

How to Raise a Well-Mannered Dog



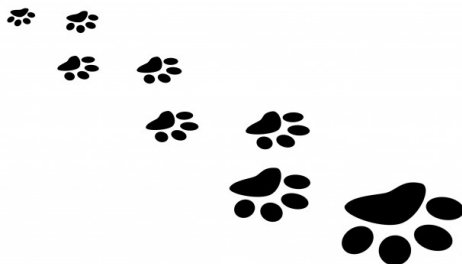
How to Raise a Well-Mannered Dog

If you're anything like us at Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue (DVGRR), 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?*"

Dogs don't automatically know how to live in the human world, 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 booklet.



Why Bother?

Chances are, your dog misbehaves only some of the time, under certain circumstances, or only around certain creatures. Some people minimize their dog's 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? ***Most importantly, a big reason dogs are surrendered to shelters and rescues is because of behavior problems. The ASPCA estimates that approximately 670,000 dogs per year are euthanized in shelters.***



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? Owning a dog is supposed to make your life better, not be a hassle.

Preventing Puppies from Becoming Problems

Socialization should have started with the breeder. As puppies' brains are developing, it is very important that they have lots of positive experiences. From a very young age, the breeder should have been getting them used to being handled and touched all over, as well as getting them used to household noises, like TVs and vacuums. Potty training can and should begin while they are still with the breeder. Between 3 to 7 weeks, they are learning to be a dog from their mom. It is very important that they don't leave mom and their littermates too soon, as there are important lessons they need to learn from them.

From 7 to 12 weeks is when they learn about people. Most experts recommend bringing your new puppy home at about 8 weeks old. While their vaccinations are not yet complete, it is the time to have friends come over and meet them. It is recommended that they meet 100 unique people in their first month in their new home. Because they are not fully vaccinated, it's best not to take them to public places where a lot of dogs of unknown vaccination status may convene. However, visiting homes of friends whose dogs are friendly and you know are current on vaccines is also a good idea.

Puppy kindergarten is the next step in raising a well-mannered dog from puppyhood. A well run puppy class will require puppies to have started their vaccinations, will have flooring that is easily and routinely sanitized, and will allow off leash play times, without allowing any puppies to bully others. Far more dogs die in shelters that were surrendered due to behavioral problems than ever get sick from attending puppy class. Socialization and training should not end with puppy class, however. Continuing to provide your dog with good experiences will only help him to remain a more stable dog.

How to (Hopefully) Prevent Behavior Problems from Happening

It is only recently that scientists have really started studying behavior of domestic dogs. They have found that harsh training, punishment, and using dominance to train dogs can be very harmful. The popularity of a certain TV show has given new life to the thought that dogs misbehave because they are trying to be dominant. Dogs need our leadership but not to be “dominated” by us. Remember, good leaders are not dictators. Dogs need to be taught how to live in our world, so we can all be happy together. To do this, it is much better to reward the behaviors we want our dogs to repeat. Punishment-based training methods only teach dogs what *NOT* to do, while reward-based methods teach them what they *SHOULD* do.

- Teach your dog to sit. Ask him to sit for treats, for petting, before playing with a toy, before going out the door, before you feed him his food, etc. He will learn to sit or say please automatically when he wants something.
- Practice obedience work with your dog every day. Always use praise and reward the good behavior. It's better to teach him what you want him to do rather than tell him what you do not want him to do.
- Teach your dog the “look here” cue. Hold a treat in front of his nose and bring it up to your eyes. When he makes eye contact, praise and reward. The more he learns to look at you the more likely he will focus on you at times of distraction.
- Give your dog a safe place that's all his: a crate. Some 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. When he will be crated, a stuffed, frozen Kong® toy will help occupy his mind.

- Feed a high quality diet. Feed on a regular schedule, always asking him to sit and wait as you put his food bowl down. Another idea is to feed him from food puzzles and food-dispensing toys. It'll help tire him out, mentally and physically, thereby helping to eliminate bad behaviors stemming from too much energy.
- Provide physical *AND* mental exercise. Walks not only provide physical exercise, they help socialize your dog and engage his mind. Allow him time to stop and “smell the roses” or fire hydrant. Mental exercise includes food puzzles, training, and other things to tire out his mind.
- Neuter/spay him/her. Don't fall for the old myths that sterilization will make the male dog slothful and the female fat or frustrated for lack of puppies. Follow the recommendation of your vet as to the age to spay and neuter. For some breeds they may encourage you to wait, and for others, they may want spayed or neutered earlier.

