

# The **Do's** and **Don'ts** of Living with a Dog





# Forward

There's something so special about sharing your life with a dog. No one else on this planet will love you more, truly forgive your mistakes, listen to your problems more intently and enjoy the simple pleasures of life with you more than your dog. I feel sorry for people who aren't "dog people" because there's no where else to experience a relationship like that than with a dog.

You should wake up every morning and thank your dog. Thank him for abandoning his wild ways and coming to live with us wacky humans. We surely couldn't do it the other way around. They learn to live according to our rules and are very understanding of our very different customs.

Your dog is doing his part and you must do yours. You need to do your best to understand his needs and take care of them. You need to take some time and effort to teach him exactly how to live in this very human world. He can do it, but not without your guidance.

Hopefully this short book will help you do your part, so that you can better enjoy your life with your furry best friend.



# DO Have Rules and Boundaries

Dogs, like kids, thrive on structure - they actually crave it. So make sure you are providing plenty of rules around the house. This will help fortify your relationship with them and help them to be better dogs.

It's simply a matter of resource control. Whatever the dog values (going outside, playing, getting up on the furniture, etc) should come through you. Just asking them to do something like give you eye contact or sit before they get the things they love is all you need to do. They are welcome to these things, they just have to get them through you.





# Give Too Much Freedom **DON'T**

Everyone wants a dog that can roam the house and hang with the family all the time, but in our eagerness to have our dogs everywhere in the home we can often set them up for failure. Dogs don't come pre-loaded knowing how to behave in this wacky human world - it's up to us to teach them. If we don't, they will just act like dogs and that will probably not be cool with us.



The great thing about dogs is that they can learn and adapt quickly but only if we teach them - and that requires our supervision and guidance. Keep your dog's world small and slowly expand it as he learns the rules. If he's doing well, give more freedoms, but if he's getting into trouble he's not ready for freedom. Shrink his world down, work with him and then slowly expand it again.



# DO Walk Your Dog More

If you could only do one thing and one thing only with your dog, walking would be it. Walking is a basic canine need and a daily requirement for every dog.

The benefits for walking go way beyond exercise (in fact, for most dogs walking barely scratches the surface of their exercise needs). It is the single best way to bond and build a relationship with your dog. This is a great tool especially for dogs that are shy or aloof with you because walks provide a non confrontational positive experience together.

Walks are also very stimulating. There are new sights, sounds and scents to explore on every walk. I recommend you go to new places often or at least take a different direction every time you walk. Ideally, you want to do at least one 30 minute walk a day, but for most dogs, the more the better.





# Use a Retractable Leash **DON'T**

A retractable leash is by far the worst invention for dogs of all time. The walk is supposed to be something you do together - it's a team sport. If your dog is 10 - 15 feet ahead of you you're not even on the same walk.

Besides not sharing the same experience, your dog's not thinking about you and NOT including you in his decision making. Also, if your dog is out in front, the leash is probably tight and we don't want any tension in the leash. This is especially important for any reactive dogs. The best ways to keep them from reacting is to recognize it early and try to get a attention on you. Try that if your dog is pulling 10 feet in front of you.

Still not convinced? Go for a walk with your husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend but walk 10 feet in front of them. Can you communicate? Are you really walking together?





# DO Provide Enough Exercise

Most people grossly underestimate the exercise needs of our dogs. Although every dog is different and has different exercise needs, as a general rule whatever you're doing, your dog could probably get more. If you have a young and/or high energy dog, a simple walk won't do it.

You can't just quit your job and run your dog all day, so you need to find constructive ways to provide adequate exercise within your lifestyle. Experiment with different physical and mental ways to stimulate your dog and give them that outlet.

You'll be surprised how big an impact letting your dog burn off all that energy can have on their overall behavior.

