if they're denied proper training, they grow up to be less than ideal members of the community. If they're to reach their full potential as our loving, loyal, lifelong companions and helpers, they need a little help.

That is the purpose of this brochure.

# WHY BOTHER?

Chances are, your dog misbehaves only some of the time, under certain circumstances, or only around certain creatures. Some people minimize their dogs' bad manners, telling themselves it's no big deal that Rover chews on the family Bible, goes into a frenzy when another dog comes into view, or pretends that "come" means "go" just when they're trying to show him off to the neighbors. Such antics, they say, may be bothersome, but still, they aren't life-threatening.

Trouble is, they can be. *Behavior problems can, and often do, lead to tragedies.* If he chews when he's lonely, what if he gnaws on an electrical cord? If he doesn't listen when you tell him the mail carrier's okay, what if your neighbor's child tries to pet him through the mail slot? If he doesn't halt when you tell him, what if he spots a flirtatious lady dog across a busy highway?

It isn't just that civilizing your dog can save his life. Truth-be-told, the most important reason for dealing with behavior issues is this: you get closer to your dog, and he gets more in touch with you. And isn't that the whole point of being together?



# YOU CAN *PREVENT* MISBEHAVIOR BY STARTING DOWN THE RIGHT TRACK *EARLY*.

Puppyhood is the best time to set your dog on the best course by leveraging his natural instincts to instill good manners. So:

1. Give your dog a safe place that's all his: a *crate*. Some unenlightened folks perceive crating as cruel, but in fact it's precisely the opposite. Your dog sees it as a private refuge, a sanctuary, the canine equivalent of your bedroom. In short, his den. Nature tells him to keep his den clean, so the crate will not be soiled. Gradually, you will teach him to perceive the entire house as an extension of his den. See the bibliography at the back of this brochure for books that address the selection and proper use of crates as training tools.
2. Feed a high-quality diet on a regular schedule. To exert your leadership position, have the dog "come" and "sit" (or "down") before eating. Always feed in a quiet place safe from the threat of another dog stealing food. Your dog will soon realize that life is good in your pack, and nature will tell him he owes you respect.
3. Take him for a walk every day. And take time for play, too. Nothing beats aerobic exercise to take the restless or bored dog's mind off the idea of chewing your Gucci handbag and running the cat onto the roof again, just for something to do.
4. Neuter/spay him/her. Don't fall for the old myths, *e.g.*, that sterilization will make the male dog slothful and the female fat, or frustrated for lack of puppies. Males tend to become a bit more manageable (not exactly a problem) and your female's inclination is to please you, not puppies; besides, her weight is easy to control with exercise and diet.

# HOW TO PREVENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS FROM HAPPENING. EVER. WELL, PRACTICALLY NEVER.

Success in training a dog is like mastering a martial art. It isn't about force or power; it's about understanding nature and working with it. And, studies have shown that hitting and yelling at a dog are *never* effective training methods.

## Step One: Appoint Yourself Leader of the Pack

Today's behavior training is based on taking advantage of the dog's inbred, natural desire to be a member in good standing of his pack. If a dog senses that the pack has no leader, he will follow nature's law and fill that position himself. Whereupon you don't have a dog — your dog has you. Dogs who take on the leadership role tend to become more anxious and prone to behavior problems.

In dogdom (like human-dom), leadership goes to whoever claims and holds it. So, declare yourself *The Leader*. Your dog, believe it or not, will be happy to go along with the idea.

Fine, you ask, but how do I do that? It comes down to doing what leaders do: *Lead!*

- Eat first. Your dog sits or lies down until you're finished. When feeding your dog, have the dog sit and stay for several seconds, then place the food in front of him. Do NOT feed him from the table.
- When your dog brings you a toy to play with, always ask the dog to sit and stay, then you initiate the play. Always ensure that you terminate the play.
- When you and your dog are entering or leaving the house or a room, or even just going down a narrow hallway, you go first. Have the dog sit and await your permission to follow you. Every time.
- When you and your dog are going for a car ride, put your dog in a "sit-stay" until you give him permission to get into the car. At the end of the trip, allow him to exit only when you give permission.

