

Common Misbehavior Problems are Really Normal Doggie Behaviors

Your dog's misbehavior is often just a normal doggie behavior that is done at the wrong place or time. Wild dogs will often chew, dig, bark, howl, eliminate, jump, or play without it creating problems where they live. However, for our domesticated friend, all of these normal behaviors done at the inappropriate times or places can get them into hot water very quickly.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, only 35% of all family dogs live out their natural lives with their original owners. It is estimated that over 65% of the dogs surrendered to shelters across the country have a behavior problem that could have been prevented with early training, or could have been solved if the owners had known some basics about dog training and behavior. Rather than let your newly adopted dog or puppy become a statistic, let's first find out why behavior problems develop and what we can do to solve them.

BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS ARE DUE TO:

BREED TRAITS: Dog breeds were developed to specialize the individual, so he could perform a certain type of work better than any other kind of dog. Knowing your Fido's breed(s) can help you understand and combat typical problem behaviors that are breed based. For instance, in the breed group known as terriers, these particular dogs were bred to hunt for small vermin and often in the process of hunting, go to ground (which literally means go under the earth and look for those pesky critters). Terriers tend to be very enthusiastic in the hunt, and therefore very vocal. A typical behavior problem you may have with terriers is that they like to dig, chase small animals, bark, and have a very high energy level.

With behavior problems that are breed-based traits, redirecting those behaviors into safe outlets are by far the most effective method of problem solving. Redirecting a terrier's behaviors would involve providing him with a special place to dig (a digging pit), and providing lots of exercise and teaching him the "QUIET" cue. At the same time, allow him barkathons at appropriate times and teach him to chase a ball or Frisbee. You would invest a large amount of your training in perfecting the "OFF" cue so that he learns not to chase small animals like your cat. Since breed based problems are instinctive, they are very hard to extinguish, but can be redirected with amazing success. Find out what he was bred, so you can understand why he exhibits some behaviors so strongly, and then you can pick safe and appropriate activities.

LACK OF EXERCISE: A tired dog is a good dog, because then he is sleeping and not digging, barking, or chewing. Not enough exercise results in your dog becoming bored and inventing his own games to play. Even if your dog spends his day in the yard while you are away, he is not exercising himself. He certainly isn't tired when you come home, is he? **A young dog needs a minimum of two to three exercise periods a day that involve aerobic activity.** A good rule of thumb for exercise is when you've given your dog enough activity he will lie down and not move for a minimum of 20 minutes. Adult dogs need at least two sessions per day (AM & PM), while older dogs still need those two sessions, keep them shorter - or as your veterinarian prescribes.

Good ways to exercise your dog are throwing a ball or Frisbee, teaching him to swim, blowing bubbles, teaching him to chase a soccer ball, or having him chase a toy tied to a string. Be inventive when thinking of ways to exercise your dog. Fido will appreciate it, you'll have some fun, and because you will be spending time with him, your dog will become even more bonded to you. Avoid wrestling, tug of war and chase games, as these teach your dog to pit his strength and teeth AGAINST you. Walking your dog is fine, but usually will not result in getting him tired enough unless you are walking four to five miles a day. For young dogs less than 14 months of age, please consult your veterinarian before starting a jogging program. Jogging with young dogs is not recommended as it can damage your dog's skeletal and muscular system. Wait until Fido has completely

finished growing before you take him out running with you. See our handout on Play & Exercise In Dogs for more detailed information.

LACK OF CONSISTENCY: Problems often develop when your dog is allowed to do something one week, then the following week he is severely scolded for repeating the same behavior. This causes a lot of confusion for your dog. For instance, when your dog was small he was probably allowed to jump on you (as it was easier for you to pet him). Perhaps he was allowed up on the furniture (after all he's just a little guy) and he was allowed to nip at your ankles (how cute and playful). Well now that your Labrador has gained 50 pounds and 18 inches in height, you find these habits annoying, not to mention dangerous. Even an adult, 10 pound Toy Poodle can be quite bothersome jumping on you, (ruining your good pants), and it can be quite painful when he is biting at your ankles! Your dog's only crime was that he grew up. Your crime is that you did not treat Mr. Puppy as Mr. Adult right from the beginning. Dogs learn rules quickly if they are taught right from the start what is expected of them.

