

Humane Society of West Michigan

Behavior and Training

Understanding your dog's behavior and learning how dogs think will make life with your new pet happier and easier. Positive reinforcement, also known as reward-based training, is proven to be far more effective in creating a well-adjusted, well-mannered dog than punishment-focused methods.

HSWM recommends all new dogs/puppies and their family members attend at least a basic manners course to solidify the loving bond and to help him understand what is expected of him.

Puppies

The experiences your puppy has, or doesn't have, will shape him for the rest of his life. Introduce your puppy to new experiences gradually and make sure these experiences are positive and not overwhelming.

Puppies may whine a lot their first few days in their new home. Remain calm; this phase will pass as your puppy gains confidence and feels secure.

Begin teaching your puppy basic manners as soon as you get him home. Take advantage of your daily routine; when feeding, ask the puppy to come, sit and stay until you give the okay to eat. Ask him to sit or wait before letting him out of his crate, going through doors, etc.

Teach your puppy to be very gentle with his teeth on human skin and to chew on appropriate toys and bones. If your puppy hurts you with his teeth, simply say "ouch" and ignore him for a minute. Please do not use physical punishment. Dogs work on instincts that you cannot change but you can redirect. Hitting or tapping on the nose, etc., only reinforces that you cause pain.

Practice touching your puppy on his paws, tails, ears, etc., and reward relaxed behavior with treats and kind, calm praise. Regularly groom your puppy and wipe his feet off (even if it isn't raining).

Do not play wrestling or rough housing games that direct attention toward your hands without first teaching basic manners. A nice game of fetch is better to begin with.

Puppy Kindergarten

Puppy kindergarten is a series of classes for puppies aged around 8-16 weeks. During these valuable weeks when your puppy is very open to learning, you will be taught how your puppy thinks and feels, and the best way to influence his/her behavior for the future. Your puppy will also be exposed to lots of positive experiences in a controlled and safe environment. Learning to interact with other puppies and dogs and with other people and children is very beneficial at this early age. Please look on our website for a current list of puppy classes and information.

Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

Look for these warning signs that a dog is anxious:

- The dog is standing stiffly.
- He is looking sideways to the child.
- He is trying to get away or hide.
- His tail is tucked.
- He emits a low, deep growl.
- He is staring your child in the eye, with a raised lip.

Most importantly:

- **Never** run from a dog; his natural instinct will be to chase.
- If a dog does run up to you, freeze with your arms folded or by your sides. Once the dog loses interest, walk away slowly.
- Respect your dog and encourage others to do the same!
- Your new pet is your friend and companion. Forcibly moving him, hitting, or pinning him down will lead to problems. The dog may see you as a threat, as someone to fear, and may shut off from you or become aggressive. Your pet should welcome your touch and not be afraid of you.

How Kids SHOULD NOT Interact with Dogs

It's common sense. Just imagine how people should interact with each other.

Avoid taking people's food



Avoid bothering dogs when they are eating

Avoid stealing other people's toys



Avoid taking a dog's bones or toys

Avoid putting your face right up to someone else's face



Avoid putting your face right up to a dog's face

Avoid bothering when asleep



Avoid bothering animals when they are resting. Let sleeping dogs lie.

Avoid pestering



Avoid grabbing tail/ears

Avoid climbing on or trampling



Avoid climbing on or trampling

Avoid pinching



Avoid hugging. Most dogs dislike it.

Avoid screaming around



Avoid hollering and shouting. Use your "inside" voice instead.

Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM

The Art and Science of Animal 1

For a additional free dog bite prevention resource dog behavior books and products, visit www.dvm.com

House Training

Puppies

A good rule of thumb is puppies can control their bladders for approximately one hour of time for each month of their age. In other words, a three-month-old puppy cannot be expected to last more than three hours without relieving himself and typically they need to defecate 10-20 minutes after eating.

Consistency and routine are key. If you can be at home with your puppy, take him out, on-leash, to eliminate every two hours, after every nap, after every play session, before confinement and any time he signals (circling, sniffing). Take him to the same area of your yard each time. Give him a word to associate with the action and do not play with or interact with him until he goes.

Praise him for eliminating outside. If he does not eliminate after a few minutes take him back inside and confine him for 15 minutes, then take him out again. Repeat this until he goes. If you miss the signals but you catch your puppy eliminating, immediately take him outside, praising him when he goes in the appropriate place. DO NOT rub his nose in any errors as this does not teach proper elimination habits or control.

Here are some house training tips:

- Use a crate.
- Have the crate next to your bed and during the night, when the puppy whines, take him outside, wait 2 minutes and when he eliminates, praise him,
- Place him back in his crate to sleep.
- Always keep his crate spotlessly clean; this will encourage him to do the same.

If you have to leave your puppy for longer periods (over three hours):

- Try confining him to your kitchen area.
- Leave the door off the crate; place the crate close to his food and water dishes.



- The puppy should sleep in his crate and get up to eliminate on a hard surface floor which is easy to clean and sterilize.
- When you arrive home DO NOT punish your puppy for eliminating on the floor. This teaches the puppy nothing except to fear your return!
- When you are home, be diligent about taking outside to eliminate and use lots of praise.

