

TRAINING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These training questions were asked at our recent Live Chat with our Trainers and we thought we'd share the answers with everyone.

Note: One thing we'd like to address that should apply to any training issue that you may be seeing are the questions:

1. In what situations is your dog performing this behavior and how can we prevent this behavior from occurring again?
2. What is reinforcing the unwanted behavior that's occurring?
3. What behavior would we like our dog to perform instead of that unwanted behavior?

Q. How do I get my dog to stop jumping when he greets people?

A. The cause of jumping is more often than not meeting someone new, whether it be out and about or when company comes over your home. Knowing what sets off the jumping will allow you to predict when it will happen so that you are able to manage that particular situation. Keeping your dog on leash with you or blocked off in a separate room will prevent your dog from being able to practice the unwanted behavior until he has learned the proper response to saying hello to someone.

Consider also what is reinforcing the Jumping. When a dog performs a behavior repeatedly, it means that there has to be something that is reinforcing it. In the case of jumping, talking to your dog, petting your dog, and even looking at your dog can be reinforcing the behavior. Our job is to eliminate the reinforcer so that the behavior will not be further strengthened.

The most important part to fixing jumping is picking one behavior you **DO** want your dog to do rather than the jumping. When working on jumping within our classes, people typically choose to have their dog sit or go to a placemat to replace the jumping behavior. Work on that behavior first when company isn't around, and then work with them on a leash when you do have company over until it is reliable enough that you can trust them off leash.

Q. How can I stop my dog from barking when we have visitors or when people walk by our home?

A. Barking can be a tougher issue to solve because there are many reasons to why the barking could be occurring. Barking can happen for any number of reasons whether it be because of excitement, frustration, fear, anxiety, or just the fact that it has somehow been reinforced in the past. Once you determine the cause of the barking, you can start to fix the issue.

Most barking is caused by some underlying fear or anxiety related to people coming in the home or unknown noises occurring outside of the home. In situations where fear or

anxiety are involved, you'll want to address the root of the problem (anxiety/fear) rather than just focusing on the symptoms (barking). Your goal would be to change your dog's state of mind when people come over or when noises occur outside. We want them to go from fearful, anxious, and over stimulated, to calm, happy and relaxed.

When changing a dog's state of mind, food is almost always a way of doing so. Have long lasting treats ready for when people knock on your door or come over to visit. For those dogs that are reactive to noises outside, try having soft small treats ready to give whenever a noise occurs. Once your dog starts to realize that people coming over and noises happening outside aren't such a bad thing, the barking should start to subside.

If your dog is showing high levels of anxiety or fear in particular situations or even in general, it's always best to contact a veterinarian or trainer to address these problems in more detail.

Q. How do I get my dog to stop eating feces?

A. Eating feces is possibly one of the most disgusting habits our dogs can develop. Unfortunately, it's one hundred percent natural! Eating feces can be a sign that your dog is lacking some kind of nutrient in their food that they're trying to get elsewhere. Your dog may very well just be hungry and turn to feces to fill up. Feces does still have nutritional content in it, so again, it's only natural that dogs seek this out.

There are some things you can try to prevent the behavior. If your dog is eating their own feces you'll want to make sure that you are out in your yard with them when they go to the bathroom so you can clean it up before they get a chance to eat it. There are certain things you can add to your dogs food that causes their feces to taste bad. Your vet may be able to recommend something safe to add into their diet. It's also not a bad idea to talk to your vet to determine whether your dog may need some kind of diet change.

In the end, it's very gross, but also very natural. The best thing you can do is prevent them from the feces itself and promise to love them anyways!

Q. How can I get my dog to stop chewing on everything he isn't supposed to?

A. Unfortunately there is no magical cure to chewing. We wish there was!

Part of what is hard about breaking a chewing habit is that it is 100% a natural behavior that is very often self reinforcing, meaning the chewing motion itself feels good to the dog so it's encouraged to repeat the behavior.

Some things to try:

- Make sure you have plenty of different toys for her to chew on so that she has the appropriate outlet for that natural behavior.
- Keep things out of her reach so that she doesn't have a chance to practice that behavior on things she's not supposed to.