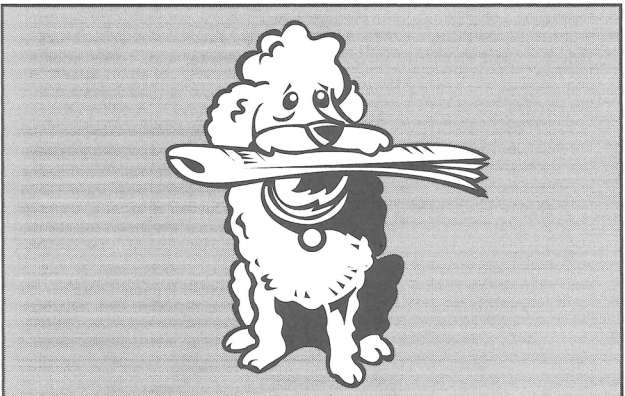
- Have him do at least a ten-minute “down-stay” daily. That practice supports your authority, and it calms better than Valium®, without any side effects.
- Ensure that you do not comfort your dog when he is afraid. Dogs perceive this as weakness and lack of leadership, and comforting will reinforce the dog’s fear.
- Practice obedience work with your dog every day, preferably in the presence of distractions, *i.e.*, people and other animals. Strive to incorporate this obedience work into the dog’s daily life, as well as spending a few minutes in the morning and evening totally dedicated to practice. Remember — dogs enjoy learning new things. Keep your practice sessions brief, fun, and upbeat!
- Resist, for now, the temptation to allow the dog on your bed or sofa, a privilege he’ll perceive to be a sign of equality with you, the pack leader. Maybe later.
- Practice the “Look” exercise daily: with the dog in a sitting or standing position, stand before him and ask him, in a pleasant voice, to LOOK you in the eye. The instant he does so, praise him lavishly. If he doesn’t look at you (which is likely), move a forefinger slowly from near his eye to your own, saying, again, “LOOK!” When his eye meets yours, lay on the praise! If he immediately looks away, repeat the exercise until he stays with you and you know he’s got the message.
- Don’t play tug-of-war with your dog. When you let go of the toy, he’ll think he’s stronger than you are, and therefore that he is leadership material. “Fetch,” where you toss an object and he retrieves it for you, is a much better game. Always tell him to “drop” the toy when he brings it back to you. Do not “wrestle” it from his mouth.

Once your dog sees that you’re the leader, he’ll happily acknowledge your place. Nature will soon take over and tell him to show his respect and regard for you, his pack leader.

## Step Two: Socialize Your Dog

Young dogs, like young people, learn certain things *at certain times*. So,

- When the puppy is between 3 and 8 weeks of age, it's time to introduce him to other dogs. Doing so will make a major difference in his behavior around them later.
- Between 5 and 12 weeks, make sure he meets new people, so that he'll be comfortable in a world where not everyone looks, moves and smells the way you do. With luck, he won't see every uniformed postman as an invader and every child as a threat to his place in your heart.
- Between 5 and 16 weeks is the time to expose him to a range of novel circumstances (a kitten, a car ride, the pond) to let him learn that new things are not always threatening. Introduce him to new sounds, too — the vacuum cleaner, the electric trimmers, a recorded thunderstorm. This is an important age to get your dog accustomed to things like brushing, bathing, nail trimming, ear cleaning, tooth brushing and handling. Play with your puppy's ears, tail, feet, and mouth. Put your hand into the food bowl while he's eating to discourage him from food-guarding behavior later in life. Lift his lips and rub lightly on his gums in preparation for a lifetime of brushing his teeth. These simple practices now will make for a much more well adapted dog later in life.



### Step Three: Train Your Dog

Here may be the most satisfying step of all: enroll you and your dog in an obedience training course. Continue at least through the onset of your dog's social maturity, which occurs at 1½ to 2 years (or up to 3 years in some large-breed dogs).

Obedience training enhances the relationship with your dog by establishing a common language and thereby improving communication between the two of you. Without training, your dog pretty much hears “blah, blah, blah” when you ask him to do something, and he does not understand what you are saying. With training, you'll “read” each other better, and your dog will actually choose to follow you and ignore tempting distractions like other dogs, a cool lake, picnicking lovers and the aroma of tasty entrails somewhere in the woods. Just as when he's in a pack, your dog will screen out everything else, watch and listen to *you*, and do what *you* ask.

The *type* of course you enroll in is critical, so take some time to explore the options and trainers in your area. Look for a trainer who uses only positively oriented, humane methods and has kept up-to-date on contemporary training theories and philosophies. We believe that positively oriented methods greatly enhance the relationship between you and your dog and build trust — in contrast, harsh or punishment based methods damage (or even destroy) that relationship and build fear. Be sure you ask questions of prospective trainers, such as “What methods do you use to ensure that a dog knows his owner is the leader of the pack?” and “How do you use positive methods to train a dog to obey?” If possible, observe a class given by the trainer before signing up and make sure you are comfortable with his or her methods and style.

Obedience training helps you raise a dog you can be proud of. The dominant dog learns to respect his owner, the submissive dog gains confidence by doing things right and being rewarded for it, and the fearful dog learns that other people and dogs won't hurt him.





## But What If It's Too Late For Steps 1-3?

We won't kid you, even the best-behaved dog, just like the best-behaved kid, is never perfect. So, if your dog develops a real behavior problem, the toughest job, and the most crucial one, is the diagnosis. If the diagnosis is correct and the appropriate treatment is applied, real progress will be made. But an incorrect diagnosis may result in *inappropriate treatment that makes things much worse*.

We have some suggestions on finding capable help, but first let's define the more common behavior problems.

### 1. Aggression

*Dominance aggression.* Ninety percent (90%) of dominant aggressive dogs are males, and because this behavior is learned, males should be neutered at approximately 6 months of age. Dominance aggression is also correlated with social maturity, appearing at age 1½ to 2 years. Often, owners unwittingly encourage dominance aggression by deferring to the dog's initial, non-aggressive challenges, or failing to correct inappropriate behavior. Punishment only worsens the problem.

