

The Leadership Lifestyle



Understanding Dog Behavior

You can't be an effective leader if you don't understand the one you're supposed to be leading. It's in yours and your dogs best interest for you to learn how your dog communicates, and what your dogs needs are; in short, what makes your dog a dog. While it's important for dogs to learn how to act appropriately with humans, it's equally important for humans to act appropriately with dogs. Strive to really *see* your dog; observe and you shall be rewarded. Books that cover this more include *On Talking Terms with Dogs* and *The Other End of the Leash* (both on the recommended reading list).

Be Worthy Of The Title

What makes a person worth following? This is one area that people and dogs aren't that different. The best leaders are confident, fair, make decisions that benefit the group (in this case the dog), offer stability, and are trustworthy. These sound pretty reasonable, don't they? Those that try to lead by using force do not have the loyalty of the group, and are often faced with avoidance, disorderly behavior, and sometimes aggression. If you're a good leader your dog will defer to you because there is more benefit in doing so than not.

Possession is Nine-Tenths of the Law... And It's All Yours

Leadership isn't about dominating your dog, it's about controlling the resources your dog considers valuable. What's valuable to your dog? Resources commonly valuable to dogs include:

- Food (not all equally)
- Toys (not all equally)
- You (your voice, your touch, your gaze, your mere presence)
- Access to various locations (outdoors, indoors, the car, the couch)

When you know what your dog considers valuable, you can use your control of these resources to reinforce behavior you like. For example, you can control your dog's access to the backyard. You can require that your dog sit before being let outside by simply not allowing him to go through the doorway until he does. Assuming he already knows what Sit means, all you have to do is close the door or block the doorway with your body whenever he is not sitting. You then use a word or phrase to indicate that he may get up and go out.

Dogs Like Structure

Dogs are creatures of habit. They learn our habits down to the smallest detail, often without our even knowing it. This can be a good or a bad thing, depending upon whether we make use of that habit or not. Creating boundaries for your dog, boundaries on your terms, is essential. It is in fact much nicer for the dog. We often think that being "nice" means making allowances and allowing freedom. For dogs, being nice means being clear, and the best way to be clear is through structure. The amount of restriction depends on the amount of difficulties your having, and can vary over time, but you should always be able to return to rules you've used in the past.

Your Attention Is Like Water

No, it's not an obscure Zen teaching. It's a way of thinking about the subtle power you have to control your dog's behavior with your attention. You can turn it on or off at will. You can adjust the amount of attention flowing toward your dog, from a trickle to a rush, and effect your dog's behavior in the process. Attention can be shown through the direction of our body (turning toward or away), through our gaze (looking at or away from), through our voice (silence and speech), and through our touch. One of the most important things to learn is how to ignore your dog, as it is one of the most

important tools in extinguishing unwanted behavior. One trap that can be easily fallen into is paying more attention to your dog for being bad (“stop it... stop it... stop it...”) then for being good (“quiet...he’s finally calm, don’t disturb him”). This can also be seen in more subtle situations with a dog that insistently solicits your attention.

Not sure how to start with the Leadership Lifestyle?

Here is a list of specific examples of how you can start to be a leader in your dog’s eyes. It may seem artificial, and in a way it is, but most of the examples are part of a useful safety structure for your dog. You probably don’t need to do this for the rest of your dog’s life, but you should always be able to go back to any of them if needed. I recommend instituting these rules for at least a month, longer if you continue to have problems with any of them. As you begin to see a shift in your relationship with your dog you can begin to ease up on these rules, but don’t abandon them completely.

Check off those you’ve applied during one month, add more to the list as needed. Keep a journal of the changes you notice during this month.

WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hand feed your dog (one week is usually enough)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog waits calmly for permission before exiting the house
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog waits calmly for permission to get in the car
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog waits calmly for permission to get out of the car
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog moves out of your way as you move about the house
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog moves back from a door so you can go through first
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog sits until released when food is offered in a bowl
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog offers her attention when asked
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your dog let’s guests enter the house without mugging them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Related Handouts:

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calming Signals | <input type="checkbox"/> Loose Leash Walking: Getting Started |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Key Ideas of Positive Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Doggie Zen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcers | <input type="checkbox"/> Sit: Part 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say What? | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention/Look At Me (Not The Other Dog) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping Up | <input type="checkbox"/> Coming When Called |