REMEMBER: Be patient. Young puppies have limited control of their bladders and short memories. Some learn more quickly than others.

Adult Dogs

Your new adult dog may already be potty trained, but she may be anxious and is certainly unfamiliar in her new home and not at all aware of what you want; so expect some accidents at first.

Take the dog outside to eliminate when you first arrive home, first thing in the morning, before confinement (if you go out), immediately after confinement, after his dinner, just before you go to bed, and any time she signals a need to go.

If your dog, no matter what age, continues to eliminate in the house when you are at home, attach a leash to the dog's flat collar and tie it to your waist. This way you can watch your dog and take him outside when he begins to show signs of needing to eliminate.



Submissive and Excitement Urination

- Less confident dogs sometimes urinate to show submission or in excitement to greet you. They want you to know that they pose no threat or challenge to you.
- Do not punish your dog, as this makes matters worse.
- Just ignore your dog, do not make eye contact or lean over to pet him.
- Try to distract the dog with another activity such as catching a treat or going to get a toy.
- Building confidence by practicing basic manners and agility games may help.
- As your dog's confidence grows, the problem should lessen and eventually stop.
- Instruct guests to ignore the dog on arrival and to praise him verbally when he sits, lies down, etc. (everyone can help with training).

Methods that do NOT work- *Please avoid*

- Hitting your dog.
- Pushing the dog's nose in his accidents.
- Shouting.

These methods lead to your dog being more worried, making the urination worse.

Cleaning

When cleaning up an accident, use an enzyme-based cleaner to effectively remove all odors.

Crate Training

Crates are actually an excellent choice for most puppies and adult dogs as they keep the pet and your belongings safe when you are not able to supervise. They aid in potty training because a dog will not want to soil his sleeping area. Select a crate big enough to allow the puppy/dog to stand up and turn around and stretch out when lying down.

Why use a crate?

To provide a personal space for your dog.

To help calm and nurture your dog in the new environment.

As a potty training aid.

As a safe way to travel in your car.

Good in hotels where pets are allowed.

As a recovery room from illness or surgery.

As a sanctuary when things get hectic.

In some mild cases, it can be helpful for anxiety to help prevent destructive chewing.

To protect your pet from children who cannot act appropriately around dogs.

Crate Do's and Don'ts

DO'S:

- Make the crate a positive place.
- Use treats and toys to lead the dog into the crate.
- Feed the dog his dinner in the crate at first.
- Leave the door open initially.
- Hide food treats in the crate.
- Place a clean, soft bed in the crate.



- Place a shirt with your scent on it in the crate.
- Encourage your dog to sleep in his crate.
- Praise and pet him when he is inside his crate.
- Stay close when you first close the door.
- Teach your dog to “wait” before coming out.

DON'TS:

- Force a dog or puppy into a crate.
- Use the crate for punishment.
- Keep the crate in an isolated area.
- Leave your dog in his crate for more than six hours.
- Talk to or let him out when whining.
- Choose a crate that is too large. If your dog can eliminate in one corner and sleep in another, the crate will not help teach good potty habits.
- Choose a crate that is too small. Your dog should be able to sit up and turn around. For a growing puppy you may wish to choose a larger crate and initially block off part of the space (with a box). As the dog gets larger, you can remove the partition.
- Remember, the crate should never take away from the contact and socialization that your dog needs from you and your family. The dog needs to spend much more time out of the crate than in.



Chewing

- Chewing is a normal and necessary behavior to promote healthy teeth and gums.
- All dogs should have their own chew toys. Avoid cooked bones, poultry bones and rib bones as they tend to splinter and cause choking or intestinal problems.
- Avoid toys with squeakies or pieces that can be swallowed.
- Show your dog the appropriate chew toy and make a big fuss over it. Praise your dog when he takes the toy. Sometimes smearing a bit of peanut butter or cream cheese on the toy can make it more appealing.
- If your dog tries to chew on inappropriate items, distract him, and give him an appropriate toy. Praise him and play with him briefly when he chews his toy.
- Teach your dogs to “drop it” and “leave it” so you can exchange an unsuitable chewy for a more appropriate one. Until he learns these cues, simply practice trading.

- Prepare your home by putting away items you value; the dog doesn't know the difference between your things and his toys.
- Prepare a puppy-proof room or crate, so he doesn't have access to unsuitable chew items when you can't supervise him.
- Bitter tasting (but safe) substances such as "Bitter Apple" can be sprayed on objects and may discourage chewing.
- Remember to reward good behavior.

Jumping Up

This is merely an inappropriate greeting behavior, as your dog is excited to see you. **Solution:**

- Ignore the dog, stand still, fold your arms, and look away. The second your dog's feet remain on the floor, acknowledge and greet her. If she jumps up again, immediately stand still, fold arms and look away. Repeat every time the dog jumps. *NOTE: Your family and friends should all follow this training plan as it needs to be consistent!*
- Teach your dog to sit to be greeted and reward quickly before she jumps. If she jumps, repeat the above.
- Keep her on a leash, so you can prevent her from jumping on guests.

