

How to be the

Leader of the Pack

...and have your dog love you for it!

Love your dog =

Make him feel secure!

Using leadership skills will make a happy dog

The following suggestions are an effective and humane way to set boundaries without intimidation and to love your dog without spoiling him.

Love is not related to social status, and most dogs feel happier when they know they are not responsible for

making all the difficult decisions that leaders have to make. They prefer knowing that you are in charge and that *they can count on you as the family leaders.*

Petting feels really good to us (as it lowers our blood pressure and heart rate), and it's a way to tell our dogs how much we love them. However, when a dog comes up to you and pushes into your space and insists in some way that you pet her, she's demanding that you pet her. If you respond, you are teaching that she can insist that you cater to her. However, you can use your dog's desire for attention to motivate her to do what you ask. If you want to pet her, simply ask her to sit or lie down first. Now she is learning that by being patient and obedient she can still get what she wants, and you are the leader.

DOG DEMANDS PETTING....NOT CUTE!

Use your shoulder or elbow, leaning forward with your torso to **Body Block** as you look away. Then ask for a sit or a lie down, then pet!

Look "aways"...

If your dog gets "pushy" and demanding for your attention, simply cross your arms, turn your head upward and to the side from your dog. Looking away is the visual signal sometimes given by high-status dogs, towards subordinates and is very different than the hard, direct stare that some books tell you to give your dog. Be careful of assertive states to your dog—they are much more confrontational than a dismissive "look away", and might end up putting you at risk.

LIE DOWN AND STAY...

Teach your dog a good solid Lie Down and Stay. Start with one second delays for the first two days, then quickly work up to longer and longer ones during which your dog gets treats while staying, not when she is released. Go slowly, and your dog has to learn to stay through all kinds of distractions. Be very patient and correct with **Body Blocks**.

Wait at the Door!

You can handle the rush to the door in two ways; one is to say "sit" and "stay", going through the door first and then releasing the dog to follow you. However you can use Body Blocks to herd the dog away from the door, then block her again if she tries to go through first without you saying OK. Avoid using the leash – that is simply an admission to the dog that you have the no control. Control the space in front of the dog and you control the dog.

Integrate obedience into your day...

Instead of having one long, organized training session each day, your dog will be much better behaved if you integrate obedience into your dog's day, so it becomes part of her regular routine. It's easy – just ask her to perform some action whenever she wants something (like time for you to open the door, play ball, or to get dinner, etc.) Teaching Sit, Down and Stay can be easily integrated while you go about your day. The key is to understand that dogs will work to get something they want, your job is to know what your dog wants at that moment.

FOUR ON THE FLOOR!

Dogs interpret an increase in vertical height as an increase in status. Period. End of sentence. It's a symbol to us, but a synonym to them. Keep status-seeking dogs on the floor –not up on the furniture (especially if you are in the room). If you want to cuddle, you get down on the floor, ask for some obedience and then pet. If your dog isn't status-seeking and you've never had any trouble, then go ahead and invite him up to cuddle.

More Pack Leader Wisdom

- ✓ Teach "OFF" or "Leave It"
- ✓ Leaders are in the lead during walks
- ✓ Don't do "Alpha Roll-Over"
This can start fights!
- ✓ Dogs *do not* understand you better if you yell at them!
- ✓ And, the suggestions on this handout are not a practice you must follow every second of every day. How strictly you learn and follow leadership skills depends on your dog's behavior! Learn how to love your dog, not how to spoil him!

Dogs settle many of their status-related issues in play:

Pack leaders initiates behavioral change so you do the initiating behavior with toys, ball, tricks, etc. You should also be the one that stops the play sessions.

- Don't misinterpret sweet and loving behavior with pushy behavior!
- Beware: tug of war, rough and tumble wrestle pay usually allows your dog to be the winner....NOT WHAT YOU WANT! Teach them how to "release" during this play so you reinforce you are in charge.
- Over-arousal can sometimes lead to aggression in dogs.

A Word about food

There is no reason not to use food to initiate a new command with your dog. Just don't always give the dog food for compliance – or soon you will have a dog who only performs if you have food. Intermittent reinforcement is the key!

Much of the information presented here comes from Patricia B. McConnell, PhD on *How to be the Leader of the Pack, and have your dog love you for it*. Read more about being a Pack Leader, or talk with your local vet or dog trainer, to raise a happy and well-adjusted dog!

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