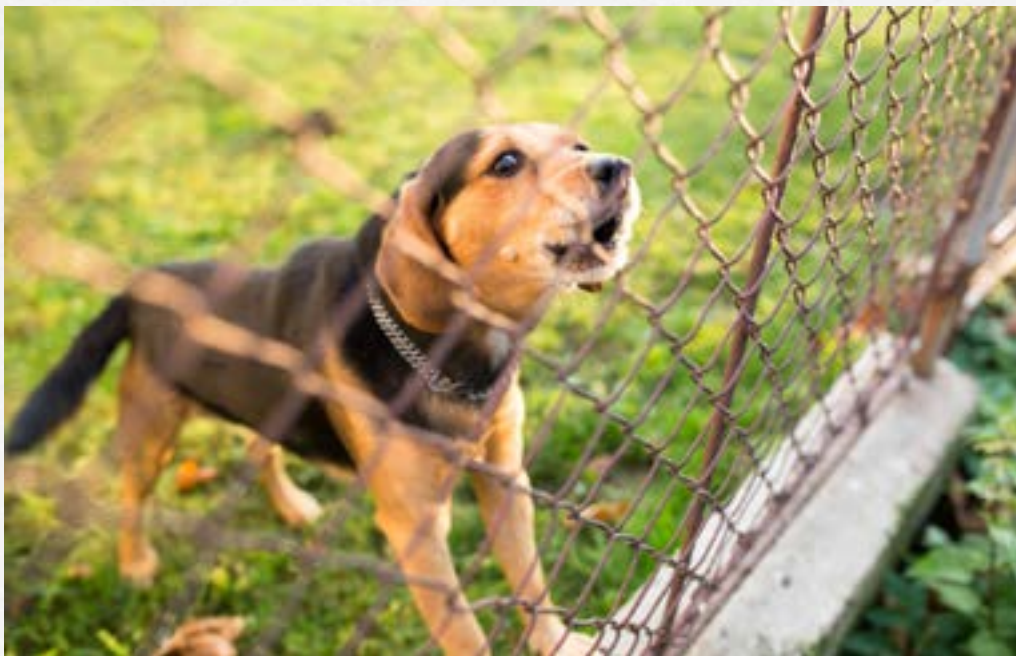




# Misuse a Fenced in Yard **DON'T**

They seem like good things and can be if used properly. The problem is that just about everyone abuses them. Fenced in yards are great if you're out there supervising and interacting with your dog. However, they can be very detrimental if you leave your dog outside alone for long periods of time.

Time alone in the yard is not really exercise for your dog. They might run around for a very short time but then they're just waiting for something to happen. If you don't provide stuff to do they will find ways to occupy their time like digging holes and barking at people passing by.



Fenced in yards are one of the big contributing causes of dog reactivity because the barrier creates frustration, which comes out as barky energy.

If used properly with supervision, fenced in yard are great. Just don't leave your dog out there unattended for too long or use it as replacement for regular walks.



# DO Praise & Reward Often

Even the worst behaved dog is good most of the time. However, we are very concerned with all of the mistakes that our dogs make and tend to focus on making lots of corrections throughout the day. The problem with that is that we are missing all the good stuff.

Dogs do so much better and learn quicker if we not only point out their mistakes but also let them know when they are doing a good job. Positive feedback is actually more important than negative feedback.

For example, say your dog is being really annoying and is jumping up on you for attention. You give him a bunch of corrections and then finally he leaves you alone and picks up a toy. Most people are relieved to be left alone at last and go about their business. However what we should be doing is rewarding that good behavior to let him know he got it right. Play with him - even for 30 seconds - to reward what you want repeated.





# Yell at Your Dog

# DON'T

When your dog just dug a hole in your couch or is about to eat your sandwich it's human nature to get angry or frustrated. With frustration and anger usually comes the yelling. The problem is that yelling and screaming at your dog is never going to help you in the long run.



Dogs are non verbal communicators (despite all that barking) and are very affected by energy. They do not respond well to anger or frustration (or sympathy or pity), but love stability. This means calm energy - even when you want to kill them.

Yelling and screaming will only make them fear you (not what you want) and ruin your relationship with them. Handling all situations with calm confidence, on the other hand, will help get your message across and help all future communication.