Make sure everyone in your family understands and enforces your household rules for Fido. (It's a good idea to post a list on the refrigerator to remind everyone). Dogs learn to test to see what "rules" are in effect, especially if different family members have been allowing assorted behaviors. They learn who is easy prey for a sad look or a tentative paw up on the couch. Enforcing household rules becomes harder because your dog is confused as to what exactly is or is not allowed. Your dog needs to have rules he can count on being the same from day to day.

Schedule your dog's life so he knows when it's time to eat, play, sleep, and work. Fido will become calmer and much more confident because he knows what to expect and when to expect it. When changes do occur in your household (such as a marriage, divorce, a new baby, change of residence, or a new cat or dog added to the family), you can expect your dog to exhibit some changes in behavior. Keeping the routine the same will help reduce his stress.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP: Dogs are pack animals and look to one leader for guidance and structure. All dogs love structure and guidance! If there is no strong leader in your dog's pack (your family), then he will then be forced to place himself as leader. Leaders pretty much do whatever they want, whenever they want. If your dog has this dictatorship view of life, then he probably has more than one habit you do not like. Start by taking your dog to a humane, rewards-based training program so that you, as a leader, can understand how to clearly communicate with your pet in a safe, non-threatening manner. To learn more about training classes, seminars and workshops offered by HSSV, visit www.hssv.org/training.

LACK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION: It is estimated that 70% of all problem behaviors are due to a lack of social interaction or isolation. Dogs are very social creatures, more so than humans. They would always choose to be with you if possible. Therefore, all dogs need daily social interaction or they can become stressed. Stress in a dog exhibits itself in many ways. The most common signs are digging, chewing, escaping and barking. (What do you know! Those sound like behavior problems!) A dog that lives exclusively in your backyard (alone), is going to be stressed because being alone goes against his very genetic makeup! (If you are thinking about getting another dog to keep your dog company, think again. In most cases, adding a second dog to a first dog who has behavior problems can mean that you now have TWO dogs who will dig, bark, and chew! Read our handout on *Before You Get A Second Dog* to help you decide if you should add another canine friend to your family).

Leaving your dog in the backyard or garage will not prevent destructive habits from developing unless you take preventive steps. Because you do not live in your yard or garage, you are not there to supervise your dog. Excessive barking, territorial aggression, escaping, digging and chewing can develop quite easily. Dogs not

educated in proper household etiquette must be safely confined to limit damage; not only to your property, but to themselves as well. Many common plants in your yard are poisonous to dogs; there are many toxic substances in your garage and yard (such as snail bait, fertilizers, paint thinner, antifreeze and rat poisons). Outdoor dogs are subject to teasing or harassment by children, prone to theft, and poisoning from an outside source.

LET YOUR DOG BELONG TO YOUR FAMILY! By having your dog live with you in your house, he can learn what is expected of him and he won't be so isolated, which reduces stress. Inside dogs have fewer behavior problems than outside dogs, and because you have a better relationship with your dog, problem solving becomes much easier. Inside the house you can control the environment to solve problems that may develop. Inside dogs bark less since they cannot be teased by the neighborhood kids; they are inside the "pack's den"; therefore feel more secure, and they have less "territory" to protect from real or perceived threats. An outside dog is not a good theft deterrent, since what most burglars want is inside your house, not in your yard. Only a dog INSIDE your house will deter a burglar (See our handout on *The Backyard Dog*).

At a minimum, your dog should be kept inside your house whenever you are home, including sleeping inside at night. If you must keep your dog outside during the day, then put up an escape proof dog run, away from the yard fence. This will keep your dog from ingesting toxic substances or plants, keep him from being teased, keep him from being a theft object, and keep him from destroying your yard. The dog run should be large enough so he has ample room to do his business in one end and still have room to walk and stretch in the other (in general a dog run should be 6' by 14' minimum). Provide enough shade in the summer months and a doghouse to get out of bad weather in cooler months. Please make sure that your Fido has had plenty of exercise before he is confined as well as leaving several stuffed chew items such as KONGs or Buster cubes.

