

Be a Leader

Your new dog doesn't come to you with a set of perfect behaviors in place. It's up to you to teach him what's acceptable by providing him the guidance and leadership he needs to feel happy and secure within your home. A little attention to leadership in the beginning will strengthen your bond and will result in a happy and well-behaved dog.

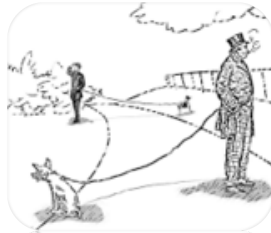


Be consistent

Consistency around rewarding desired behaviors and not rewarding unwanted behaviors creates good habits in your dog. You as a confident, consistent, and patient leader can assure him that he can trust you to guide him as he learns. Make sure your body language, actions, and words are those of a leader: good eye contact; strong body positioning; a positive and fun-loving approach; clear and consistent commands. All family members can and should learn how to be a leader with your new dog. All should use the same commands for the same request, for example, everyone should use "Come" when you call your dog (not one use "Come" and another use "Here"). There's no room for mixed messages when it comes to working with your new dog.

Keep your new dog close

Teach your new dog to come to you when you call him by tethering him to you in the first few days. If your dog is nearby, it's easier to quickly reward good behaviors and to avoid unintended rewards for bad behaviors (like eating off the counters or finding a quiet potty spot). Tethering teaches your dog that he can't just ignore you by walking away.



Choose a Reward

Your dog needs to know when he has done something well. Choose a positive reinforcement word like "yes!" or "nice!" while simultaneously offering a coveted treat. You'll have to be on your toes: keep treats nearby and try to create situations where he can succeed, so you can teach him desirable behaviors and then reward immediately. He'll soon learn that doing certain things results in wonderful rewards!

Teach Your Dog a Few Commands

Use positive reinforcement methods to teach your dog a few commands, starting with "Sit" and progressing to "Down," "Stay," "Wait," "Shake," and any other fun tricks you would like to teach him. Choose a location with few distractions, away from activity and food. Once he's mastered a few commands, require him to perform one before you give your dog anything. Make training fun, keep training sessions short (1-2 minutes, 4-5 times a day), and use everything your dog likes or wants to your advantage.



Practice "Nothing in Life is Free"

Food, treats, toys, walks, petting, and attention are all highly valuable to your dog. Don't give anything away for free. When he wants one of those things, require him to earn it by performing a "Sit" (make sure your dog knows the "Sit" command well before practicing "Nothing in Life is Free"). Be sure to reward immediately when he sits. Remove all rewards if he doesn't perform a sit, and walk away (so you don't inadvertently give him attention for his unwanted behavior). Within a few minutes, you can come back and try again. Be patient as your dog learns that he'll get what he wants if he obeys your command. Be positive and have fun!

Walk with a Loose Leash

Walking with your dog provides a perfect opportunity to demonstrate leadership. Walk with your dog every day, even if it's only for 15 minutes (this is not a substitute for the amount of exercise your dog needs every day). Be sure to require a sit when putting on the leash and again before opening the door to leave the house. Have him walk beside you (not in front of you) with as loose a leash as possible. The walk is not a time for him to do his own thing. If he tugs and ignores you, stop and reverse directions with a slight tug on the leash. Once he begins to follow you, continue the walk. If he continues to tug, continue to stop and reverse directions, until he understands that you are in charge of the walk, not him, and that his reward for walking properly is . . . well . . . the walk!

