

Dog Behavior Tips

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King County

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Introduction

The objective of this book is to give you a quick and easy overview of the most common dog behavior problems and their solutions. A more detailed description of training procedures can be found in any of the books in the "Suggested Reading" list.

My goal is to help you understand why your dog is behaving the way he is and what you can do to change unwanted behavior. You will notice as you read that I frequently warn of the unfortunate effects from using any form of punishment as a modifier of behavior. The only way you can build a bond of mutual trust between you and your dog is for you to praise good behavior whenever it is displayed. A dog learns to repeat behavior; that is rewarded with praise and/or food tidbits. A dog learns to be shy or aggressive whenever his behavior is punished.

Verbal praise is given with a slightly higher pitch in your voice and with lots of expression. A happy tone in your voice, a smile on your face and a kneeling body position will tell your dog that you are pleased with his progress. A pat on his chest at the time of verbal praise will reinforce your expression of happiness.

Dogs have a keen sense of hearing. They learn best when commands are spoken softly and firmly. Consistency and simplicity in giving commands will hasten the learning process. For example, use the work "Off" to stop a dog from jumping on you. Avoid screaming, "Get down, dammit!" There are three key essentials in the learning process for changing unwanted behavior: a verbal reprimand, a command, and a reward. If your dog is jumping up and planting his front legs on your chest as you walk through the door, scream, "Off!" (the reprimand). Say, "Sit," (the command). Give praise by excitedly saying, "Good dog!" (the reward). A dog that has a tendency to jump up on you will learn that he gets lots of smiles and praise when he comes up to you and sits. A dog lives for our approval!

A dog is easily trained by the use of food tidbits as lures and rewards. If you want your dog to pay attention to you when teaching him to walk on leash, carry a food lure in your hand. When he responds correctly to your walking commands, give him a food treat as a reward. Reward correct behavior every time it occurs. Then, slowly begin substituting praise for food rewards each time correct behavior is displayed. Once the command is learned, offer a food reward intermittently as this will "fix the learning" and will prevent him from becoming a beggar!

Behavior problems are quite often medically related. Before trying to solve a behavior problem, make sure that your dog is healthy. Establish a relationship with a good veterinarian.

Please consider adopting your dog from an animal shelter. Get him altered as soon as possible so that you will not contribute to the horrendous canine overpopulation. There are lots of intelligent and companionable dogs found in our local shelters. Mixed breed as well as purebred dogs will give you many years of love and affection. If you must select a purebred, acquire him from a responsible breeder who will guarantee his health and proper socialization.

I have avoided using the term "owner" in referring to you. You are your dog's protector, friend, guardian, and caregiver. Too many people who "own" a dog think they can "sell" or "give him away" as soon as he misbehaves. Adopting and protecting a dog are commitments to the lifetime of the dog!

Pet supply stores have lots of items to help you solve behavior problems, from vibration alarms and flea control products to silent whistles and geriatric beds. If they do not have what you need, look through any popular dog magazine, and you will find a variety of advertised products.

Throughout this book, I refer to your dog as "he." My apology to you caregivers with female dogs! To be fair, in my book on cat behavior problems, I refer to your cat as "she." I have properly used the term "neutering" in this book as gender neutral. To neuter a dog is to spay her and castrate him.

After having been the guardian of several dogs in my lifetime, the best advice I could give to you, if this is your first dog, is RELAX! Accept the fact that a dog is going to sleep on your bed once in a while, leave a few hairs on the carpet, and drink out of the toilet. Keep a patient perspective! A dog will also curl up at your feet when you really need someone to love and is always ready to keep you company in the car. Your dog will give you more companionship than you ever dreamed of and will ask for little in return!

Guardianship of your dog will cost you a little money. Did you think you would get fifteen to twenty years of love free?

A New Way of Thinking About Dogs

In the past we have thought of ourselves as "owners" rather than "stewards" of our dogs. Stewardship implies commitment and caring. Too often, as "owners," we think of dogs as property. Therefore, when our dog develops a problem, often because of our own ineptness and lack of understanding, we get rid of him instead of getting rid of the problem. When we choose to become the steward of a dog, we are making a commitment to that dog's lifetime which, with some dogs, can be twenty years or more. Giving up a dog for adoption because of a behavior problem is not only traumatic to us, it is psychologically harmful to the dog as well.

Many dog problems are really people problems. Making a lifetime commitment to a dog is understanding that natural dog behaviors, such as barking, digging, and chewing, can be changed with patient consistency in establishing your leadership. Many misbehaviors are caused by boredom, overabundance of energy, loneliness, stress, lack of leadership, or medical problems. With information, you can help your dog overcome these causes. Bonding involves building a trust between you and your dog. This trust can be built only by establishing your leadership, showing or telling your dog what behavior you expect, and giving lots of praise for good behavior. Having a leader is essential to a dog's security.

Before any of this can be done, you must choose the right dog for you and your family. A dog which may be a problem for you might be a pleasure for someone else, even though his behavior is the same for both. You must be aware of his activity level and his ability to get along with humans. It does not matter whether you choose a purebred or mixed breed dog. It is more important to know how well he can adapt to stress. This will determine whether or not he will have a behavior problem. Stress can be caused by being left alone at home all day, tied up or punished.

You can inadvertently teach your dog to misbehave. For example, your puppy runs barking to the door upon hearing the doorbell ring, you pick him up and say, "That's okay, that's okay, it's only Martha. You don't need to bark." You have just told your puppy that his behavior is okay. By picking him up, talking to him in soothing tones, you have reinforced his behavior. Instead, the pup should have heard a firm verbal "NO!" followed by a "SIT" command and then, "GOOD DOG!" when he sat and stopped barking.

Physical punishment should never be administered to a dog. Hitting, kicking, and screaming are forms of punishment which do not help to establish a bond, the trust needed for a dog to see you as a fair but firm leader. Verbal praise and a good rub or two on the chest is all a dog really needs to know that he's receiving approval. Training a dog to sit/stay, down/stay, etc., is important in establishing your role as leader. Absent a leader, a dog will assume leadership.

Food tidbits can be used as lured and rewards during training sessions. After learning has taken place, only occasionally reward with food, but keep up the praise to maintain the learning level. Be sure to be consistent in your commands and corrections, using the same ones each time. If you must reprimand your dog, do it with a firm, "NO!" always followed by a simple command, such as "Sit," then, "Good Dog!" This praise, following a reprimand, maintains the bond. Use a quiet, steady voice in giving commands.

Dogs have an excellent sense of hearing. Raising the volume and repeating the command numerous times will not help. Say it once, use the food tidbit lure, expect the correct behavior, and wait. Then repeat. Your dog will eventually perform, and then you can praise and reward him with the food tidbit.

Try to understand the motivation for your dog's behavior. If your dog is digging, ask yourself why and try to eliminate the cause. Filling the hole with water and sticking his head in it is a futile attempt at treating the symptom rather than the cause. Also, this is a form of abuse and breaks the bond, thereby increasing stress and creating more behavior problems.

Many behavior problems are medically based, so if your dog suddenly starts messing in the house, whining, or chewing, see your veterinarian for a thorough check-up.

To adopt a dog is to make a commitment to care for his health, solve his behavior problems, give him praise, and provide leadership. To reduce his stress, give him plenty of exercise, good food (no table scraps), and do not physically or emotionally abuse him for behaving badly. If need be, take him to an obedience training class to help establish your leadership.

To Adopt an Adult Dog or a Puppy

Every member of your family who is going to live with this dog should be present and participate in his selection. Family commitment is an important first step.

Try not to make the mistake of selecting a dog based on your past experience. Some people choose a dog like the one they had when they were growing up, or they select one just like the one that died. Not all dogs of the same breed are alike! In fact, two dogs from the same litter can be totally different. Before making your selection, know what kind of personality best describes you and your family, then find a dog that will fit your personality.

If you consider yourself to be highly assertive and have a very active, busy family, you will probably be happiest with an assertive, outgoing, very friendly, and vivacious dog. You may not be as happy with a shy or submissive dog.

Some people, however, greatly enjoy shy, quiet, submissive dogs. These dogs are excellent for senior citizens or for people without children. They take less effort to control and are happy with a quiet, laid-back life-style. Assertive, high energy, outgoing dogs will need more training and obedience work. Be willing to give time for this effort. It will eliminate your having to solve future behavior problems.

There are many ways to find out about the personality of purebred dogs. You can go to the library and read about dogs. You can talk to breeders, behaviorists, veterinarians, and others who work with dogs. Before you decide where to get your puppy, let me advise you to find out as much as you can about the puppy's mother and father, his litter relationship, socialization, and his health. As a general rule female dogs tend to be less dominant than males and would be a better selection for young children.

A mixed breed will be every bit as good a friend and companion as a purebred and have fewer inherited genetic defects.

Do not select a pup whose mother is surly or cranky. A pup will mimic his mother! Make sure that the puppy has been taken out of the litter from time to time to be handled and played with by a variety of adults and children of both sexes. A pup should be socialized to other dogs and cats. You want this pup to grow up liking the warmth and affection offered by people and other animals.

Sometimes the runt of the litter is not a good selection because he has to fight for space at the lunch counter and is picked on by the bigger, more dominant dogs. Runts can grow into adult dogs with a competitive, fight-for-your-rights attitude. Make sure the pup you select is of a proper weaning age, generally around eight weeks. Early or late weaning can result in adult behavior problems.

Consider the following in selecting an appropriate puppy. In a litter of puppies determine which is the active, dominant one as well as the quiet, submissive one. The latter would probably not be good for a family with children but fine for a single or elderly person where there will not be as much excitement or activity.

Check for assertiveness. A pup who mouths and chews your hand is more assertive and will require a firm hand in training. Cradle the pup on his back in your arms. If he struggles to get down, he is independent and may be difficult to train. Hold him out at arm's length, and if he shows no fear, it indicates that he is trusting you as his leader. Put him on the floor and gently pinch him between his toes and on the fold of skin on his flank. If he shows very

little sensitivity, this high pain tolerance indicates that he would be a better adoption for children.

Throw a set of keys alongside of him. If he goes to the keys, smells them, and wiggles all over, this is a good sign. If he acts fearful by withdrawing, he may not be able to tolerate the loud noises and unpredictable behavior of young children.

Take the puppy to a quiet area. Bend down, clap your hands, and call him. If he comes happily wiggling all over, this is a good sign. If he does not, he may be aloof and independent as an adult dog.