Training Your Dog

“Dog training is not a luxury, but a key component of good animal care. Everyone who has a pet should understand that basic fact. Training is a way to enhance the quality of life for our pets. It is far more than just teaching a dog to do a cute trick. Training is about teaching a dog (or any animal) to live in our world safely.” ~ Ken Ramirez

- Training should not be a chore; it does not need to take huge blocks of time from your day. One tip is to spend the few minutes during commercial breaks to practice some cues or tricks.
- Enroll in basic obedience classes that use reward-based methods. Avoid trainers who use punishment, choke, prong or shock collars. These methods work because they cause pain when the dog does something wrong. Most people do not get dogs with the intention of causing them pain.
- Find new ways to have fun with your dog. Other classes you could try include things like tricks, nosework, agility, or even dancing with your dog or herding large balls.
- Training using rewards will enhance your relationship with your dog. It will teach you both to communicate with each other.

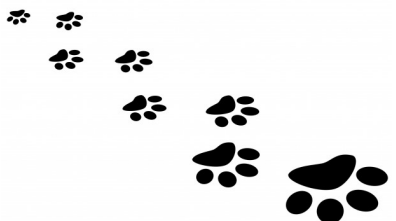
Finding a Trainer

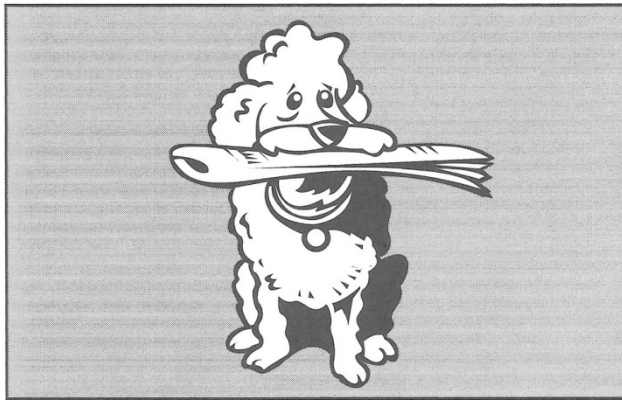
The dog training industry is not regulated; anyone can say they are a dog trainer and start taking on clients. Do some research before choosing a trainer.

The Association of Professional Dog Trainers is a membership organization. Anyone who pays the fee can join, so being a member does not necessarily mean they are a positive trainer. So do your homework.

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers tests and certifies trainers.

Pet Professional Guild trainers have taken an oath to use only positive, force free methods.





Common Behavior Problems

But what if your dog already has some behavior problems?

We already discussed how to find a good trainer, and we'll talk more about what to do if you need more serious help than just a basic obedience course. But here are a few of the more common behavior problems we see in dogs surrendered to us.

Aggression or Reactivity *(best if treated by a professional)*

Aggression, either to other dogs, people, or other animals, is a problem best solved with the help of a real professional. Aggression can be caused by so many things – from lack of socialization to abuse or neglect, among other things. The solution, no matter the cause, is the same. First, you'll need to manage your dog so that no one gets hurt. Secondly you will need to change how the dog feels about the thing toward which he aggresses. Again, this is a serious issue best solved by an experienced trainer or behaviorist.

Reactivity is when the dog barks, lunges, or otherwise gets overly excited when he sees another dog, person, or animal. He may not want to fight or attack the offending being; he just gets overly excited. Again, this may be due to so many reasons and often frustration or fear is at the root of it. Untreated, reactivity can

progress to aggression. Like aggression, it is best solved with the help of a skilled professional.

Separation Anxiety *(best if treated by a professional)*

True separation anxiety is less common than many people may think. A dog that chews up the sofa cushions when left alone may just be bored. A dog that destroys a crate, jumps off a second floor balcony, or breaks through a plate glass window when left alone probably does have separation anxiety. Fixing separation anxiety will most likely require medication to go along with behavior modification. You'll need to start by only leaving your dog for a second and returning and then gradually building up the length of time you go away. This can be a very difficult task as most people must leave their dogs for long periods to go to work. There are ways to try to prevent your dog from developing separation anxiety, and these are also good ways to keep a bored dog occupied. First, always leave him with something to do; a stuffed, frozen Kong toy or other food-dispensing toy is a good option. Or better yet leave him with several. Do not make leaving and returning into a big deal. Keep greetings calm. Play the TV or radio when you leave.