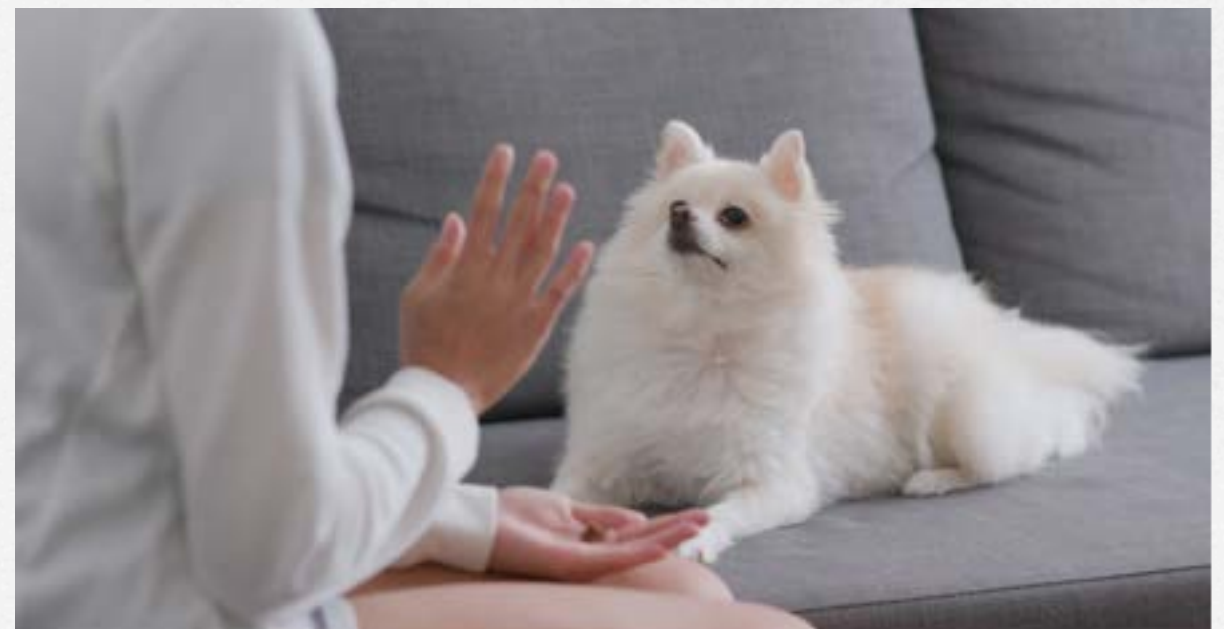


# DO Teach Your Dog the Basics

Every dog and every person will benefit from learning the basic commands: sit, down, stay and come. Learning these skills go way beyond having a dog that does these things on cue.

Whether you are working with a trainer, doing a group class or teaching these things to your dog yourself, it provides a number of benefits to both you and your dog and can greatly impact your long term relationship. Learning this stuff together as a team really helps you communicate and understand your dog so much better.

Doing some basic obedience will also give you some homework to do and a reason to spend time with your dog. That may sound unnecessary to you but as life goes by and responsibilities pile up, sometimes you need a reason to hang out with your poochie pal.





# Expect Issues to Go Away **DON'T**

If your dog has some behavior issues that concern you, they should be addressed as soon as possible. If you change nothing, nothing will change - it will only get worse with repetition. Problems will not just magically disappear without being proactive and working to determine what created the problem and working on a treatment plan.



Dog behavior is shaped by repetition, so a problem will be much less time consuming the sooner you recognize it and get working on it. You can always teach an old dog new tricks, but a problem that has been going on for years is going to take quite a long time to counter condition.

So don't assume things will improve without taking action. Instead, be honest with yourself and do everything you need to do to help your dog through it.



# DO Understand the Breed You Have

Every dog's different and every breed has specific characteristics that are genetically encoded. I get many calls from people upset by specific behaviors that are merely the dog doing what he was bred to do.

If you have a Beagle, there is good chance he will be a bit aloof and not listen to you all that well. You may be upset but that is exactly what Beagles were bred to be like. Their job is to catch a scent, follow it, find it and then yell like hell. They are bred to work independently of humans, meaning they were bred to ignore us.

Jack Russell Terriers were bred to hunt so they will tend to chase small animals. Border Collies were bred to herd so they will likely chase the kids around the yard and nip at their feet. Chow Chows are supposed to be very loyal to the family and may growl at the neighbors.





# Baby Your Dog

# DON'T

Dogs need and crave rules and boundaries and live much healthier lives when provided with a stable person to guide them. If you are allowing your dog to get away with a lot of questionable behavior or coddling him you are not doing him any favors, but may be causing mental distress. So many anxieties are amplified by well meaning people who feel sorry for the dog and instead of providing stability, they actually reward the anxiety.



This is most common in small dogs whose cuteness and size may lead you to think that they are little fragile creatures who need special care. In reality, they are pretty much the same as big dogs. So, just like any good parent, show them love, but also make sure you're setting rules and not enabling bad behavior.



# DO Be Happy with the Dog You Have

Everyone has an image of the dog they want in their head and when the dog we get doesn't match that dream we can sometimes try to force them to fit our image. This often causes lots of problems as we can't shoe-horn the dog we want into the dog we have. As hard as it may be to accept you can't change who your dog is.

You may want to go to the dog park and gossip with the neighbors while your dog frolics with the other dogs there, However, if you dog is nervous around other dogs, under socialized or grumpy around other dogs, you shouldn't try to force it.

You should try to help your dog overcome any challenges and see how you can improve different situations but sometimes you need to know when it is what it is. Just appreciate all of the things your dog is, while understanding and accepting any limitations based on his/her personality and preferences.





# Take Your Dog For Granted **DON'T**

In the hustle and bustle of life, it's very easy to lose sight of the stuff right in front of us. Our dogs are always there at our feet, so it's easy to say we'll play with them later, or we'll spend more time with them after our work slows down or go for that long walk together tomorrow, but often that tomorrow never comes.

The lifespan of our dogs is so fleetingly short and we need to enjoy our dogs right now, today. Don't wait, don't put off a short game of tug, a nice walk or some quality snuggle time. Enjoy every single day you have with your dog!