Here are some tips on selecting an appropriate adult dog. It may be difficult, but find out as much as you can about this dog's past. You may be adopting a dog with a behavior problem. On the positive side, most behavior problems are solvable and, contrary to popular notion, you can teach an old dog new tricks! It just takes a little longer and a lot more patience. A definite plus in adopting an adult dog is that someone did not want him, and, if you do and are patient and caring, you will have a devoted friend for life. Look for a dog that is happy and active, not one that is fearful, withdrawn, or aggressive. Keep in mind that wherever you look for an adult dog he will be under tremendous stress, having just been given up or picked up as a stray. As with a puppy, check his tolerance for noise with a set of keys. If he withdraws, he may be shy or fearful, but a patient single person or an adult family could help him overcome his fear. If he returns your glance with a glazed stare, this indicates distrust and aggression. He would not be a good adoption for a family. Take him to a quiet spot and find out if he likes to play, be held, walk alongside, and act equally responsive toward all members of the family. If he was not properly socialized as a puppy or was abused, he may react fearfully to a particular member of your family who may remind him of a former abusive person. The last thing to check is his health. Adopt him on condition of a veterinarian's satisfactory examination. An advantage of adopting an older adult dog is that you save yourself the craziness of those puppy years. Also, an older dog is more likely to be content with being left alone all day. The advantage of adopting a puppy is the absence of learned behavior problems.

Selecting an Appropriate Dog for Children

Congratulations for giving consideration to your children in making your selection! Most of us choose a dog we like, not really thinking about ones that will get along well with our children. Of all the factors to be considered in selecting an appropriate dog for children, the most important must satisfy the question: Will he be patient and tolerant with occasional abuse, whether it be purposeful or accidental, from children? Children are more often bitten and hurt by dogs than are adults. There are reasons for this. Children are physically closer to the height of a dog. Children sometimes tease a dog. Children are more readily put into a subordinate role by dogs.

If you are considering getting a purebred, look at the recommendation of breeders, animal behaviorists, veterinarians, and trainers concerning the likelihood of a particular breed to bite children. One helpful book is Lynette and Benjamin Hart's "The Perfect Puppy." Through surveys they rate certain purebreds on their incidence of "snapping at children." Keep in mind, however, that no matter what breed you select, there is a tremendous variability, even among dogs of the same breed. I would like to stress that mixed breed dogs make excellent pets for children!

Of course, you must spend time educating your children about the proper handling of a dog. This is more important than the type of dog you select. In preparation for the final selection, you must decide whether you want a puppy or a full-grown dog. The advantage of choosing a puppy is that you can educate both of these "children" together. For example, a puppy will need to be taught bite inhibition. Your child will need to know how to teach this. The advantage of choosing an adult dog is that he will not be quite as rambunctious as a pup and will be more easily managed. Before adopting any dog, however, it is essential that you know his history. Was he properly socialized to children? Has he ever been teased by a child or has he ever bitten a child before?

Generally, females are less aggressive than males. However, this only holds true for spayed females. It is not a good idea to adopt the runt of the litter because he has learned to fight for a place at the lunch counter and aggressively to defend himself against his larger dominant siblings. If you are considering adopting a puppy, be sure you know that the mother is a gentle, non-aggressive dog. If possible, find out about the father's disposition as well.

Also make sure the owner has socialized the puppies to children. Do not select a pup that is less than eight weeks old. They need to be with their moms for that length of time to feel secure as a dog.

Whether you choose a puppy or an older dog is not as important as knowing that proper socialization took place and that the dog's parents were not aggressive.

Introducing an Adult Dog to the Home

There are several important reasons for taking care to introduce your dog properly into your home. How he behaves in the future depends largely on the parameters you establish for him in that initial introduction.

Plan to stay home with him for at least a week. Be patient with his behavior for three or four weeks. It takes time for him to get over the stress of being surrendered by his previous caretaker. Give him time to make the adjustment to his new home.

Keep him in the house during this three to four week period to allow him a chance to become comfortable with the household routine. Take him outside on a leash only to go for walks or for housetraining routine.

Your new dog may already be housebroken. If he is not, there are reasons for this. A change in diet is going to cause some digestive upset until he is accustomed to the kind of food you are serving him. Feed him a good quality dry dog food twice a day and give him water only at feeding time. After he is housetrained, water can be available at all times. Do not feed him table scraps or give him any between-meal snacks. Within an hour after feeding and watering him, take him outside to the place for urinating or defecation. Do not punish him for having an accident in the house.

A dog needs lots of exercise and prefers the company of people. Take him for walks. Take him with you in the car. If he must be left alone for long periods of time, do not leave him tied in the yard or confined in a garage or basement.

Leave him in the house. Before you leave him, however, take him for a long run or play with him for at least thirty minutes. When you leave, do it without fanfare. Turn on a radio to keep him company.

Most dogs want to sleep close to their caregivers, so a doggie bed in or near your bedroom will comfort him and eliminate nighttime behavior problems such as barking, whining, and wandering.

To lengthen your dog's life and to keep him healthy, get him neutered and keep him in your house or yard.

Never physically punish your dog by hitting or screaming at him. The way to teach a dog is to tell or show what you want him to do. Catch him doing something right, then use verbal praise, food tidbits, or a pat on the chest to reinforce this good behavior.

Introducing a Puppy to the Home

Your new puppy should be adopted when you will have time off to give him that good start which is so important. Remember, a pup will be under a great deal of stress leaving his former home or temporary shelter and learning about your home. He will miss the companionship of his littermates, have a tummy upset from a change in diet, and will be unsure of you, his new caregiver. This is one of the most upsetting transitions in a young puppy's life—going from canine companionship to human. The first impression or imprinting you make will shape his long-term behavior.

Beginning with the ride home, it is important for you to let the pup sit next to you in the car. He may even want to crawl on your lap for security. Give him lots of pets and hugs on the way home. If he whines, do not try to reassure him with words or by cuddling. Words of assurance and touching will reinforce and encourage this behavior in the future. Touch and talk to him when he is not whining. Also, if he gets carsick, say nothing. Just clean it up when you get home. If you make a fuss over his first carsickness, a lifetime of carsickness may be imprinted.

Upon first arriving home, take the pup to where you want his permanent toilet. Wait until he goes, then praise him profusely. Take him in the house and let him roam and investigate at will. Put his food and water bowl near the door where you will let him outside to eliminate. During the remainder of the day, take him outside periodically to eliminate. He will need to go especially after eating, drinking, playing, and waking from a nap. Take him to his toy box and show him his chew toys. Take a toy out of the box and give it to him saying, "Chew, Good Dog!" Young pups have a great need to chew, especially at the four to six month teething time. Do not put any items of clothing or shoes in the toy box. He may get the wrong idea when he sees these on the bedroom floor. Take him outside to eliminate after a vigorous chewing session. Remember to praise him each time he eliminates outside. Never scold, hit, or rub his nose in the mess in case of an accident inside. Accidents will happen during the first three week settling in period. A quiet, calm, consistent approach to training with lots of laughs will build a bond quickly.

A puppy will feel most comfortable sleeping in your bedroom or a family member's bedroom. He should never be left alone those first few nights in another room, the garage, or the basement. The trauma of this will result in stress that will manifest itself in behavior problems later on. Put his bed right alongside yours and remember to take him outside upon his first awakening in the morning for he will have to urinate immediately. Eventually, he will sleep until your first stir.

Change over gradually from his former food to your choice of a high quality food. Add a little of the new food to his old food each day for about a week to avoid digestive problems.

Housetraining

Puppies are easy to housetrain. They have circuitry built into their brain which tells them not to urinate or defecate in their den. Their den is your house!

Puppies are like babies. They make mistakes until they are completely housetrained. This is normal and you should not be upset with your pup if this happens during the first several weeks of housetraining.

Before starting a discussion of how to housetrain your older dog, we must first rule out poor health. Health problems usually result in house soiling problems. So, get a thorough medical check-up for your dog before you do anything.

For whatever reason your dog is soiling in the house, let's proceed as if he had not been housetrained and start at the beginning. An older dog, or a pup, that messes in the house does so because he has not been taught the boundaries of his den. In nature, dogs do not soil in their den. So, you must teach him where to go and how to let you know that he needs to go.

It takes patience and a bonding which teaches him to trust you. He needs to know that you are going to teach him where to go and that you are not going to punish him for forgetting and doing it in the house. A dog does not have the ability to relate punishment after the act with the act. A dog that makes a mess, comes wiggling up to you, then gets his nose rubbed in the mess, cannot figure out why he was punished for wiggling up and greeting you. Punishing a dog for making a mess in the house will create stress and cause more messes as a way of relieving that stress.

The best thing to do if your dog has an accident during the training period is to say nothing, clean up the mess with soap and water, overspray it with a 25% white vinegar mixed with 75% water solution which masks the odor. Then, continue the training.

The training is simple. First, feed and water him twice a day. After he has eaten and had his drink, take the bowls away. A dog that eats and drinks all day is going to poop and pee all day! About an hour after eating and drinking, take him outside for a brisk walk, then take him to where you want him to go. Stay with him until he goes, and when he does, give him lots of praise. Take him to the same spot each time. For a very young pup, it is a good idea to take him outside every hour. Be sure you go out with him to give him praise for going. Yes, this process requires a lot of patience and time. Plan on taking a week to accomplish the housetraining. This is nothing compared to a human animal! If he has an occasional accident in the house, you can place the feces in the yard where you want him to go and the odor will encourage him to go there in the future.

Just before bedtime, take him outside for a walk and if he goes, give him lots of praise. Let him sleep in your bedroom during the housebreaking period. This becomes a sleeping den. Most dogs will not soil their den. (I say "most" because dogs who are raised in filthy kennels and cages will be very difficult to housetrain. The imprinting for not going in the den is broken for these dogs.)

Prepare a special bed or you can train him to use a crate. A crate is a kenneling box with a door into which your dog goes to spend the night. He will feel perfectly comfortable in a crate and he will not be able to roam the house. First thing in the morning, upon his stirring, take him outside to urinate. Give him lots of praise.

A most important step is to teach him the signal for letting you know that he has to go outside. Each time you take him out during the day, stop at the door, wait until he sits, say, "Good Dog!" then open the door and go out with him. After a while, he will learn that going to the door and sitting is the signal for letting you know that he needs to go outside. Some dogs will improvise on this by going to the door and letting out with a little "woof" or by scratching the door. Do not let him out if he scratches the door or you will have a door-scratching dog. Wait until he stops, then open the door. It should not take more than a week to housetrain your dog following this training plan.

Introducing a New Dog to an Existing Dog

Two cats are better than one, but this is not always true with dogs. Many dogs do enjoy the companionship of their own species. Some, however, are very devoted to their human companions and resent having to compete with another dog for attention. You will find out what your dog prefers. Naturally, there will be some jostling for attention when a new dog appears on the scene. But in a few weeks you will all settle into one happy family.

It is important that your existing dog be well-trained and not have any annoying behavioral problems before you introduce another dog into your home. The reason for this is that dogs mimic. For example, if your dog is an excessive barker, the new dog may mimic this habit. If you have firmly established your leadership, then your existing dog will be a model of good behavior for your new one, and behavior problems will be kept to minimum.

The best choice for a new dog is one that fits your family's personality and one that is about the same temperament as your existing dog. Choose one that is the opposite sex, younger, and smaller. This will reduce same-sex rivalry and make the new dog less threatening to the existing one. Get the new dog neutered as soon as they are old enough. If they are ready at adoption time, have it done before bringing them home.