*Territorial and protective aggression.* Territorial aggression intensifies when a dog is in a confined space (e.g., a car, crate or fenced yard) or restricted on a chain or leash, but it diminishes when the dog is removed from his territory. Territorial aggression can be particularly dangerous when there's an electronic fence around the property. People who happen to walk onto the property may be attacked by the dog, who perceives them as invaders.

*Fear aggression.* When a normal dog is frightened, he puts his tail between his legs, cowers or hides. But the fear aggressive dog growls, snaps or bites. Since such a dog may sometimes attack only after being cornered, one should not turn away while backing off. Fear aggression may have its roots in the dog's genetic makeup, or it may result from poor socialization, inappropriate punishment or abuse. The known correlation between animal abuse and child abuse means that people who abuse dogs may also abuse children. It has also been suggested that abused children are at risk of becoming dog abusers.

*Inter-dog aggression.* Usually seen between same-sex dogs, it becomes apparent by social maturity (age 1½ to 2 years). Prevention includes early socialization as well as neutering/spaying at approximately 6 months of age.

*Predatory aggression.* Dogs who bark and bound after moving objects are less dangerous than those who silently stalk their prey. Immediate action is essential the first time stalking is observed, because such a dog may perceive a crying, squirming infant as wounded prey. Interestingly, once the child can sit up, he's far less likely to trigger the dog's predatory behavior.

*Possession Aggression.* A dog who will not give up toys or other objects may simply be stubborn but one who growls, shows teeth or tries to bite has possession aggression. To prevent this behavior, teach your dog the "leave it" and "drop it" commands so your dog knows not to steal objects and will readily give items over to you.

*Food-related aggression.* Prevention includes feeding the dog on a regular schedule in a quiet environment where he will not be disturbed. Do not give bones or rawhides, and instruct children not to walk near the dog with food in their hands.

## **2. Separation anxiety**

Separation anxiety is a condition in which a dog becomes anxious when separated from his or her owner(s) or other pets in the household. It is typically brought on when a submissive dog is not shown enough leadership and the owner allows the dog to train him/her. When the owner leaves the dog's sight, the dog can no longer "tell" the owner what to do and the dog panics.

Separation anxiety can be exacerbated by owners who are excessively emotional when they depart from and return to the house. It is more commonly seen in emotionally "attached" dogs and in older dogs for whom household circumstances have recently changed (*e.g.*, a household move, children leaving home, etc.). The dog may destroy furniture, urinate/defecate in the house or howl for prolonged periods when family members are absent from the house. Punishment usually increases the severity of future episodes.

To prevent separation anxiety, leave and return to the home calmly, at first for short periods, gradually extending the time away, thus desensitizing the dog to being alone. Feeding and play time should not take place until at least 30 minutes after you return to the house.

The above discussion provides only a brief background on the more common behavioral conditions. It is by no means complete, nor do we promise you that our advice will always work. Successful resolution of a problem hinges on competent diagnosis and therapy of the individual case.

**It is always best to consult your veterinarian and/or a qualified animal behaviorist for accurate diagnosis and recommended treatment before attempting to tackle a behavior problem on your own!**

## NEED MORE HELP? READ ON:

If your dog exhibits behavior problems, don't lose heart. Take some time to try to modify your dog's behavior. If it isn't working, don't give up; seek help. Treatment can resolve almost every problem. Suggested courses of action:

- Ask your veterinarian for a referral to a qualified animal behaviorist or contact the Animal Behavior Society (<http://animalbehavior.org>).
- Ask your veterinarian for a referral to a veterinarian who is board certified in behavior and a member of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. For a list of veterinarians with an interest in behavior (but not necessarily board certified), contact the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (<http://www.avsab.us>).
- Dog obedience trainers who have significant experience with behavior problems may help with minor problems, but do not use a trainer if you have a major problem like aggression. If your trainer can't help or provide a referral, contact the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (<http://www.nadoi.org> or 729 Grapevine Highway, PMB #369, Hurst, TX 76054-2085) or the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (<http://www.apdt.com> or call 1-800-PetDogs or 1-800-738-3647).



## SUGGESTED READING:

*The Power of Positive Dog Training,*  
by Pat Miller, 2001.

*Dog-Friendly Dog Training,*  
by Andrea Arden, 1999

*How to Say It to Your Dog: Solving Behavior  
Problems in Ways Your Dog Will Understand,*  
by Janine Adams, 2003.

*The Other End of the Leash,*  
by Patricia McConnell, 2002

*The Dog Whisperer,* Paul Owens, 1999

*Don't Shoot the Dog,* by Karen Pryor, 1999

*The Culture Clash,* by Jean Donaldson, 1996



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**DELAWARE VALLEY GOLDEN RETRIEVER RESCUE, INC.**

**60 Vera Cruz Road**

**Reinholds, PA 17569**

**610-678-4981 • [www.dvgrr.org](http://www.dvgrr.org)**

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