Barking

If your dog barks at every sound he hears or barks for attention, when he is excited and already barking is not the time to fix the problem. You must teach him to bark and "be quiet" when he really doesn't feel like barking anyway. When he is calm, ask him to bark, you bark yourself, get him all excited and barking. Then wave a smelly treat under his nose. He can't sniff and bark at the same time. Ask him to "be quiet." As soon as he is, reward with the treat. Practice at quiet times of the day, so he can learn the "be quiet" cue when he is more likely to be quiet.

House Soiling

Potty training a puppy is usually not a difficult prospect. Puppies need to potty after they eat, sleep, drink, or play. Older dogs can hold their bladders and bowels much longer. When a new dog first moves in, you need to show your dog where the proper place

is to relieve himself. Take him out on leash to his potty area and reward as soon as he potties. Do this often at first. Do not leave him unattended inside until you know he is reliable. Crates are also useful tools for house training.

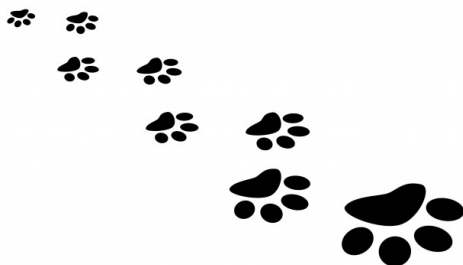
Pulling on Leash

Dogs pull on leash because they are excited to get where they are going. One method to teach them to stop pulling is teaching them if they are pulling they will *NOT* get to where they want to go. When they pull, stop walking. Wait until they loosen pressure on the leash and then walk. If they pull, repeat the process. Another alternative is to reverse direction when they pull. Simply say, “Let’s go” and turn around and walk the other way. If they pull in that direction, repeat. You won’t get very far at first, but your dog should learn that if he pulls, he doesn’t get to walk. For management of leash pullers, one of the most humane methods is a front attachment harness, like the Premier Easy Walk®. When the dog starts to pull, the harness brings his body around so he cannot pull. Head harnesses, such as the Gentle Leader® are another option but do require more training on the part of both human and dog to be comfortable, safe, and effective. We *NEVER* recommend choke, prong, or shock collars. In addition to causing your dog pain, they can cause injury.

Fearfulness

It is okay to comfort a fearful dog. Old fashioned trainers told you that by doing so, you would be rewarding the fear and make the dog more fearful. Because fear is an emotion, it cannot be reinforced or rewarded in this way. Helping a dog to conquer fears is done with patience, counter conditioning (changing the way he feels about the scary thing), and desensitization (gradually introducing him to increasing intensity of the scary things). These methods will work with anything from fear of people to fear of a vacuum cleaner to fear of thunderstorms. The most important thing to remember is to try to keep him feeling safe as you help him conquer his fears. We recommend Debbie Jacobs’ book *A Guide to*

Living with and Training a Fearful Dog as one of the best resources for fearful dog owners. She also has a Facebook group and web page.



The information above is a very brief outline of some solutions to common behavioral issues. It is by no means complete or meant to be the only resource you use to train your dog. Some behavior problems are best left to professionals to handle. See the section on “Training your Dog” for information on how to find a trainer. If your dog has more serious behavior issues (such as aggression, separation anxiety, or extreme fear) you may need the help of a Behavioral Consultant (see www.iaabc.org) or a Veterinary Behaviorist. To find a board certified veterinary behaviorist, see www.dacvb.org.

Here are some of the good sources of information we recommend:

Ian Dunbar and www.dogstardaily.com

Patricia McConnell

Jean Donaldson

Sophia Yin

Zak George

Victoria Stilwell

Karen Pryor

Pat Miller

Suzanne Clothier

Nicole Wilde

Debbie Jacobs

Nicole Skeehan





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***To donate visit:
www.dvgrr.org/support***

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Our mission is simple: Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue provides new beginnings for displaced Golden Retrievers and other golden-hearted retrievers along with a full array of adoptive and educational support.



DVGRR is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that receives no government funding. We rely solely on donations, memberships, event proceeds, fundraising campaigns, and the proceeds from our retail store, Pap's Place, to support our mission and rescue Goldens, Doodles, Labrador Retrievers, and dogs "with hearts of Gold."