Be sure the new dog has a clean bill of health, including shots and de-worming, before bringing her home to expose your existing dog. Bathe and groom your new dog before bringing her home. It is less traumatic for your existing dog to get used to the odor of one dog rather than several. Also, there will be less tendency for your existing dog to mark his territory against all those other dogs he smells on the new one.

Introduce the dogs outside. In fact, if you can leave them together outside for a day before bringing them into the house, this will reduce their tendency to mark in the house.

However, if one dog does mark in the house, say nothing, wash the spot and spray it with white vinegar and water solution. As soon as the dogs have worked out their dominant-submissive roles, urine marking will diminish.

If the dogs get into a scuffle, growling, snarling, and fighting, let them be as long as they are not really hurting each other. Your tendency may be to rescue the underdog. It is important for you, however, to go to the dog that comes out on top in this scuffle, probably your existing dog. This recognition will help him establish dominance. One of these dogs will have to be dominant, the other submissive. After you have reinforced the dominant dog, go to the dog who comes out worse in the scuffle to help her understand and accept submission. Once they feel secure in these roles, the fighting will cease. Do not forget to give the existing dog the same amount of attention as before.

Introducing a New Dog to a Cat

Cats and dogs can become good friends. They can be company to each other, providing needed exercise chasing through the house or yard. Dogs bring so much happiness and pleasure into our lives that it is not surprising that you are considering adopting one as a companion for you and your cat!

Inter-species introductions follow the same basic rules of adoption as same species, i.e., choose a dog that is younger and of the opposite sex of your cat. It would be best to choose smaller also but only an eight-week old puppy would fulfill this requirement. A puppy is a more acceptable choice to an existing cat for two reasons. Most puppies have not had a chance to discover how much fun it is to chase a cat. The second reason is that a puppy is less threatening than a full grown dog. If an adult dog has been socialized to cats, or if your cat has had a good relationship with dogs, the job of introducing them will be that much easier.

There are several things to consider before introducing a new dog to your existing cat. You must protect their health by making sure vaccinations for both are up-to-date and each is free of worms and fleas. Cats are very territorial and do not appreciate any change in their environment. Therefore, no matter what, this will be a stressful situation for your cat. Be sure your cat is mentally and physically healthy before introducing her to a dog. Ask a friend to bring the dog to your home. Be sure the dog is on a leash and under control at the time of arrival. Your friend can then turn the dog and leash over to you. If your cat does not run and hide, let her make the first advances toward the new dog. If the dog displays any inappropriate aggressive behavior toward the cat, he should be quickly and firmly corrected with a slight jerk on the leash and a verbal "NO." This is the beginning of your assertion as this dog's leader and, as leader you will not permit him to chase the cat. After they get to know each other, friendly games of chase are acceptable.

After an hour or so of this controlled introduction, release your dog with leash still attached and let them come together. It is the dog's natural instinct to chase, so be prepared to grab the dragging leash and assert your leadership. Be warned! Your cat may go on the offensive. Be prepared to protect your dog's eyes or nose from scratches. Chances are very good that your cat is going to retreat to high ground and survey this new creature from a safe height while your dog explores the house. Your dog will adjust fine. Your cat will be under some stress and may take several weeks to act as she did before this newcomer arrived. Talk to your cat, give her lots of hugs and great food treats. Be understanding, and forgiving, if she sprays a time or two or if she jumps up on something normally off-limits. She will get used to the idea of having a dog around, and chances are very good that they will become best friends.

Advantages to Neutering

The term "neutering" refers to both sexes. Males are castrated, females are spayed. There are several myths about neutering that must be dispelled. Males do not begin acting more like females, nor does their bark become higher.

Males and females do not get fat and lazy after neutering. Weight gain comes from overfeeding and lack of exercise. Usually aggressive behavior toward people is not changed after neutering. Finally, there is no evidence that shows females to be better pets after having had a litter of pups. The age at which you neuter your dog is best determined by your veterinarian.

There are behavioral differences as a result of neutering, and they differ for males and females.

After castrating a male, you can expect to see a less aggressive position taken toward other male dogs. The male will be less inclined to exert his dominance over you and will be less predisposed to mount other dogs or people. Mounting is not just a sexual behavior but an assertion of dominance. After castration, the male will exhibit less urine marking in the house. He will be less inclined to roam for extended periods of time. It is estimated that these behavioral changes take place in about fifty percent of the dogs that are castrated. Do not expect castration to make your male dog calmer, less destructive, or better with children. Also, it does not seem to matter whether or not the dog is castrated in puberty or as an adult. For the sake of population control, I would urge you to castrate your male just as he is becoming fully sexually mature.

The main gain from spaying your female is that she will not contribute to the millions of unwanted puppies who are killed each year because of the lack of an adopter. As a warning, however, there is some research that indicates that early spaying, before six months, can result in submissive wetting and a degree of masculine aggressiveness in some dogs. This can be controlled with chemical hormone therapy. Also, there seems to be a five to ten percent weight gain associated with spayed females. This is due to their reduced caloric need and can be controlled by monitoring their diet. There are some medical benefits as well. For example, you no longer need to be concerned about ovarian cancer in your companion. From a selfish standpoint, I think a neutered dog becomes a better pet in that he becomes more attentive to his human family.

Urinating at Inappropriate Times

Here we are not concerned about urination as it relates to housebreaking problems. Nor are we concerned about territorial urination-urine marking. The two most common forms of urination at inappropriate times are excitement urination and submissive urination.

Excitement urination most commonly occurs with puppies who, like children, do not have complete control of their bladders. The scene is usually one in which you arrive home after being gone a while and your puppy or young dog twists and turns in happiness to see you, and you respond with animated speech and lots of petting. At the same time, he inadvertently releases a few squirts of urine. It is especially important that you do not get upset over this occurrence. This is an involuntary reaction, and any form of punishment, including scolding, will confuse and bewilder your pup. The best thing to do is to tone down your greetings. Walk in the house saying nothing to your pup. In fact, ignore him altogether. This gives him a chance to calm down. Once he has calmed down, you can then verbally greet him with something like, "Hi, Pup." Wait a few more minutes and then reach down and give him more time to get used to the idea that his friend and companion is home once again. After several sessions of quiet, calm greetings, he will learn to hold it because he will realize that he only gets attention when he does. It should not take much time to correct this problem.

Submissive urination is a natural response by a dog who is trying to tell you that you are the boss and he accepts his submissive role. Dogs who roll over on their backs and urinate when approached are signaling an extreme submissive position. Quite often a dog who has been physically punished – hit, kicked, slapped or verbally reprimanded in an abusive way – will exhibit this behavior. If you just adopted this dog and have not been the abuser but he is submissively urinating, then you must rebuild his trust in humans. If you are physically or verbally abusing him, stop it!

To rebuild trust or re-establish a bond with your dog, do the following. Teach him what it is you want and reward him with praise and a food treat for complying. This will take time. First, as soon as your dog starts to cower or roll over or begins to look like he is submitting, do not approach him. Wait and let him approach you. Then give him lots of praise. If he does cower or roll over and urinate, back off, say nothing, clean it up and try again. The important thing here is for you not to forcibly approach this dog. Let him approach you and reinforce his non-urination behavior by giving him a ton of praise. Eventually, he will learn that you are different from his last careless giver, and that you are not going to scold or hit him. Once he figures this out, the submissive urination will disappear, and a bond will be built between you that will be strong and will last forever.

Unruly, Excitable Behavior

The unruly, excitable dog is one who is jumping up on you, barging out the door, nudging visitors in the crotch, and pacing back and forth in the car. You can probably think of many more descriptions!

Some dogs by nature are more active, more dominant, and therefore, more difficult to handle. Some dogs are made that way by caregivers who are hyperactive, anxious, and excitable. A dog will eventually reflect the moods of his caregiver. If you are quiet, easy-going, and laid-back, your dog will tend to be this way, too.

Many of our modern day dogs are quite bored and under-exercised. Dogs were originally bred to do man's work of carrying, guarding, herding, and pulling. Today, dogs just hang around the house or yard. Dogs are very capable of learning and performing simple tasks but we seldom call upon them to do this.

Consequently, they assume jobs on their own. For example, a dog will herd us or our visitors. He will paw or nudge us for attention. He will jump up on us or mount our leg. All of these behaviors are representative of a dog who is bored, has had little exercise, and who thinks he is boss. In short, absent a leader, a dog will assume leadership.

To correct this situation, you must give your dog more exercise. This means ball throwing, Frisbee throwing, long walks, jogging, and swimming. You must teach your dog a variety of commands and reinforce them by daily use. The basic commands of sit/stay, down/stay, off, and come are essential for establishing your leadership. Your dog is more comfortable when behavior boundaries are set for him. His security is in knowing that you are the leader and that all he has to do is to follow your lead. An unruly, excitable, or overactive dog exhibits this behavior as a result of the stress from his not knowing who the leader is.

Teach your dog basic commands. Use a soft, but firm, reassuring voice. Be consistent. Each time, use the same verbal command for the expected behavior.

Plan at least six ten minute training sessions each day. Use food tidbits and praise as lures and rewards for learning.

If you suspect your dog is "hyper" because of some medical reason, see your veterinarian immediately, especially if this behavior has just started and is not normal. There are many treatable diseases which will cause hyperactivity.

Jumping on People and Furniture

Puppies naturally jump up on people as a way of greeting or expressing excitement. We inadvertently reinforce this behavior by verbally or physically responding to it. But before long the puppy is a dog and his greeting with paws on our shoulder, eyeball to eyeball, is not very welcome.

In the dog world, jumping up is natural! A dog jumps because he is showing an interest in playing. He jumps as a prelude to fighting, as the beginning of a sexual dance, or to assert his dominance. We unwittingly encourage this natural behavior by giving it attention. Some people even catch their small dog in a mid-air jump or pick him up by his shoulders and plop him on their lap. This tells the dog that jumping behavior is okay. Your high pitched, excited voice delights your dog and gives him the signal of approval. Some caregivers are inconsistent, allowing their dog to jump on the furniture but not on them. Jumping is jumping, and if you want to stop it, you must be consistent.

There are many things you can do to correct this behavior. Upon first seeing your dog after a long day, you must talk to him in a low, soft voice and get down to his level so there is no need for him to jump up to give you that kiss. You must give him more exercise to help release some of that jumping energy. You must be consistent. Jumping on people and furniture must both be stopped.

Obedience training will help establish your leadership so that when you yell "OFF!" the first time, your dog will believe it and will not repeat that mistake again. You yell because you want to startle him into attention. The key is to catch your dog in the act of jumping on something and then consistently give him the verbal reprimand "OFF!" followed by a command to do something else like "sit," followed by a food tidbit and/or praise. There is no need to knee your dog or step on his toes. If he jumps up on you, scream, "OFF!" Then, when he backs off, say, "Sit." Then, say, "Good dog!" Your dog will soon learn to approach you and sit. Keep food temptations off of the counters to discourage his jumping up on them. If he jumps on the counter, say, "Off." If he pays no attention, rattle a shake can (an empty pop can with a few rocks inside and the hole taped closed).