- Give her an appropriate amount of physical and mental exercise. (i.e. take her for walks, play fetch out in the yard, give her fun puzzle toys, work on teaching her new things through positive training)

Q. How do I stop my dog from submissively urinating?

A. Most submissive urinating is caused by a root lack of confidence. Our goal for her would be to boost the dog's confidence when meeting new people by making those positive experiences. With submissive dogs, we initially want to avoid having people come up to say hello to these dogs. We work on just treating them when strangers are around and eventually work up to having that person hand, or even throw, them treats so that they aren't put into a situation where they are forced to be uncomfortable. Try keeping them on leash as well when people come over so that people will be less likely to invade their space.

As trainers we'd like to say we know everything, but there are some behavioral issues that we can only give so much advice on. Submissive urinating could be something that indicates more underlying issues and may be something you want to mention to your vet. Veterinarians are trained to deal with deeper behavioral issues.

If a dog is responding dramatically to corrections to the point where she's feeling so uncomfortable that she has to urinate, it may be time to explore a different form of training. Some dogs just need something a little different regarding training techniques. I would consider exploring positive reinforcement based training methods. One of the more popular forms is clicker training in which we focus on reinforcing and teaching the correct behaviors we want from our dogs rather than correcting the bad behaviors. I did correction-based training with my dog for a long time and it just wasn't the right answer for him. He continued to exhibit unwanted behaviors and he started to become fearful of my reactions. We are more than happy to answer any questions people may have about clicker training and you can also find information on these techniques at clickertraining.com.

Q. How do I get my dog to stop chasing the cats?

A. This is something that we hear often. Sometimes this occurs with a dog that is new to home and other times it is with a dog that has been a part of the home and the cats are a new addition.

Either way it is this is not an easy problem to fix. This is a problem that would be helped along with obedience training. The best thing about obedience training with your dog is that it builds up a bond between the two of you and also opens up a line of communication.

With our positive training techniques that we use it helps to teach solid behaviors that you can rely on in tough times. It would be ideal if you have your dog on a leash with you. This will help to minimize the opportunity that your dog has to chase them. It will

also allow your cats to come out more often instead of feeling the need to hide. At times when your dog wants to bark or chase after them this would be the ideal time to have a really high value treat with you and have your dog focus on you and a solid behavior that they know. The goal to teach your dog that leaving the cat alone and focusing on you = AWESOME TREAT. If what you are offering is better than chasing the cats this behavior should start to diminish. Depending on how long this has been occurring you may have to put a lot of time into practice with your dog and cat, but this time will be well spent to have a happy relaxed family.

Coming in and meeting with you to introduce some clicker training would be very beneficial. At times when you cannot have your dog on a leash and help encourage good behavior your dog or cats should be put away somewhere safe so you will not experience any setbacks.

Q. What can I do to get my dog to take treats more gently?

A. I laugh when I read this one question about taking treats roughly because I own a dog who has very rude behaviors also. This is something that can be worked on and easily fixed. In our Basic Obedience class we spend a good deal of time working on teaching the puppies and dogs of all ages a “Leave it” cue and a “take it” cue. It is important for dogs to know how to take things gently other wise it is no fun for the person who wants to reward them.

Step One: To began teaching this cue we use a very low value treat (dog food). Hold that piece of food in our hand keeping your hand closed tightly around it. The goal is that your dog does not get this treat. Ignore whatever your dog does in response (licking, nipping, staring etc) as soon as your dog looks away or backs away this is when we would reward them from other hand with a very good treat. (on the floor is fine) Continue this until you offer that food out in your hand and your dog isn't even interested. At this point we would start to teach the dog what we are doing by offering it and then telling them leave it.

Step Two: Offer the dog food to your dog and tell them leave it. When they back away or look away tell them take it and feed them from your other hand. The process I am explaining is an easy and fun way to teach your dog two things at once; how to leave something that is not theirs and also how to take something on cue. Practicing these behaviors regularly with your dog will teach patience and also how to take items nicely.

On the other hand until you have this problem fixed I would give your dog treats on the floor instead of out of your hand. Advise the same of others too. Let them know he is a little excited when taking treats and for now their fingers would be safer if they just tossed him a treat.

