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Nip it in the Bud: Common Problem Behavior in Dogs

By Diane Blackman, CPDT-KA

Jumping

Dogs jump because they get what they want – your attention. Here is how you start your dog learning that only good actions receive your attention.

1. When your dog jumps on you, cross your arms and look up. Do **NOT** say anything to your dog. Even bad attention is still attention!
2. Praise him when he has all four paws on the ground.

Barking (at people)

If your dog is barking for your attention, telling them “NO!” or “QUIET!” actually rewards the **WRONG** behavior! When your dog barks, simply ignore him. Reward him when he is quiet for several seconds. While the first few days may be hard, being diligent now will reap huge rewards later!

Counter Surfing

Paper, food and other things on tables and counters often entice dogs to explore. We want this behavior to go away – and never come back! You can only do this exercise while the dog has his paws on a table or counter. Once he gets off the counter, it is too late and you have to wait for another opportunity.

1. Place several small, thick paperback books around the areas your dog is surfing.
2. When he has his feet on the counter, whack the counter as close to the dog’s paws as possible .
DO NOT HIT THE DOG.
3. Do not talk to the dog. If you say anything, talk to the counter, and say something like “Bad counter!”
Over time, the dog will begin to have a negative association of getting on the counter!

Taking Treats Nicely

Does your dog grab at treats from your hand? Take a handful of treats and sit in a chair to train him that only polite dogs receive treats.

1. Give your dog the treats, one at a time, from an open hand. If your dog takes the treat too roughly for you, DO NOT let them take it. Remove the treat and try again.
2. Once they are taking treats nicely from your open hand, repeat with the treat held between your thumb and forefinger.

Nipping

Your dog needs to learn his teeth hurt! Here are a couple of ways to help him learn:

1. In the litter, if somebody is hurt, they squeal (almost like a pig) and all play stops. Everyone looks at the offender before play resumes. When you are playing with your dog and you feel teeth (even if it does not hurt all the time), squeal and stop playing for a moment or two. If his teeth really hurt, squeal, stop playing and put the toy away.
2. When the dog nips, grab his muzzle and lightly squeeze. Hopefully, his tongue will be between those sharp, little teeth and he will get a taste of what he is dishing out. If you let go and he comes back at you, repeat. You can tell him “no bite.” Release and if he is good, praise!

Remember, puppies often nip when they are teething and in pain. Provide lots of appropriate chew toys to help him cut teeth without using you!

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