Teach your dog to jump on the bed or furniture by saying, "Okay," and after he jumps on, give him a food tidbit followed by praise. Then when you want him off, say, "OFF!" and complete the training routine. In other words, teach him to get on the furniture only when you give him permission with a verbal cue such as "Okay." If you never want him on the bed or furniture, never give him the verbal cue.

You can keep him off of the counters and furniture when you are not at home by using a vibration alarm.

Coming When Called

Your dog must learn that you are the leader and what you say is law. Your dog will test your leadership ability. If you are not assertive, he himself will assume the responsibility for leading. A dog that runs away or will not come when called is simply saying, "I am the leader and I will do what I please."

The best way to establish leadership is to begin a training program. Schedule a minimum of three fifteen-minute sessions per day and teach only one thing at a time. Do not go over fifteen minutes because your dog will lose his attention span and you will lose your patience!

The three most essential commands to teach your dog are "sit," "stay," and "come." The three are related. The training will begin in the house, but once learned must be re-taught outside. The distractions of being outside necessitate reintroduction and reinforcement of each learned skill. After you have taught your dog to sit/stay, walk him outside, with leash attached, and practice sit/stays. Once he trusts you and knows that when he is given a command he will get rewarded by verbal praise and a food tidbit, he will more readily come when you call him.

If this method does not work, put him on a thirty-foot light nylon line. Tie the line to a stake in the ground. Stand by the stake, then release him. Just before he gets stopped by the light line, call his name followed by "Come." If he does not stop or come, the line will stop him. Reel him back in to the stake and start all over again until he does come. When he finally does, give him a ton of praise, then try him off the line. After you have had success in an enclosed yard, try these procedures in an open space.

Do not ever call your dog and then punish him for some reason. He will quickly learn not to come when called. Do not give the command several times in quick succession. Say it once, wait, then repeat it. Do not go after your dog when he wanders off because this will become a game of run and chase. Be consistent in the way you give the command. Use praise every time a command is obeyed.

Leaving Your Dog Home Alone

Dogs get into trouble being left alone in the yard or house for long periods of time, simply because they are domesticated social animals. They love being with people. Today's busy family often finds itself absent from the home for long periods of time with the dog left alone. Most dogs who choose to engage in destructive behavior are simply bored or have built-up energy because of a lack of exercise. Since they cannot watch television or swing on the swing set, they do what they know how to do. They bark, chew, dig and jump on furniture.

The term which animal behaviorists apply to this behavior is "separation anxiety." One mistake that is made when leaving your dog is to try and allay your guilt by making a big fuss over leaving and saying things such as, "Now, you be a good dog. I will see you later. Bye, bye." This creates an even bigger sense of loss when you leave. Your dog now wants more attention than he would have needed. The result is frustration and anxiety which triggers barking and chewing behavior. Some dogs will pace and whine when you leave. The fear of being left alone or separated from you can even result in stress-releasing urination or defecation.

There are some things you can do to eliminate the problems resulting from separation anxiety. First of all, be sure to give your dog lots of exercise just before you leave. Turn the radio on for the comfort of hearing human voices.

Turn up the volume on your telephone recorder and call a few times during the day to say "hello." Hire a pet sitter to take your dog out for a walk during the day.

Be sure not to make a fuss when you leave. Just walk out the door and say, "Good-bye, Bob." Also, do not make a big fuss when you return because this will highlight the trauma of the length of time you have been gone and how much you have missed each other.

A good technique is gradually to condition your dog for being left alone. Leave for ten minutes, come back, and, if there are no problems, give him lots of praise and a food tidbit. Then, leave for twenty minutes, forty, eighty, and keep increasing the time until you have conditioned him for the amount of time you are normally gone. Be sure to maintain regular hours after this conditioning because the first time you are later than usual, he will misbehave as a way of relieving stress. As you are increasing the time each day, be sure that the length is sufficient to assure that there are no problems. If he misbehaves, shorten the time interval. The goal is to achieve success every time.

A few dogs do better with a companion dog around. You may want to try a friend's dog before making a commitment to this solution.

Chewing and Destructiveness

There are various reasons for destructive chewing. Pups need to chew when they are teething between the age of four to six months. They are like babies putting everything in their mouths. This is a pleasurable and necessary experience for them and must be handled properly or a chewing habit may be carried into adulthood. The best way to handle this problem is to soak several old wash rags in water, squeeze them out, and put them in the freezer. Whenever you catch your pup chewing, give him one of these frozen wash rags. The coldness will soothe his swollen gums.

Older dogs usually chew to release tension. There are several things you can do to help your dog feel more at ease. Try to avoid emotionally charged departures. When you leave, just say, "Good-bye, see you later." The greater fuss you make, the more anxiety you create. Establish your leadership through training. Dogs are more secure knowing they have a leader. Do not give in to his demand for excessive attention when you are home. The more you give, the more he will want and, when you are not there, he will be frustrated.

Do not isolate your dog as punishment for chewing. This will create more tension and lead to more chewing. Do not physically punish him for chewing. He is chewing to relieve tension, and punishment creates more tension, hence, more chewing. Instead, give him plenty of exercise before leaving him home alone. Exercise works the same way for dogs as it does for humans. It relieves tension.

If your dog insists on chewing, there are some things you can do to slow down the habit and redirect the chewing to permissible objects. Do not play tug-of-war games. This stimulates the oral/mouthing response. Get him a toy-box and fill it with permissible chew toys-nylon bones, racquet balls, rubber rings, and nylon rope. Do not put any personal belongings in this box such as old slippers, knotted socks, or any leather or fabric items. Whenever he chews on a personal belonging, say, "NO CHEW!" and lead him over to his toy-box, give him one of his chew toys and say, "CHEW," followed by "Good Dog!" This will teach him that he can chew but only if the item comes out of his toy box. If he has a personal item in his mouth, do not pull it out. Instead, distract him with one of his toys or a food tidbit. If this does not work, blow a whistle, pop a balloon, or blow a horn. A loud noise will cause him to release. Physical punishment for having this forbidden item in his mouth will only serve to reinforce this behavior. In other words, the chewing will continue and will, in all probability, increase in frequency.

The key factor in anything that you do is to establish a bond with your dog. It is essential that you spend time training him. Part of any good training program includes breaks for playtime. And, of course, lots and lots of daily exercise is absolutely necessary for reducing the stress of being left alone for long periods of time.

Follow this advice and you will establish a bond with your dog wherein he will see you as his leader and he will always try to please you.

Digging

There are many reasons why dogs dig. For some, it is characteristic of their breed. They are going after prey, real or imagined. Dogs that are confined to a yard have a great need to dig. During the winter, they dig to build a den or warming chamber. During the summer, they dig to create a cooling pit. Some dogs dig to escape. They want to escape because they are domesticated and, therefore, have a great need to be with people. Dogs also need to be with their own kind from time to time and, if confined, will dig to join their canine companions. Most dogs dig to bury bones and, later, to recover them. Whatever the reason, your solution to this problem will be to eliminate your dog's motivation for digging or to redirect the digging from an inappropriate to an appropriate place.

Praise your dog when he is not digging! Punishment for digging will create more stress and result in an increased rate of digging as a means of alleviating tension. Corrections, such as tying your dog to a stake in the hole, or filling the hole with water and pushing his head in it, are abusive. These often-mentioned tactics serve to break the bond between you and your dog.

A dog left alone all day in the yard will be bored. Give him plenty of exercise before leaving and, if possible, ask a neighbor to take him for a walk during the day. Better yet, give him access to the house through a pet door.

To redirect a dog's digging to a more appropriate place, you must be prepared to spend some time on training. First, create a "sandbox" or an area where it is okay for your dog to dig. Next, soften the soil and bury a food treat in your dog's presence. Say, "Dig!" and praise him for finding the food treat. Do this several times until he gets the idea. Then, take him in the house. Go outside and bury a food treat. Release him from the house with the command, "Dig!" followed by praise for finding the treat. Repeat this until the behavior is learned. After this, if he digs someplace other than his "sandbox," go out into the yard and firmly say, "NO DIG!" and immediately take him over to the "sandbox" and say, "Dig," followed by praise if he does so. You may have to continue this training schedule for several days and reinforce his digging in the "sandbox" by burying a food treat a few times each day. Do not give up! Your dog is intelligent and will figure this out.

Barking

Dogs bark just as people talk. It is perfectly normal. Just as some people talk too much, some dogs bark too much. Excessive barking or barking at inappropriate times can be corrected. It is easier to correct a puppy than it is to retrain an adult barker.

There are many reasons why some dogs bark excessively. Confinement in a home, yard, or kennel can result in excessive barking. The dog barks to attract attention because he is lonely or bored. Dogs which are not exercised enough bark to release tension. Some dogs are hypersensitive to every sound or movement around them. This may be a result of environmental training or breed characteristics. A dog growing up can learn to bark too much because his caregiver inadvertently reinforces his barking. For example, the puppy barks and the caregiver yells, "Quit barking!" The puppy interprets this verbal attention as a sign that you approve of the barking. So he continues.

We should keep three goals in mind in correcting excessive and inappropriate barking. Reduce the number of barks per session. Eliminate those situations or events that are causing the barking. Increase the length of the quiet times between barking sessions. It is not reasonable to eliminate barking altogether. It is okay for a dog to sound the alarm by barking a few times. Using methods such as shock collars or surgical removal of vocal cords are abusive and potentially lethal.

There are some basic training techniques that can be done to reduce excessive barking. First, get control of your dog through training. This will establish you as the leader, so when you give the command "No Bark!" he will instantly obey. Do not physically punish him for barking. Dogs do not relate punishment, after the fact, to the previous act. Praise him when he is not barking. It seems silly, but it works. Whenever your dog is just lying around being quiet, say, "Good Dog!" After the third or fourth alarm bark, say, "NO BARK!" When he stops, say, "Sit," followed by "Good Dog!" In other words, give a verbal reprimand for excessive barking and follow it up with a command and praise which indicates what you want him to do after he barks the alarm. Always use a soft, quiet voice forcing him to listen. If he barks in the house after you leave, change the way you depart. Act unemotionally! Just say, "Good-bye, Jack," and walk out.

If he is already into heavy-duty barking, start with the above retraining program. Use a deliberate set-up by leaving and quietly returning to check if he is barking. If he is not barking, go into the house and praise him. If he is barking, verbally reprimand him, give him a "down" command and leave again. If he is outside, the verbal reprimand might be accompanied by a horn or whistle to interrupt the barking. Be persistent in the training. Do not give up!