The best way to solve a problem is to never let your dog acquire unwanted behaviors by training and managing him the minute he is adopted into your family (or follows you home!). All dogs can learn as young as four weeks and as old as 12 years (provided they are still healthy and have some eyesight or hearing left). Sometimes that is not always possible or perhaps you have adopted an older dog who was never trained properly, so what can you do now that Fido has a habit you do not like? There are actually several different ways you can deal with problem behaviors. The best results are obtained by combining several of the different methods below.

PREVENT ACCESS (USE MANAGEMENT): This simply means we do not let our dogs practice the behavior we don't like. We use indoor crates, baby gates, secure dog runs, a tie down, a leash, a head collar, and SUPERVISION. You may use all of the above, or a few of the above, but always use at least one...supervision. Until your dog is adequately housetrained and understands household rules, he should not be left alone loose in either the yard or your house, for ANY length of time initially. If you can't watch your dog, then crate train him so he can be indoors while you are gone or for those times you are busy doing something else. (See our Crate Training handout for proper use and training of a crate.) Use baby gates to restrict access so he can't steal the kid's toys, chase the cat, dash out the front door, or leave the room you are currently in. A leash is helpful in preventing jumping, stealing off the counter, or running away at the park. A head collar is very helpful when teaching your dog to walk on leash without pulling, or when you are having any aggression or control problems. Management does not have to be forever, IF you take the time to properly train your dog and reward him for good behavior throughout his lifetime. Just as you keep earning a paycheck for working, your dog's good behavior needs to be noticed and rewarded, otherwise it will not remain "good" for his lifetime. (See our handout on *Crate Training*)

PREVENT THE BEHAVIOR FROM HAPPENING BY REMOVING THE MOTIVATION THAT STARTS IT: Think of it this way, dogs do what works. Dogs will repeat behaviors that they can get a reward from (just like kids!).

Identify the reward and remove it. For instance, your dog jumps on people. Every time he jumps, people pet him and make a fuss over him. Your dog is being rewarded for jumping. Remove any physical or verbal attention when he jumps, (ignore him like a ghost dog!) but praise and give treats and pets when he is standing quietly or sitting. Pretty soon he will be doing much less jumping and a lot more sitting!

Another approach, is if a behavior is not dangerous to your dog or any human, ignore the behavior. A behavior that is not rewarded in any way will start to die out (this is called extinction). For example: You have a dog that loves to steal socks. Do you react to Fido's sock stealing by chasing him all over the house? He probably is doing it because it gets your attention and a good game of chase then happens. Try ignoring him when he has a sock and see what happens. Does he become bored and drop it? Pay attention to him when he is playing with his own toys and ignore the sock stealing (as long as he does not swallow the fabric). Soon he will be playing with his own toys and leaving the socks alone.

CHANGE YOUR DOG'S BEHAVIOR (OR TRAIN): Dogs do not understand English unless we make it a point to humanely teach them what certain sounds (words) mean. When you talk to your dog, think of him like a distant foreign exchange student who only speaks "Ruffwoof". For instance, we need to methodically teach our dogs that the sound, "sit", means put your rear on the floor by putting a treat just out of reach over his head. When his butt hits the floor the treat gets delivered immediately and your dog will start to make the connection that hind end to the floor is a very good thing to do. By training your dog, you establish a common language so your pet understands how to act and what will be rewarded (sit when greeting humans, down/stay when dinner is served, open my mouth when told to "drop", wait quietly at the door to be let in/out, etc.) Training isn't hard when using positives (such as food & toys) and is a great way for your pet to bond with your family as well. Visit www.hssv.org/training to learn more about the training programs we offer.