Q. How do I address my dog's aggression towards other dogs?

A. There is no great way to go about answering this question. I myself have been in the same position as many of you who have a dog who is dog aggressive. I will tell you in

my dog's case, he was never able to get past his dog aggression. Meaning that until the day he died he was never comfortable with more than 3 dogs his whole life. However, we were able to work with him with a lot of training and get him to the point where he would trust and rely on me when dogs were present. He was no longer showing unwanted behaviors when on walks, but I also kept him very safe. Never allowing other dogs to push his comfort zone. All this being said my personal advice would be:

- Call us. Every aggression case is different and every response would be different too.
- Seek the advice of your Vet. We have amazing Veterinarians on staff here with us that help us out a lot with behavioral/training issues that we have. Some of these dogs do better when they have training along with anxiety medications to help them.
- Don't force your dog to socialize. There is something called flooding. Flooding would be when you push your dog to the point that is unhealthy. It would be the same as taking someone like myself and putting me in a room full of spiders so I would just get over my fear, or every single day forcing me to touch a spider or sit next to one.
 - The worst thing you can do is force your dog aggressive dog on other dogs for both of the dog's sake. One bad experience is sometimes all it takes to change another dogs point of view.

Some dog owners may think that their dog is aggressive and sometimes it is not always the case. We are always available to evaluate your dogs and share with you what we see. Some dogs are best worked away from their owners with someone who isn't nervous about how they will react and then trained with their owner. We have programs here for all this.

It personally is not a make or break deal for me if I own a dog who is dog aggressive. Some of these dogs have not had the best start in life and have had so many bad experiences it is almost impossible for them to learn how to trust other dogs. These are the cases where I think it is best that we don't force this on them. Instead find appropriate times of day to walk your dog when others aren't out, avoid pet stores. Try to find places to take your dog where it can do fun things like socialize with humans or play fetch or whatever they find enjoyable.

Again, everyone who has questions further on dog aggression please call us and we can better help you.

Q. How do I get my puppy to stop going to the bathroom in the house?

A. It is always hard to say if your dog is having issues with potty training or if they have a medical issue or behavioral problem. Usually the best way to figure out what is going on is to go to your Veterinarian and explain what is happening. Allow them to run a urinalyses on your dog. That will help to rule out one possibility.

If it is not a urinary track infection then it leaves two other options. Either your dog is having a hard time figuring out potty training, or you're dealing with a deeper behavioral issue.

Behavioral Issues are much harder to fix than potty training. This is definitely one you would want to see a Veterinarian for. They would want to sit down with you and talk about what might be causing this unwanted behavior and also what they can do to help with this.

If it's a potty training issue, that can be easily fixed. My advice to everyone is always very similar.

1. Keep your dog with you in the house on a leash. This will keep them from peeing or pooping in your house without you noticing.
2. If they pee or poop in the house and you are able to catch them, the best thing you can do is to interrupt the behavior. Say their name and get their attention and get them outside as soon as possible. Once outside, be patient, keep them *on leash* and stay in one spot in the yard. Sticking to one small area will prevent your dog from finding better things to do (i.e. chasing a leaf, chewing on a stick, smelling things).
3. If your dog does not go outside, simply bring them back in and put them in their crate or other confinement area. We want to stress that this is NOT a punishment. The crate should never be a punishment. This is simply a way of preventing your dog from coming in the house and going to the bathroom 5 minutes later.
4. Once they've spent a few minutes in there, take them directly back outside and repeat the process.
5. One of the biggest things to remember when potty training is to always always reward them when they go to the bathroom outside. Give them treats, play a quick game of fetch, love on them, or whatever they find reinforcing.

Q. How do I stop my dog from being aggressive over his food bowl?

A. Unfortunately, resource guarding is a natural behavior in dogs. There are a few easy steps you can take in reducing the aggression that can be related to guarding the food bowl.

1. Don't push your dog's space while she's eating and definitely DO NOT take your dog's food away to prove "dominance" over your dog. Aggression related problems are almost always related to some underlying fear, and in this case, your dog's fear is that you may take away her food. It is instinctual for any animal to want to protect the thing that is essential for them to live. Taking your dog's food away very often increases a dog's anxiety related to the food bowl and therefore the aggression related to that.
2. Try adding more food or even better treats to her bowl while she is eating. Initially, you'll want to start by just tossing treats from afar until your dog is able to be comfortable with you being close to her bowl. In doing this, you'll teach your dog that people and hands coming near the food bowl results in good things.