Fence Jumping

Dogs jump fences for many reasons. Mostly, they jump because they are seeking the company of another dog or a friendly person. They also go over the fence in pursuit of cats and squirrels. Some dogs jump the fence only to run around to the front of the house and sit on the porch. Unneutered dogs will jump fences to find amour. Dogs will jump fences to re-mark territory that was marked the day before on a walk with you. Some dogs, sensitive to a restriction of their freedom, will jump to release the stress that captivity produces.

Most dogs will jump a fence when the owner is not home. So, you must become a detective and try to find out when, where, and why your dog is going over. For the dog who jumps over the fence, runs around the house and scratches on the front door to get in, a pet door is the best solution, giving this dog easy access from the fenced yard whenever he feels the urge to go inside.

If your detective work has told you the "where" of your dog's jumping, then the best solution is to do one of the following things. Increase the height of the fence in that area. Erect an inner, shorter fence two feet from the outside fence. This will interrupt a running start. Plant a three foot shrubbery moat in front of the fence. Nail one-foot-long strips of wood to the fence posts at a forty-five degree angle into the yard and tie a rope all along the tips of these angled strips. Dogs will usually balance on top of a fence and push off from there. The rope barrier will stop that. Finally, you can fit your dog to a harness that loops around his rear legs and inhibits jumping.

If you know the "when," then you can prepare to interrupt his preparation for jumping by blasting a horn or blowing a whistle followed by a firm "NO JUMP!" Remember to praise him when he stops. If he is in mid-jump, try spraying him with water from a hose. Hide outside the fence and try not to let him see you with the hose. The goal is to let him think that the environment, not his loving caregiver, gave him the squirt. The hosing-down will put him on alert for what might happen every time he attempts a jump.

Eliminate some of the reasons, the "why," for jumping by leaving him in the house, instead. Do not allow him to urine mark territory close to your home. This way, other dogs will not be attracted to leave their mark, eliminating the need for your dog to jump the fence to re-mark. If you have not done so already, get him neutered. Since one of the major reasons for jumping is boredom and loneliness, take him with you or leave him with a dog sitter.

Food Stealing and Food Bowl Aggression

All dogs would rather eat human's food. Therefore, when food is left lying around, the temptation is too great for them not to sample. A dog that grabs and runs does so because of fear of punishment. Do not leave food lying around.

Teach your dog to sit out of the way while you are preparing food. Do not give in to his pleading eyes and reward him with a tidbit or he will become a constant beggar.

Teach your puppy not to be aggressive around his food bowl. Make him sit while you put the bowl on the floor, then give the command to eat by saying, "OKAY." Next, as he begins to eat, place a food treat, something he likes even better than his dog food, on your hand and put your hand alongside the food bowl, letting him take the treat. Say, "Good Dog!" Then, let him eat. Do this for several feedings. Then, place a food treat on your hand and put your hand on top of the food in the bowl. Let him take the treat. Say, "Good Dog!" Then, let him eat. Do this for several feedings.

The last step is to place your hand with the food treat on it, on top of the food, and while your puppy is taking the treat, remove the food bowl for a few seconds. Say, "Good Dog!" Put the bowl back on the floor and let him finish the meal. This teaches him that you control when he will begin to eat and whether or not he will eat. A dog that is taught this can be trusted around children who might be playing with him or with food while he is eating. This training should be repeated by every member of the family.

Eating Dangerous or Poisonous Objects

Puppies, young dogs, and some adult dogs are orally oriented. Just like human babies, everything goes in their mouths! This may be a habit left over from teething. It may be a way of releasing tension. It can even be breed-related. For example, Retrievers naturally pick up and carry things in their mouths. Whatever the reason, the problem begins when the item is swallowed.

The only safe bone for a dog to chew is hard rubber or pliable nylon! Giving your dog the bones of another animal to chew on is not a wise idea. Bones splinter and can lodge in the mouth, throat, or intestine.

Table scraps do not provide adequate nutrition and, therefore, should not be given to a dog. A little juice, left over from any dish, except poultry, can be poured over a high quality dog food. Poultry juice is very difficult to digest. Raw eggs should not be given to a dog because of the risk of salmonella poisoning.

Chocolate contains theobromine and even small amounts can cause restlessness and vomiting in pets. The lethal dose of theobromine depends on the size of your dog and the type of chocolate. As little as one-half ounce of baking chocolate can be fatal to your dog!

Obviously, drugs, liquor, and tobacco are dangerous to your dog. Many pills are sugar-coated and, therefore, are attractive to dogs. Anti-freeze is sweet tasting and dogs are attracted to it. A small amount can result in irreparable brain and kidney damage, if not death. The odor of slug bait is attractive to dogs, but ingesting slug bait is lethal without medical attention.

Some dogs swallow rocks and sticks. Many a veterinarian has had to remove both from these silly dogs with unusual appetites.

Most indoor, and many outdoor, plants are poisonous to dogs. It can be the leaves, berries, stems, or roots that cause the poisoning. The only plant easily identifiable and safe for a dog to chew and swallow is grass. Eating grass is quite often followed by vomiting and it is thought by some researchers that the grass acts as an emetic. Some researchers also feel that many dogs simply like its taste.

Chasing Cars

Imprinting left from centuries ago still triggers the chase reflex in many dogs. To run after and take down a noisy car, van, or motorcycle seems preposterous to us but possible to a dog. The key to eliminating the vehicle-chasing habit is to make the car such a fearful prey that the predator turns and runs away.

Ask a friend or relative to use his car as "prey." Your dog must not be familiar with this car! Eliminating this behavior pattern cannot be done quickly so your friend must be willing to drive by several times over a period of several days.

Your role will be to act fearfully. Your dog will sense your fear and will stay with, and protect, you, his leader. The first step is for you to walk with your dog toward the street and in the area of the starting point he uses to begin the chase. Next, your friend drives by. You allow your dog to break into a run. The driver slams on the brakes as soon as your dog begins the chase. The tires squeal. Your friend jumps out of the car dressed in a scary disguise and runs screaming at your dog and flailing his arms. You, acting and sounding fearfully, grab your dog by the collar and run with him toward the house. Upon reaching the house you act relieved and praise him for turning and coming with you. The vehicle is then driven away and the next set-up begins. For some dogs, just the squealing of the tires with the driver remaining in the vehicle and the owner retreating with the dog is enough of a learning experience. For others, the addition of an air horn wailing after the dog is necessary.

This process must be repeated until you no longer need to reverse direction, grab your dog and retreat back to your house. This may take several set-ups. When this much is accomplished, the same set-up must be made with you absent from the scene to test the degree of success. If your dog regresses, the procedure should be started anew until success is achieved. Periodic reinforcement may be necessary. Do not give up on this as it may save your dog's life someday.

Killing Animals

One of the most difficult behaviors to change is one where your dog has already started killing other animals. The two types of killing are accidental and predatory.

Accidental killing occurs when a dog is innocently acting out his curiosity by romping with, or throwing about, a small animal such as a kitten, a gerbil, or a mole. He is usually trying to get the small animal to play.

Dogs who kill by acting out their predatory instincts usually do not eat their prey. They stalk, lie in wait, and attack the animal at the base of the neck. These dogs are more difficult to correct.

Many dogs who kill have a history of too little activity with their owners. Also, some owners make the mistake of "sicking" their dog on stray animals, like squirrels, who enter their territory. This is interpreted by these dogs as an "okay" signal to attack and kill. Many animal-killing dogs are leader types who boss their caregivers and have taken over the house and yard.

The first step in correcting this problem is to establish firmly your leadership role with your dog. This can be done through obedience training or by the following method: You must ignore him completely, except to feed and let him go outside to the bathroom. Cut off all play and petting, and even avoid eye contact. Do all of this for at least three or four days or until he is craving attention.

The next step is to show affection only after he has responded to some instruction from you. This can be a simple "sit," "lie down," "stay," or "come." When you feel confident that you have established your leadership, borrow a friend's cat, a rabbit, or chicken, and teach your dog how to behave around it. You become the dog's emotional leader by acting happy at the appearance of the other animal. Before you do this, however, consider the safety of the other animal by putting your dog on leash and enclosing the "prey" animal inside a protective barrier such as a cage. Set it up so that you are in control. When your dog notices the other animal, act happy, give him a toy to play with. In other words, keep him emotionally involved with you. Whenever he pays attention to you, rather than the other animal, give him tons of praise - "GOOD DOG, GOOD DOG!"

Continue with this routine for several days until the mere appearance of the "prey" animal causes him to turn his attention to you, rather than toward it. Bring the two closer and closer together, still in a controlled setting, until your dog appears to accept the other animal. Ease up on the control and test your dog. If he responds by paying no attention to the animal and by giving you all of his attention, discontinue the training.

I would urge you to seek a professional animal behaviorist to help you work through this procedure with your dog.

The Aggressive Acting, Biting Puppy

A puppy who is biting you or someone else in the family is doing so because he has not yet learned the rules of playing with humans. Your puppy has not accepted his subordinate position in your family. He may be acting aggressively but, in fact, he is not considered an aggressive, dangerous dog. At this point, he is just an obnoxious pup who desperately needs to be trained.

The first thing to realize is that a puppy will put everything and anything into his mouth. He expresses himself with his mouth. During teething time at age four to six months, he has a great need to mouth everything. There are ways to change this behavior.

Please understand that your puppy is not bad if he is mouthing you quite vigorously. If you administer any kind of physical punishment when he bites too hard, he will eventually respond in kind. He will learn to defend himself whenever anyone raises a hand to him and will become a dangerous adult dog.

During teething time provide things for him to chew on. For example, soak old wash rags in water, ring them out, and put them in the freezer. Whenever he has a need to chew on you or the furniture, give him one of these wash rags to work over. Provide a box filled with chew toys such as nylon bones or hard rubber balls.

It is best not to play games where your hand is near his mouth. If you do, however, train him not to bite when you are playing. As soon as he begins to apply any pressure to your hand, scream as loudly as you can. Startled, he will release and, as soon as he does, say, "Good Dog!" Continue to do this until you see him noticeably inhibit his bite. He will learn that skin is tender and that he can only press down very lightly during play. Be sure each member of your family follows this same procedure. Never play with gloves on your hand. He may bite down harder without your knowing it, and the next time you play with bare hands, you may get hurt.

It is not a good idea to have tug-of-war games with old socks because he will have to bite down very hard to hold on which retards the previous bite inhibition learning. This advice pertains also to any kind of stuffed animal. The reason for this is that a small child may walk in one day dragging a teddy bear, and your pup, seeing a stuffed animal, may grab it for his own and inadvertently grab fingers as well.

If your puppy is biting and pulling at your jeans, tell him in a loud, firm voice, "NO!" Then, give the command, "Sit," followed by, "Good Dog!" He will soon learn to approach you and immediately go into a sitting position. Of course, teaching him to sit is part of his training program.

Beginning Signs of Aggression

Young puppies up to the age of six months will sometimes act aggressively and even snap at or bite someone. These beginning signs of aggression are usually easy to correct because of the pup's age, size, and lack of maturity.