ACCEPT THE BEHAVIOR / CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE: Sometimes it is easier to accept the behavior, rather than try to change it. I have a wonderful adult Boxer at home who loves people and other animals. But she is a full blown addicted counter-surfer. Any food item left on the counter will be consumed when she is left unattended for even one minute. Rather than put up elaborate booby traps (see below), I have learned to put the bread away, put the dog treat canister out of reach, and close the door to the office where the cat feeding station is. Any time she steals something, I consider it my fault and I laugh at how clever she is in finding that one item I left out. To try to change her behavior would be difficult at best since she has been rewarded so many times for it, (my bad memory you know!) and personally I don't want to have all my counters covered with Booby Traps! So I changed my lifestyle, and now I am a better housekeeper!

Now I need to point out that when you adopt or buy a dog, your lifestyle DOES have to change. You can no longer work 12 hour days (the dog needs to be walked, fed, trained, and exercised daily you know!). You cannot leave your \$200.00 pair of hiking boots out for your brand new puppy to use as a chew toy (this WILL happen, as all puppies think ALL items are chew toys until we give them guidance!). You DO need to supervise your children whenever they are with the dog (kids also need training on how to interact appropriately with pets – see our Kids N' Dogs handout) and you DO need to find a pet sitter if you take a vacation without your dog. It is unavoidable. Just as when you decided to have a human child, a dog child also demands that you make some changes in your life.

REHOME YOUR DOG: Let's face it. Some of you may have read through this entire handout and realized that you had no idea what a dog was, or what they needed to thrive and be happy before you acquired one. A puppy or newly acquired adult dog takes as much time as an active human toddler. They require guidance (training) and time (socialization). Rather than isolate your dog outdoors or neglect their social needs, perhaps you should be thinking about re-homing your pet if you don't have the time or energy to properly care for him.

You do need to understand that if your dog has an existing aggression problem, you can still be held liable, even if your dog is in the new ownership of someone else. The problem originated with you and the law has been upheld that “original owners can be held responsible for preexisting serious behavior problems such as aggression”. Do consult a professional trainer before giving up on your dog. They may be able to help you with some of the problems you are experiencing so that you can keep your family pet or make your pet more adoptable so someone else will want him (After all, if your pet has behavior problems severe enough that you don’t want him, why would anyone else want him? Take the time to make him more adoptable before giving him up to someone else).

SOLUTIONS TO ANY PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

There are some common solutions to all behavior problems. They are:

1. Spend time humanely training your dog. Stick to force-free, reward-based methods and trainers that use rewards like food and toys. Don’t worry, you won’t need to use these motivators for your dog’s entire life, just while you’re helping them to learn. Avoid any method or trainer that tells you to use a choke chain or pinch collar, hit or yell at your dog, or tell you that you cannot use food to train with.
2. Make your dog more a part of your family; bring him indoors!
3. Manage your dog; don’t let him practice the unwanted behavior. Keep him leashed, use baby gates, tie downs, head collars, and/or an indoor crate.
4. Increase daily exercise.
5. Reward good behavior, ignore bad behavior (unless dangerous)

The first two points on the above list should be emphasized. Most dogs develop problems because they were never taught what to do or what not to do because they were never allowed to be part of a human family! Take the time to train your dog so he does become the perfect, well-mannered pet that you have always dreamed about. Behavior problems are never solved by isolating your dog to the backyard, in fact, they may become worse. You are your dog’s pack and it is up to you to teach him the correct way to behave, by making him more a part of your family.

RECOMMENDED READING

- **Positive Perspectives 2- Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog** – Pat Miller
- **Parenting Your Dog** – Trish King
- **I’ll Be Home Soon** (dealing with separation anxiety) - Patricia McConnell
- **Cautious Canine** (fearful behavior) - Patricia McConnell
- **The Tool Box for Remodeling Your Problem Dog** - Terry Ryan
- **The Bark Stops Here** - by Terry Ryan
- **Dogs Home Alone** (dealing with separation anxiety) - Roger Abrantes
- **Overcoming Dog Problems** - Silvia Hartmann-Kert
- **Your Outta Control Puppy** - Teoti Anderson
- **Aggression in Dogs: Practical Management Prevention & Behavior Modification** – Brenda Aloff

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS OF COMMON BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

The following table is not meant to cover every possible problem that your dog may develop. This table is included to help you understand why a behavior in your dog may be occurring. To solve a problem, a combination of several different solutions has the highest success rate.