Barking

Dogs bark to alert you of danger, because they are lonely, bored or anxious and seeking attention, or because they are being teased by an outside influence (i.e., squirrels).

Solution:

- Keep your dog inside your home when you are not there.
- Leave appropriate music on to mask outside noises.
- Ignore your dog if he is barking for attention.
- Consistently reward the silent pauses with your attention. Your dog will learn that he is not rewarded for barking and hopefully will stop. Please call us for help if your dog appears anxious or stressed or if the barking does not subside.

Digging

Usually dogs dig because they are bored or left outside for too long. However, digging is a normal activity for dogs and many of them really enjoy it.

Solution:

- Control digging by spending time with your dog, giving him plenty of exercise, keeping him indoors, and providing him with toys.
- Direct the behavior by designating an area in the yard where it is acceptable for your dog to dig. Encourage him to use this area. You can even create a sandbox where he is allowed to dig.
- You can also try covering the spot with dirt and securing chicken wire on top, or placing the dog's feces in the spot where he likes to dig.



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Bolting Through Doors/Gates

Bolting can be a very serious problem that may show up at your home in the first few days before your new dog realizes she lives with you!

Solutions:

In the beginning, put your new dog on leash before opening the door, even if you are only going into your fenced yard. This extra control will teach and guide your dog to be calm and learn boundaries.

Teach your dog to “wait” at every door or gate until you release her to go through. Going to a training class is a great way to learn how.

If she escapes, don't run directly after her as this can often be seen as a game, and she probably will run away faster! Instead, try turning around, calling her happily and running away at an angle and the dog may turn around and chase you safely home.

If your dog approaches you, try crouching down and offering a cookie to lure the dog to you. Talk in a “happy” voice to attract your dog.

Remember, some breeds are more likely to roam than others; research the breed before adopting the dog.

Home-Along Anxiety

Usually within 30 minutes of the owner departing, the dog attempts to get out finding his owner. Tremendous damage can be done to door frames, drapes, windowsills, furniture, blinds, etc. Dogs can injure themselves in their panic. Putting a dog in a crate or kennel can increase the anxiety, and they can break their teeth and rip out their nails in a frantic effort to get out. Food is rarely a distraction. Most dogs will be too frantic to even notice treats. The dog may urinate and defecate because of his anxiety.

The dog is not being willfully destructive or malicious. Punishing the dog does no good as it only confuses your already anxious and distraught pet. Usually the dog is extremely affectionate, calm and loving when in the presence of his owner. The attachment formed is very strong, so much that the dog feels intense panic when the owner leaves, feeling unable to cope with being left alone.

What can you do?

Please consult an experienced CPDT (Certified Personal Dog Trainer) or find a CAAB (Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist) in your area. You may also consult your veterinarian, as treating your dog with medication may be necessary to take the edge off his anxiety and enable you to implement a behavior modification training program.

If the anxiety is mild, please ask for help in our store and from our training department staff as there are many more things we can suggest to help you and your new dog.

The Outdoor Dog

It cannot be stressed enough: the more time a dog spends with you, the more quickly he will become a well-behaved member of your family. When a dog is isolated for long periods, he will develop bad habits, beginning a cycle of you wanting to spend less and less time with him.

You should know:

- Your dog will not appropriately exercise in your yard by himself.
- Your backyard can be a place of danger or cause bad habits.
- Your dog may become territorial and feel he has to patrol the area, barking.
- A dog left alone in the back yard can be subject to mistreatment or be stolen.
- A dog tied up in the back yard does not serve as a deterrent to potential burglars who know they will have free reign of your home.

REMEMBER dogs need to be with you to learn good behavior.

Training at Home

Reward the good behavior and the good behavior will increase. (Rewards include: food, toys, petting, putting on the leash, opening doors, going for walks, etc.)

Many bad behaviors can be significantly reduced if your pet is exercised regularly. Take him for a long, brisk walk and play fetch. *Keep him tired!*

Remember...

- Dogs “act out” because we are not clear with what we want them TO do- so they are confused (not stubborn) and just act like dogs! Show your dog how you wish him to behave and reward the good behavior.
- The dog has to be around you and your family to learn good behavior.
- Giving a reward for the right behavior is proven to be a faster and easier way for dogs to learn (you only have to teach one response- the right one!).
- Make use of everyday activities and turn them into mini-training sessions, i.e., wait until your dog sits and stays before giving him his food dish, sits and waits at the door before it is opened, etc.
- Teach your dog not to pull on the leash by changing your direction every time he pulls.

Recommended Reading

- ***Leader of the Pack*** by Dr. Patricia McConnell
- ***Lost in Translation*** by Dr. Patricia McConnell
- ***Before You Get Your Puppy*** by Dr. Ian Dunbar
- ***After You Get Your Puppy*** by Dr. Ian Dunbar

Please feel free to ask our training department for book and DVD recommendations for specific issues and training. Remember we offer many training classes and workshops here at HSWM. Please look on our website for more information.



Our Behavioral Specialist, Namiko, and her dog Aggy