Young dogs, six to ten months old, represent a different quality and degree of aggression but are still considered manageable and, through reconditioning, can be corrected. A dog older than ten months, who is acting aggressively and has bitten someone, is much more difficult to recondition, and the aggressive behavior can sometimes not be changed.

No matter what solution one tries, there is no guarantee that a mature dog who has already bitten someone will never bite again. You have a potentially very dangerous situation on your hands! The body language or signs of defensive aggression displayed by a puppy are: a prolonged direct stare, raised hackles, growling, showing his teeth, arching his body, and curling his tail between his legs. If any of these signs are present during the following circumstances, you should be concerned and need to get professional help:

- eating
- sleeping and suddenly disturbed
- being petted, especially when your hand is drawn over the top of his head
- approached by strangers
- approached by other dogs
- protecting toys
- protecting the house or yard
- being groomed or examined
- being around children

Any dog who is not trained, that is, does not understand his subordinate position to you, will try to become "top dog." One example of this is when a dog repeatedly jumps up on you. An out of control dog is like a belligerent teenager, always pushing to test the boundaries. This behavior can be a prelude to aggressive behavior.

Assert your dominance! Get your dog trained! Teach him to respect you and others near and dear to you. If you are concerned about your dog's aggressiveness, seek the guidance of a professional dog trainer. In the meantime, confine or muzzle your dog whenever people are present.

Biting Dogs

There are many reasons why dogs gradually or sometimes suddenly become aggressive. It is always frustrating and sad because it usually means the demise of the dog. A dog that is repeatedly biting, leaving bite marks or drawing blood, must, for the safety of others, be confined, be muzzled, or be put down. How do dogs get this way, and what, if anything, can we do about it?

One cause of aggressive biting is pain. For example, a dog may bite if touched where there is a growing tumor. He may bite if he has a severe case of indigestion or a bladder blockage. If you suspect pain as the cause, see your veterinarian immediately.

There are at least two normal causes of aggressive biting. One is maternal protection of pups by the mom, and another is inter-female or inter-male rivalry. Here, the best advice is to properly socialize your dog at a very early age, to people as well as to other dogs. Sometimes, hormonal medication will effectively treat the aggression in these dogs.

Some dogs bite because of in-born neurological problems. A genetically excitable or aggressive dog can have this behavior accentuated by an environment that overstimulates him. The solution is to place him in a calm, quiet, low-key, non-punitive environment, and then get him obedience trained.

There are dogs that have a greater predisposition for asserting themselves as predators. A wolf mix, for example, has a greater imprinting for a chase reflex. Therefore, he may become aggressively dangerous around rapidly moving, screaming animals, including people. This dog would be a poor risk as a pet. Male dogs and certain breeds have a greater tendency toward asserting their dominance over their territory, other dogs, and people. The solution for this kind of dog is to get control quickly and establish your leadership through training.

A dog may be territorially aggressive over certain objects such as his bed, his home, and his food bowl. Establishing your leadership and counter-conditioning this dog are essential. It is important to begin this training at a very early age.

A dog may become aggressive around certain visual stimuli such as a hand raised over his head, especially if he has been hit before. The best way to approach this dog is by getting down to his level and rubbing his chest. Avoid patting him on the head. Some dogs will become aggressive because they misread a gesture, due to hair hanging down over their eyes. Keep the hair over his eyes trimmed. Note which visual stimuli produce aggression, and be careful to avoid these signals.

A dog that is teased (for example, by a child pulling his tail, or by a neighbor throwing rocks at him), may someday react aggressively.

Dogs that are physically punished will build fear of that person and may react with defensive aggression one day. The stress built by persistent physical punishment can, for some dogs, be released in the form of aggression toward the person or persons resembling the one administering the punishment. This dog will be difficult to rehabilitate. Once he has bitten, he may not ever be trustworthy.

Finally, aggressive biting may result from a psychosis brought on by a variety of factors. A very small percentage of dogs are genetically defective and, therefore, may be predisposed to aggression as adults. Other factors inducing psychosis are drug and alcohol abuse,

poisoning by paint, anti-freeze, pesticides, and other dangerous chemicals. An illness or an accident can cause brain damage which may result in aggression. Usually, these dogs must be euthanized.

If you are in doubt about your dog's aggressive behavior, consult veterinarians or animal behaviorists for their opinions about whether your dog can be rehabilitated or should be euthanized.

One last word of warning! A dog that has bitten one time may bite again given a similar set of circumstances. The best insurance against a second occurrence is a muzzle, or confinement, whenever he is around people. This is such a serious problem that you may have to resort to euthanasia.

Aggressiveness Toward Other Dogs

It is natural for a dog, at one time or another, to get into a fight with another dog. Some dogs are more prone to fighting than others. They either act, or are, more aggressive for a variety of reasons. Amazingly enough, most dog fights do not result in serious injury. It is not a good idea to try breaking up a dog fight because you might end up being the one who gets injured.

Dogs act aggressively toward other dogs for a variety of reasons. A puppy who was not properly socialized to other dogs, i.e., allowed to play or romp with various kinds, sizes, and both sexes of dogs, will naturally grow up feeling anxious and tense in the company of other dogs. Some dogs are not social because of their need to defend territory.

The territory might be the yard, the house, or personal territory such as the food bowl or the bed. There are hormonal aspects to aggression toward other dogs. A female in heat, or with puppies, might act aggressively toward other dogs. Two unneutered males will be more aggressive toward each other than two neutered males. A dog who is tied up or restrained in some way acts more aggressively because he senses that he is defenseless. Some dogs act any way they want because they have assumed a leadership position with their caregiver. A dog may act aggressively because he has been attacked by another aggressive dog sometime in his life. A dog may act aggressively because he has learned this behavior from his mother or he may have inherited this characteristic from one of his parents. He may have been the runt of the litter, learning to fight for a feeding space. As you can see, there are many ways in which a dog acquires a disposition for acting aggressively toward other dogs.

It is important for you not to unintentionally reinforce this kind of behavior. For example, if your dog growls at another, do not give him reassuring words like, "That's okay." Also, do not pick him up. If he growls or snaps at another dog, do not try to physically restrain or soothe him. A dog will sense your uneasiness, and this is a signal to act even more aggressively to protect you! Do not think you are making a good watch dog by saying "Good Dog" when he growls at another dog. You are creating a mean dog.

If your dog is acting aggressively toward other dogs, here are some things you can do. Take him for frequent walks where he can be exposed to other dogs. Do not restrain him for wanting to investigate another dog unless you know his intentions. Act and sound happy by laughing or singing, giving your dog the message that you are not concerned by the approach of another dog. Praise your dog for appropriate behavior, i.e., not growling, snapping, or pulling on the leash. Get control of your dog. Take a leadership position by training your dog in the commands of sit/stay and down/stay. If you have not already done so, get your dog neutered. This will reduce his territorial tendencies.

Excessive Chewing or Licking of Self

Unlike cats, dogs seldom lick themselves to clean their fur. If your dog's licking is caused by health problems or if it is causing health problems, then the first thing to do is to see your veterinarian. There are medications which are helpful in reducing the need to chew or lick.

Excessive licking or chewing that results in hair loss, sores, or redness, usually occurs because of parasitic infection. Check for fleas or ticks. Get rid of these parasites. Then, bathe your dog with a medicated shampoo and give him some medication for the itching.

A dog will chew at a burr, a thorny stick that is caught in his fur, or a thorn in his paw. He will try to untangle matted fur by chewing on the fur mat. For longhaired dogs, regular grooming is necessary.

Some dogs suffer from food allergies which can result in excessive licking. If you suspect diet, ask your veterinarian to recommend a non-allergic dog food. If the licking stops, slowly introduce one food at a time, carefully checking the ingredients. Try to determine which ingredient is the culprit.

If excessive chewing and licking are not due to health problems, then take a close look at your relationship with your dog. If your dog is shy, introverted, or is quick to go into submission, and there is stress because of his relationship with you, he will likely direct his attention inwardly. Mouthing, chewing, or licking are methods he uses to relieve tension. This situation can be created by an overattentive, neglectful, or abusive human.

If you are overattentive, try withholding your petting and praise for those times when your dog responds to some direction by you. Tell him to sit, then praise and pet him. Give him attention only when you are acting as his leader and after he follows your lead. This will build his security and improve your relationship.

If you are neglectful and do not spend enough time with your dog, give him more playtime. Take him for walks. Exercise works miracles on dogs that have turned in upon themselves by chewing or licking.

If you are abusive, discontinue any form of physical punishment to correct behavior problems. Hitting, screaming, or chasing your dog will create enough stress for this behavior to continue.

Eating His Own or Other Animal Feces

While it has not been thoroughly researched why dogs eat their own or other animals' feces, it is not uncommon. Many of the dogs that are involved in this habit are thought to be timid or submissive, indicating a lack of maturity. No matter, this habit can be very annoying. There are several possible causes and corrections.

A dog may eat feces simply because he is hungry and has no alternative source of food. The solution is simple. Try feeding him more and get him to a veterinarian for a check-up.

A dog that is fed an inexpensive, generic dog food has to eat more of it in order to satisfy his nutrient requirements. Much of this food passes through the system undigested, leaving a stool that looks and smells much like what was originally eaten. Feeding a high quality food would solve this stool-eating problem.

Dogs that are punished for having an accident in the house may eat their own stool as a way of hiding the evidence and avoiding the punishment. Punishment for doing something as natural as eliminating makes no sense at all. Housetrain him properly.

A dog that is locked in a kennel, chained, or restricted to a small backyard may eat his own feces as a way of relieving boredom. It is something to do in a restrictive, boring world. This dog needs to be exercised and played with several times a day.

Some breeds have a great need to carry things in their mouths. Picking up feces and carrying it around is usually a sign of an under-exercised dog. This dog needs to play a lot of retrieval games.

A kennel or yard where feces are allowed to pile up may cause a dog to clean up his living space by eating his stools. Keep a dog's living area clean!

The emotional stress of being left alone or restricted to a small area for long periods of time without the companionship of the caregiver can result, for some dogs, in the eating of his own feces.

Check with your veterinarian for internal parasites which may be leaching nutrients from your dog's system, causing an unusual appetite. The way to eliminate this habit is to feed a complete and balanced diet, provide lots of exercise and playtime, keep the kennel or yard clean, avoid restricting him for long periods of time, and take him to your veterinarian for a health check-up. Your veterinarian may also be able to prescribe a chemical additive to his food which will make the stools taste terrible. There are products that can be applied directly to any animal's stool which will discourage your dog from consuming it.

Eating Non-Food Objects

If you have a puppy who is eating non-food objects, he may be doing so as a by-product of a chewing problem. All puppies have a need to chew and will do so during the teething months. Giving puppies appropriate things to chew will reduce the swallowing of scraps left over from the chewing process.