Behavior	Possible Causes	Possible Solutions
Jumping on people	Rewarded for doing it-petting, shoving, getting picked up; fed treats while jumping	Do not pet or pick up while jumping; do not feed unless all four paws are on the floor; keep on leash when guests come over; teach sit/down/stay using positives
	Urge to greet/lick muzzle of leader	Teach "sit" as a greeting
	Mounting or Socially-Motivated Controlling Behavior	Spay or neuter early; provide strong leadership/guidance
	Social isolation	Use time buffers (see our <i>Separation Anxiety</i> handout); more exercise
Excessive Barking	Breed Characteristic	Teach "speak" and "quiet" command; have bark-a-thons at times when barking will not disturb others
	Social Isolation – Boredom	More exercise; reward quiet behavior; train trick behaviors; keep indoors. Give several stuffed KONGs to occupy time.
	Outside stimulation	Teach "Quiet"; keep indoors; desensitize to sounds; keep radio on
	Being teased or harassed	Keep inside; keep behind sight-proof dog fence.
Fearfulness/Shyness (See our handouts on <i>Socialization The Key to...and Socializing Your New Puppy</i>)	Breed trait Poor quality individual	Research breed before obtaining; never buy pet shop dogs; research breeder before buying; very active socialization
	Inadvertently rewarded	Do not pet or soothe in fearful situations; use JOLLY routine instead or ignore
	Lack of socialization Poor training	Don't hit or yell at; provide consistency and proper timing; active socialization; enroll in positive training class
	Early traumatic experience	Slow socialization to traumatic situation; JOLLY routine; reward only confidence-ignore fear responses
Digging	Too hot or cold	Provide warm doghouse, cool shady area, or wading pool. Bring indoors for better climate control
	Nesting behaviors in females	Provide a "nest" or doghouse with old blankets; keep inside
	Attempt to escape Boredom Desire to mate	Keep dogs inside; keep in escape proof dog run; have neighbors ignore dog if he gets out; increase exercise; give several stuffed KONGs or Buster Cubes to occupy time.
	Separation anxiety or stress	Time buffers; more exercise; have someone let dog out at lunch; provide special toys such as stuffed KONGs or Buster Cubes
	Inadvertently rewarded	Remove garbage or tasty plants; provide toys; put chicken wire just below dirt surface; put large rocks or boulders into areas where digging is not wanted
	Breed characteristic	Provide digging pit; teach "Dig" and "Off" command. Go to beach and let dog dig to heart's content

Chewing	Inappropriate chew toys given – shoes, towels, stuffed animals	Give toys that do not resemble household items: stuffed KONGs; Buster Cubes; Nylabones
	Separation anxiety – boredom	Use stress reduction ideas from separation anxiety handout; increase exercise
	Pleasant taste/smell	Clean spilled food/drink; use bad tasting booby traps (bitter apple/orange or Tabasco sauce)
	Breed characteristic Teething	Supervise; confine give ice cubes; give proper chew toys (stuffed KONGs or natural bones)
Thievery	Inadvertently rewarded – ate food; got a good game of chase out of you; other family members think it's funny and encourage it	Put food out of reach; set up booby traps; ignore dog when he has stolen item; put a long line on dog to stop chase; re-establish household rules with family members. Do not hit, yell at (this is a surefire way to teach an animal to be possessive aggressive!)
	Inappropriate toys given – shoes, towels, stuffed toys	Give toys that do not resemble household items; KONGs, Tuffys, Nylabones, Boomer balls; teach "Off" and "GET YOUR BONE"; supervise or confine
	Playing inappropriate games. (See our handout on <i>Play and Exercise in Dogs</i>)	Stop playing games that encourage dog to grab things from you; teach fetch; teach "DROP" and "TAKE IT" commands. Supervise all interaction between dog and children
Pulls on leash	Breed trait	Teach a pull command and then a walk nice command; get involved in sledding or cart pulling; exercise with game of fetch before taking on walk in neighborhood
	Inadvertently rewarded for pulling	Stop walking when pulls forward; reward staying close to you with food/toys; use a head collar (comes in brands such as Gentle Leader, Snoot Loop, or Halti) or other walking equipment like the Easy-Walk or SENSE-ation Harness; exercise with game of fetch before taking on walk in neighborhood; enroll in a positive training program
	Outside stimulation	Practice in low key environments first; use a head collar; don't let play or visit other dogs on leash (rewards pulling)
Excitability	Inadvertently rewarded – hyped up with games; petted or fed while "wild"	Avoid playing excitable games do not feed or pet unless sitting or lying down
	Breed trait Poor quality individual	Research breed before obtaining; never buy pet shop dogs; research breeder before buying. Adopt or buy only temperament tested animals
	Social isolation	Keep dog inside so he learns manners; have neighbors visit dog; teach down/stay using positives
	Lack of exercise	Provide structured, controlled exercise; teach fetch; get involved in a dog sport such as flyball, agility, tracking or obedience
	Poor training or lack of training	Teach "DOWN" with progressively longer periods that dog has to perform; time rewards correctly; get involved in obedience or agility to further training; desensitize to exciting stimuli

