

Training

All pet owners go thru difficult periods with their dogs at some point. Behavioral issues are emotionally challenging. It is frustrating to have a bad dog. It is also easy to give into your dog and add to the existing problems. If you have never owned a dog before you will probably feel inadequate. You will wonder if it is something you are doing wrong. There are some simple things you can do to get your dog on the right track.

First, you are the master. Dogs need to establish their position in the pack. You must assert yourself as the dominant member of the family. If you give into your dog's bad behavior you are in a sense accepting that the dog is the boss. This is the most common issue with pet misbehavior. Many times they will treat you as a sibling and have no respect for you.

You must take into consideration that if you have a puppy, puppies are mischievous. A crate is wonderful for containing the puppy and training him/her to listen and obey. A crate is said to provide a safe secure feeling for the puppy. Puppies need to frequently use the restroom. Take this in to consideration. You should take your puppy out on an average every three to four hours. This will dramatically reduce indoor accidents! Also refer back to our Crate Training article.

Your dog may have behavioral issues like constant barking, or getting out of control on walks. **To have a well-mannered and well-behaved dog you will have to work with your dog. You must teach the dog how he/she should behave to please you. Corgis are people pleasures, this is not a difficult task. Everyone in the home should be involved in being consistent to the training and rewarding when necessary.**

Save yourself time and trouble by following the tips below:

- Use trash cans with lids and keep them sealed. Child-proof lid locks work well.
- Crate your dog. If your dog is young, new to the home or a proven trash thief, a cozy and well-appointed crate will put your mind at ease while you're out of the house.
- Clear the counters and tables of all food unless preparing a meal. Make sure each member of the household understands that even one slip-up on a person's part means many more weeks of training for the dog. Dogs who steal food see the kitchen as a doggy Las Vegas; they may get nothing, or it could pay off big-time.
- Supervise your dog. A dog who steals food should be on a leash or tethered out of reach of the counter while in the kitchen. (While being monitored) With your dog on a leash, teach an alternate behavior, such as a sit or down-stay, or a stay outside the kitchen's entrance. Only remove the leash once you trust the dog to

maintain the stay. While you're in another part of the house, make sure the dog does not have access to the kitchen.

- Create a diversion. If you catch your dog running his/her nostrils along the table rim, gently interrupt him/her and ask for a sit or down-stay.
- If your dog gets hold of something he/she isn't supposed to have, do what you must to get it back.
- Teach your dog to "leave it." Start by offering your dog a low-value treat in a closed fist. Say nothing. As soon as the dog stops sniffing and licking your fist, even for a millisecond, say "Leave it," and open your hand to give the treat. Work up to higher-value treats, extending the amount of time you ask your dog to wait. Begin using the "leave it" command as you present your fist.
- Make a "food bowl" zone. Show your dog there is an appropriate place to eat treats, but not off the counter. Put a place mat or food dish in a corner opposite the food-preparation area and place treats inside on a random basis. Combined with a strict policy of keeping food off the counter, the dog will learn to check the food bowl instead.
- Use counter-conditioning — literally. With your dog on-leash, place a very boring treat (or even a non-food item, if a treat is too exciting) on the counter. Stand beside the boring treat and tell your dog to "leave it." Before your dog has a chance to snatch the treat on the counter, drop a more enticing treat on the floor (or in his/her "food bowl" zone). Repeat, placing increasingly high-value items on the counter.

Positive Learning is a rewarding way to teach your dog or puppy quickly and effectively.

Positive training isn't about teaching your dog to stop doing something, but teaching him/her what you want him/her TO DO instead. For example, it isn't how I can get "Flash/Dog" to stop jumping, it's about teaching Flash to lay down when people come in the door. It isn't about getting Flash to stop chewing slippers, it's about teaching Flash to chew appropriate toys and ignore slippers. If you don't know what you want your dog to do in any given situation, your dog won't be able to figure it out either. So it's all about first picturing what you want your dog TO DO, not what you want him/her to stop doing. A communicating that in a clear concise way.

Let's say you want your dog to sit and stay when a squirrel runs through the yard or the mail carrier comes up the walk or someone walks in the door. These are pretty powerful distractions. In essence, you have to be more attractive than any of them. Let's face it, these distractions are worth the

equivalent of \$10,000 to your dog—and you're worth squat. Therefore, in order to get your dog to do what *you* want, you need to become worth more than these distractions and teach your dog in baby steps.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement means using rewards for behaviors you want your dog to do and repeat. When your dog performs the sit behavior for example, reward him/her. Give him/her a treat every time he/she puts his/her behind on the floor, and there's a good chance he'll/she'll keep putting his/her behind on the floor. Start the training process in a non-distracting environment and gradually add more challenging distractions until he/she reliably stays in a sit position even with a squirrel running by. The key is to have realistic expectations of what is possible for your particular dog and simply progress from kindergarten to a college level of reliability.

To do this, we use two simple methods:

1. **The Magnet Game** : Simply wait for the behavior to occur, then let the dog know that what he/she just did thrilled you to no end by rewarding him/her with praise, a scratch behind the ear, and especially treats. In essence, the “sit” behavior attracted the treats, just like a magnet attracts iron.
2. **Step-by-step training a/k/a “School”** : Use a visual prompt such as food, a favorite toy, or other object to lure the dog to do what you want, then praise and reward. Gradually add more distractions. By the way, your dog will have to be at a “college” level of “sit/stay” to be successful with a squirrel running by.

The difference between the two is that in Method 1, you don't ask for the behavior but reward your dog whenever it happens to occur. For example, you're watching television and you see your dog sit on his/her bed. You then say “good dog” and throw him/her a treat. In the second method, you are asking for the behavior and then rewarding him/her. Both methods are used throughout the day until the dog realizes a certain behavior (like “sit”) is always worth a reward.

Using Treats in the Training Process

But does that mean you always have to use treats? Absolutely not. Once an association is made, you simply begin to reward your dog on variable reward schedule until eventually treats are unnecessary. In human terms, think of a Las Vegas slot machine. At first you put money in the slot machine just for fun. But once in a while you actually win. That occasional jackpot keeps you playing. It's the same with positive training. At first your dog gets a treat every time he/she sits, then you gradually wean him/her off treats but he'll/she'll continue to sit because every once in a while he'll/she'll get a jackpot. Of course he's/she's still being praised and petted so his/her interest always remains high. We recommend using high quality treats.

Stay away from greasy foods and commercial dog training treats that list ingredients like by-products, artificial coloring, and/or additives; wheat, soy, corn, and sugar.

You can shape virtually any behavior you want. All you need to do is: 1) Catch your dog doing something and reward him/her in the act (The Magnet Game); and 2) Teach your dog what you want him/her to do step-by-step (School).

It's just a matter of being consistent, communicating in clear terms what you want your dog to do and managing your environment so your dog can't get into trouble while the training is taking place.

If your dog is aggressive or has moderate-to-severe behavioral problems, a professional trainer is needed. Always err on the side of safety. You can learn a lot about positive dog training from books and DVDs. However, it can be fun to join a group class at a Petsmart, Petco, and/or any Pet Academy. We suggest interviewing the trainer before hiring him or her. Find a trainer who uses positive training methods.