A dog who consistently swallows non-food objects does so because it makes him feel better, at least temporarily. He may be swallowing these objects because he is hungry or is experiencing a diet deficiency. Both of these can be remedied by feeding him a proper amount or by changing to a quality food with a balanced nutritional recipe. Sometimes a dog will chew to relieve stress and swallow some of the scraps in the chewing process. Stress is built up from boredom, lack of exercise, physical restriction, or physical punishment.

If your dog is chewing and swallowing something he shouldn't, you can bait a trap by smearing a distasteful substance on the object. There are a number of commercial products which work or you can use something as simple as Tabasco sauce. This remedy, however, is really only treating the symptom. It is best to understand the motivation for his behavior.

Your dog may be eating non-food objects because he is unhappy with your relationship. It may be that you are giving him too much attention or too little attention and this may have started in puppyhood. If your puppy got away with a lot of mouthing or if you played tug-of-war games, the need for continued oral stimulation may have been built. If you suspect that he is not getting enough attention, play with him more, and give him more exercise. If you think that he is getting too much attention, (for example, he constantly nudges you for petting), then give him less petting. When he nudges you for attention, tell him "NO," and say, "Sit." Then, give him verbal praise and a pet. If he does start to chew on a non-food item, give him an appropriate item to chew, such as a rubber ball.

Never administer physical punishment for chewing and swallowing non-food objects! This will only increase his stress, and, in all likelihood, the problem will continue at an increased pace.

The Shy and Fearful Dog

Fearfulness can be an outgrowth of shyness. A shy and fearful dog is one who panics quickly because of loud noises, the approach of strangers, a car ride, or just going out for a walk. He may hide, freeze, urinate, defecate, whine, or run barking to a safe place. The usual outward appearance of a shy and fearful dog is one who rolls over submissively, lays his ears back, or folds his tail between his legs.

Shyness in itself is not a problem. It is when the shyness, representing certain fears the dog may have, results in growling, snapping or biting as defense behavior. A shy dog growling, snapping or biting is a defense behavior. A shy dog is one that has not been properly socialized during the critical period before weaning. He may be a dog who was always kept in a kennel away from human contact or a dog who has been with a quiet, single, sedentary person. The shy dog usually becomes overdependent on his caregiver, and many times that person inadvertently reinforces shy behavior by trying to coax or calm him. This is not to say that a shy dog does not make a good pet. He may be an ideal companion for someone who lives alone and rather quietly. This is also not to say that a shy dog cannot be rehabilitated. It will take some time, training, and patience!

If your dog is growling, showing his teeth, or displaying any sign of fear, instantly reprimand his behavior with a verbal "NO." When the behavior ceases, praise him. If he has already started biting as a way of allaying his fear, you may have to muzzle or confine him whenever he is in a fearful situation. If he is biting, immediately seek the assistance of an expert animal behaviorist or consider euthanasia. This is a very dangerous situation!

There are several things you can do to help your dog overcome his shyness. First, check with your veterinarian to see if there is any organic cause to this behavior. A diet that reduces stress may help. It is very important that you do not give him attention for rolling over and urinating, whining, barking, or running off and hiding when visitors come to the door or when strangers approach. Keep in mind that this shyness is a manifestation of fear. Ignore these behaviors and praise him at the times when he is showing courage and confidence. If he is acting fearfully around certain situations or strangers, you act happily, laugh, and talk as if it is not all that serious. Dogs mimic so he will pick up on your ease during his anxious moments. Let him approach a stranger rather than vice versa. The stranger or person whom he fears should always crouch down and allow him to approach. Petting should be on his chest rather than his head. Arm your visitors with food treats as rewards whenever he approaches. If he is acting shyly and fearfully because of excessive punishment administered by some member of your family, cease this abuse immediately. Excessive punishment is described as hitting, kicking, screaming, or restrictive confinement. A verbal reprimand for incorrect behavior followed by praise for correct behavior is the only appropriate way to teach a dog.

Fear of Loud Noises

Some dogs are terrorized by loud noises. This terror is usually learned from a traumatic experience which occurred at the same time as the noise. It can also be learned by transfer. For example, if you showed fear of a loud noise one time, your dog would learn that loud noises are to be feared. A dog's ears are sensitive, and loud noises can hurt them.

Whatever the reason, try to shield your dog from loud noises. Keeping him in the house on New Year's Eve or the Fourth of July is very wise. If your dog is already afraid of loud noises, then a process of desensitization will help.

To desensitize your dog, expose him to low-volume noises while giving him something pleasurable such as praise and a food treat. Gradually increase the noise level, praising his tolerance, until the fear no longer manifests itself.

If your dog is afraid of thunder, firecrackers, or gunshot, get a recording of these sounds. Play the recording at a low volume barely audible but high enough to be heard and not frighten him. At the same time praise and reward him with his favorite food treat while the recording is playing. In the beginning, introduce the recording for a short period of time several times a day. Increase the time interval each day and slightly raise the volume. Continue to offer large measures of love and reassurance, praise, and food treats as the recording is playing. If you get an adverse reaction, you may have increased the volume too much too soon. This should be done about three or four times a day for a week or two or until you feel that your dog can tolerate the noise at a loudness that simulates it in reality.

If your dog does not respond to desensitization, it may be wise to get a tranquilizer from your veterinarian and administer it just before certain holidays, the hunting season, or a predicted thunder storm. It is not easy to anticipate when a loud noise will occur. For example, the backfiring of a car may send your dog under the bed for a few hours. The best you can do if you are with your dog when a loud noise frightens him is to act happy and unconcerned. If your dog suspects you are frightened also, he will react accordingly.

Finally, provide a safe place for your dog to retreat when the noise is heard. Install a pet door. If he gets frightened when you are not home, he can fly through the door and head for the bed.

The Finicky Eater

Dogs are not finicky eaters by nature. We inadvertently create this problem by substituting food for love. We think that every time our dog does something cute, we should give him a treat. After a while, our dog wants nothing but treats, especially if they come from our plate or the refrigerator!

Choose a well-balanced food for your dog. Feed him twice a day, whatever he does not eat at one feeding, serve it at the next feeding. You can tell if you are overfeeding him by checking his stool. If the stool is large, soft, and looks like dog food, you are feeding him too much. The stool should be small and firm, indicating the food was thoroughly digested. Do not worry if your dog passes by a meal or two. He will adjust his intake of food by his level of activity. If your dog suddenly quits eating for several days, you may want to have him checked by a veterinarian.

If you feed your dog a variety of food in hopes that one will appeal to him, he will demand a greater and greater variety, and you will have created a finicky eater! Choose a high-quality food and stick to it. Do not feed table scraps or give in-between meal snacks to your dog. Instead of using special treats as training lures, use his own dry kibbled food and conduct training sessions just before meals. This food comes out of his regular ration.

Dogs become finicky by being given too great a variety and by overfeeding. Many quality dog food companies have age-level diets. For example, for the elderly dog, there are maintenance diets designed for his needs. These foods are good choices for your dog going through the various growth stages. If you do change foods, do it gradually by adding a bit of new food each day to the old food. The reason for this is that the digestive flora get used to one food and a rapid change can cause diarrhea and digestive upsets.

If you choose a high quality food, there is really no need for vitamin supplementation. You will pay more for good dog food, but you will use less because a small feeding amount has more nutrients and is more thoroughly digested. Check with your veterinarian for your dog's dietary needs.

Car Sickness and Riding Behavior

When first introduced to car riding, some dogs get sick. Luckily, most get over it and love to go for car rides.

The first signs of car sickness are yawning, then excessive drooling, sometimes followed by vomiting. For a dog that is exhibiting these symptoms, open a window a crack to get some fresh air in the car. Along with getting fresh air, it is important that the dog be able to see out of the window. Arrange a spot in the car, perhaps the rear window ledge or a box, that the dog can get up onto and see the road ahead. For severe cases and for long trips you may want to try motion sickness medication.

Conditioning is the best method to prepare your dog for riding in the car. This is done over several weeks and it involves you, your dog, your car, and the use of lavish praise. For a few minutes several times a day for three days in a row set up the following schedule. First, just sit in the car with your dog and give him lots of praise for not showing any symptoms of sickness. Then, start and run the engine for the next three days and continue with the praise. Next, start the engine and back the car out of the driveway and drive back in. Never mind what the neighbors will be thinking! Continue praise for showing no symptoms. Finally, drive around the block, then go half a mile, then two miles. Keep this up until your dog is able to ride several miles without getting sick!

Teach your dog a verbal signal such as "OKAY" for getting in the car. Use the same signal for getting out. In other words, do not let your dog get into or out of the car without your okay. This will teach him not to get into strangers' cars, and it will keep him from jumping out of your car into traffic.

If your dog is jumping around inside your car, try putting him in a crate (a small cage). After he appears to have settled down, you can open the door of the crate and offer him some freedom so long as he behaves.

Whining and running around can often be a symptom of impending sickness, excitement, or anxiety. If you determine car-sickness, follow the procedure above. If the whining is simply a bad habit, work on training him to stop. When he whines, say, "NO Whine!" When he stops follow this with "Good Dog!" For some dogs, you may have to try some aversion therapy by squirting lime juice from a plastic squeeze lime into his mouth immediately during the whine. Follow this with "NO Whine!" and praise when he stops. The best way to accomplish this training is do it in small steps following the routine outlined above for conditioning.

Preparing a Dog for a New Baby

Preparations for introducing your dog to a new baby should begin several weeks before the baby's actual arrival. It is important that your dog be well trained. He should at least know how to sit, stay, not jump up, and come when called. The main reason for training is to establish your leadership so that he will trust you not to abandon him when this new creature arrives and the bond will be strong enough for him to continue to obey your commands.

The first thing to do prior to baby's arrival is to get a doll. Sprinkle it with baby powder, wrap it in a blanket, cradle it, rock it, talk to it, and walk around the house with it. At the same time, praise your dog for not jumping up on you, by saying, "Good dog." Show the "doll baby" to your dog. Let him smell the baby.

Give praise and food treats at the same time. Next, get a recording of a crying baby and play it softly at first. Praise your dog, while listening, and reinforce his quiet behavior with a food treat. Each day increase the volume and continue the praise and food treat. Continue to expose your dog to the smell of baby blankets and powder. Invite a friend with a baby to your house. Reinforce good behavior with praise while the baby is visiting.

On the day of arrival, it would be best for you to walk in without baby and greet the dog. Then, someone else brings in the baby. If you can trust your dog's behavior around babies at this time, let him see, smell, and touch the baby. Do not worry if he licks the baby. You can wash it off later. Besides, a dog's mouth has less bacteria than a human's! If you act happy and relaxed while your dog is in the presence of the new baby, it should not take more than a few weeks for him to accept this new littermate. If you are nervous about your dog's intentions for a good reason such as growling, you may want to consider using a muzzle when baby and dog are together. It is best not to allow a dog unsupervised access to a new baby for a while. Some dogs are unnerved by loud crying and flailing arms and legs. Be sure you know your dog is comfortable in all situations before allowing unattended access.