Does not come when called	Physical limitations	Have dog checked for hearing and eyesight loss; tie hair out of eyes; put on high quality diet and holistic supplements
	Something negative was done to discourage dog from coming	Don't call dog and then bathe, yell at, clip nails, or flea spray; reward with praise, treats, and toys for coming at any time; re-teach command using different word. Don't hit or yell at dog when finally caught if it ran away.
	Outside stimulation	Keep on leash and teach command initially in less distracting situations, gradually working up to very distracting ones. Use high value rewards in more distracting situations
	Off leash privileges given too soon	Keep leash or long line on whenever in an unenclosed area; re-teach command in controlled environment. Use higher value rewards so dog would rather come/play with you than other dogs/people
	Called only once during walk and then taken home	Call dog many times during walk to check in and then go play
Escaping	Boredom, no bond to family	Increase exercise; keep inside when family is gone (crate train); make more a part of family; take a training class. Don't hit or yell at dog when finally caught
	Separation anxiety	Keep inside house (either in single room or crate); provide special toys (stuffed KONGs or chew bones) when family is gone. Increase daily exercise. Enroll in doggie daycare center.
	Pleasant experience in past – rewarded with food and/or play with neighbors or other dogs	Keep in escape proof dog run (chain link); have neighbors ignore dog when he gets out. (They should not play with, pet, feed, etc. They can just put dog directly back in fenced yard with as little interaction as possible)
	Outside stimulation – kids teasing dog through fence; other dogs running loose	Keep inside talk to neighbors if they are bothering dog; have neighbors keep their dogs in their own yards; build sight proof chain link dog run in middle of yard (away from yard fence)
	Poor training or lack of training	Teach "DOWN: with progressively longer periods that dog has to perform; time rewards correctly; get involved in obedience or agility to further training; desensitize to exciting stimuli
	Desire to mate	Spay or neuter dog; keep inside your house in a crate

<p style="text-align: center;">Aggression</p> <p>Aggression can be a complicated and dangerous behavior problem. In ALL cases, we recommend that you have a private consultation with a humane, force-free, professional trainer. For trainer referrals go to our website at www.hssv.org/behavior.</p>	Traumatic experience	Desensitize to stimulation using only positives; remove from situation if too stimulated; stop outside teasing; contact a professional humane trainer
	Poor socialization	Systematic socialization under the guidance of a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT); don't reward fear behavior by petting/picking up; keep dog removed from situation until get professional help
	Poor quality individual	Research breeder before buying adopt/buy/only temperament tested dogs/puppies from rescue/shelters; keep dog out of situations that illicit aggression; get professional help; reward good behavior; stop hitting or yelling
	Physical problems	Consult a veterinarian for a full physical workup; put on high quality diet with holistic supplements
	Poor training or lack of training	Harsh, physical training often results in fear aggression; stop hitting or yelling; throw out choke chains and pinch collars-use a head collar for more control; contact a humane trainer for private consultation

Also see more of our online animal behavior information at www.hssv.org/behavior.