Some dogs will break house soiling rules for a short time after baby's arrival. They think that if this new littermate creature can do it anywhere, so can they. To discourage this from happening, do not leave dirty diapers lying around. You may not have the same feeling of devotion and love toward your dog after your baby arrives. Be prepared for this surprising change of attitude. Your dog is no longer your baby. The important thing to remember is to try and give him as much attention, playtime, and exercise as before.

Preparing a Dog for the Veterinarian

Your dog will encounter strange people, unusual odors, and a clinical setting at the veterinarians. He will hear barking dogs and meowing cats. He will be handled by a stranger which, for some dogs, is very unnerving. Your attitude and how you prepare your dog for that first visit is critical.

If your dog's first visit is because of a severe illness or an accident, he will already be under quite a lot of stress, and so will you. It is important for you to appear happy, calm, and unconcerned. Dogs can read our emotions and will react accordingly. If you are acting uneasy or upset, your dog will perceive this as a signal for him to be concerned, also.

The first thing to do in preparing your dog for an examination is for you to examine him yourself. Each day, during nap or quiet time, carefully touch all parts of his body. This can be very calming for him. In fact, some behaviorists have had good success with massage in helping a dog to reduce stress. As you go over your dog's body, take special care to spend time touching and rubbing his toes. This will reduce his fear when it is time for nail clipping. Next, look into his ears, touch the inside of the ear flap. A veterinarian will surely examine his ears someday. Then, lift up his lips, open his mouth, touch his teeth. Get him used to this type of an examination. Your veterinarian will love you.

If your dog is not accustomed to traveling in the car, teach him how to behave before you ever cart him off to the veterinarian. If you have a small dog, you may want to use a carrying case. Act as though this is just another ride to the park. Be sure to have his leash ready upon arrival.

Choose a veterinarian who has a good reputation for working with dogs. Before you schedule an actual examination, make arrangements to stop by just for a visit. Reward your dog for good behavior during this introductory visit with lots of praise and a food tidbit. A good veterinarian will understand your need to make this first visit a pleasurable one wherein everyone is relaxed and happy.

If your dog is very wary or reluctant to go to the veterinarian, there are those who make house calls. If it is not a surgical procedure requiring hospitalization, a house call might lessen his anxiety. If an office call is necessary, a tranquilizer might help, providing your veterinarian approves.

Most importantly your sense of tranquility is essential anytime a veterinarian is examining your dog. Your dog will judge the seriousness of the matter by your expression of emotions.

Moving to a New Location

Unlike cats, dogs relate more to their caregivers, rather than to their territory. Therefore, moving a dog to a new home is not very traumatic unless there is also a change in the caregiver.

If the new home is one in which the previous owner had a dog, it is a good idea to have it thoroughly cleaned so that your dog will not smell the odors of the previous owner's dog and want to mark this new territory for himself.

Show your dog where his food, water, and bed will be. Let him freely roam the new house and do not let him outside unsupervised. As long as you and your furniture are there, your dog will adjust quickly.

If your new home does not have a fenced yard you have a wonderful opportunity to teach your dog the boundaries beyond which you do not want him to go. Boundary training takes patience and time. Do not let your dog roam freely outside. Instead, each day walk him on a leash around the perimeter of your new property. Each time he begins to wander over your property line, firmly say, "NO," give a little jerk on the leash and walk him back inside the line.

Continue this several times a day for several weeks. To test him, attach a long, light nylon line to his collar, throw a ball over the boundary line and see if he goes across to fetch it. The line should be just long enough to let him get to the boundary. If he decides to go across the boundary, let the line stop him and at the same time say, "NO!" If he does not cross the boundary, give him lots of praise and a terrific food treat. If he crosses the line, just continue with the training. Remember, cats, dogs, and squirrels may prove too great a temptation for crossing the boundary. But, for most of the time, after successful training, you can be assured he will be on your property.

Regular exercise and playtime are the keys to keeping your dog at home, healthy and happy.

The Flea Problem

Fleas are probably the most successful creatures on the planet in terms of reproduction. There are over 2,400 species. They are difficult to control for a variety of reasons. One female flea will produce 25,000 offspring in one month. An unfed adult can live for several months. The chemicals used to eradicate adult fleas have no effect on the eggs. Fleas are very good at mutating to resist new pesticides.

Fleas are a menace to dogs! They cause allergic dermatitis, tapeworms, and anemia. Most of the eggs are not laid on the dog but in the dog's bedding, in the rug, and on the furniture. It is extremely difficult to eradicate fleas completely.

The most you can hope for is to control them and to keep your dog reasonably comfortable during the warm, moist flea season.

The best way to control fleas is to remove them from your dog and your house. Take him to a groomer for the day and have him bathed with veterinarian approved flea shampoo. Spraying or dipping him with a residual pesticide has little or no lasting effect. While he is out of the house, hire a company that uses a non-toxic product to spray the carpets and the furniture. These companies usually guarantee a flea-free home for one year.

From this point on, it is important for you to vacuum the carpets, furniture, and your dog's bedding every day. Place the cut-off end of a flea collar, or a moth crystal, into your vacuum cleaner bag to kill any vacuumed adult fleas. Vacuum the dog if he will let you! Groom him daily with a flea comb. Do not be surprised if you occasionally find a flea on him. He will bring them in from outside. Remember, you cannot get rid of them, only control them. Some dogs are bothered more by the use of pesticides than they are by fleas.

Flea collars, sprays, powders, and shampoos are all loaded with pesticides. Beware! If your dog is into serious scratching, your veterinarian can prescribe medication for the itching.

There are a lot of products on the market that claim to get rid of fleas. Flea collars, cedar shaving dog beds, garlic and yeast tablets, water/light traps, and ultra-sonic devices are among them. Research, however, has not shown them to be effective in fighting the war on fleas.

The Aging Dog

Dogs will lose certain bodily functions as they get older. Even though physically disabled, a dog that is still able to eat, eliminate, and enjoy your company may not have to be euthanized. The problems most often leading to premature euthanasia are deafness, loss of sight, the chronic pain of arthritis, and incontinence. There are ways of dealing with these problems!

A dog that is going deaf must be taught to sit, stay, or come by the use of visual signs or physical touching. If your dog is no longer responding to your spoken commands, teach him hand signs. If he is not in your visual line of sight, throw a bean bag just in front of him to get his visual attention. When he turns, give him a hand signal to come.

The older dog that is losing his sight will do quite well. The senses of hearing and smell will take over and, with a little help, he will remain a wonderful companion. You can help him avoid hazards by spraying an inexpensive perfume on upright objects like chair legs and door jambs. Once bumped into, and associating the odor, he will avoid these sprayed vertical objects later. Also, spray the perfume at least six inches in front of stairway steps to warn him to step up or down. It would be a good idea for every member of your family to wear a bracelet that jingles so that he will be able to identify and follow your movements.

Many incontinent problems can be corrected through medication or surgery. Check with your veterinarian. If he/she cannot help you, order pet diapers from your local pet store or dog magazine advertisement. Helping your dog with his incontinence is a little inconvenient but it is no reason for euthanizing your beloved companion.

There are other considerations for your aging pet. Try not to disturb his sleeping and resting times. Feed him a proper geriatric diet and keep his weight down. Give him attention, if he seeks it, but do not give him unsolicited sympathy attention. He will quickly learn to play this for all it is worth and, in turn, will become a pest. Do not subject him to strenuous exercise if he appears to be in pain afterwards.

You will know when it is time to consider euthanasia. Some veterinarians will come to your home and help you share the burden of this decision. Death, in this way, is quick and painless.

When, or If, To Euthanize

The term "euthanize" means to put to death an animal, for reasons of mercy, who is hopelessly sick or injured. This is one of the most difficult decisions any of us will ever have to make.

The day may come when you can no longer outweigh your dog's discomfort with your own fear of separation and death. But how will you know that the time has come? Your veterinarian is the best judge of your dog's physical condition, but he/she should not be asked to make a decision about euthanasia. You are the best judge of this because you know about the day-to-day quality of your dog's life.

You may want to consider the following questions regarding your dog's quality of life. Does he still have an appetite? Is he having problems eliminating? Does he respond when you give him attention? Does he seek your company? Does he participate in playing or in family life? If he is in constant pain, is undergoing difficult and stressful medical treatments, is unresponsive to your affection, or is seemingly unaware of his surroundings it might be time to do the loving thing and end your companion's suffering.

Please understand, no matter what anyone else tells you, intense grief over the loss of your pet is normal and natural. The unconditional and non-judgmental love given to you by your beloved friend and companion can leave you devastated by the loss.

To help you through this period of grief your veterinarian or a pet loss counselor would be helpful. I would highly recommend a book entitled "Coping With Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet" by Moira Anderson. She describes ways to overcome the pain you are feeling.

Suggested Reading

Coping With Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet by Moria K. Anderson (Peregrine Press, 1978). This book will help you get beyond the grief of the death of your beloved dog.

Dogs (A series of Behavior Booklets) by Ian Dunbar and Gwen Bohnenkamp, (1985) Center for Applied Animal Behavior, 2000 Center Street, #1406, Berkeley, CA 97704. An excellent series of booklets describing a sound philosophy in dealing with behavior problems.

How To Be Your Dog's Best Friend by The Monks of New Skete (Little, Brown and Company, 1978). A good basic book filled with practical advice on training procedures.

The Chosen Puppy by Carol Lea Benjamin (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990). An easily read and humorously illustrated book on how to get your puppy off to a good start.

Second-Hand Dog by Carol Lea Benjamin (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988). Also, easy to read with great advice for those adopting a "secondhand dog."

The Perfect Puppy: How to Choose Your Dog by Its Behavior by Benjamin and Lynette Hart (W.H. Freeman Company, 1988). An outstanding book describing and comparing behavior characteristics of various purebred dogs. A must read if you have small children and are considering the adoption of a purebred!

The Invisible Leash: A Better Way to Communicate With Your Dog by Myrna M. Milani, (New American Library, 1985). A splendid book to help you understand and communicate with your dog.

Better Behavior in Dogs and Cats by William E. Campbell, (Alpine Publications Inc., 1989). My favorite book for understanding and solving behavior problems.

When Good Dogs Do Bad Things by Mordecai Siegal and Matthew Margolis, (Little, Brown and Company, 1986). A very good book for those wanting a thorough knowledge of how to train a dog and correct behavior problems.

About the Author

Rod has been a student of pet behavior all of his life. His professional experience with dog and cat behavior problems started at the Tacoma/Pierce County Humane Society where he established a Pet Behavior Hotline. He writes a weekly pet column for the Tacoma News Tribune in which he answers questions submitted by readers. He also conducts a bi-monthly one hour program on a major radio station in Seattle where he answers listeners' questions about pet behavior problems. In private practice, Rod offers a telephone and in-house counseling service for pet caregivers directed at understanding and solving their pets' problems.

His own current menagerie includes Hank, a mixed-breed Benji look-alike, and Mike and Molly, mixed-breed American Short-haired cats.