



Behavior and Training Department Tips and Techniques

Nothing in Life is Free A Behavior Modification Program

We get dogs for companionship, but they sometimes need a leader more than they need a new friend. Once you have established leadership, friendship will follow... along with trust, dependability, and obedience.

Virtually all dogs will take a leadership role, if forced to do so. Many of them will actively seek it. Dominant dogs naturally wish to control their pack, and their behavior can take many forms, including active disobedience, then snarling, snapping or biting. In order to modify their behavior, we must make them earn everything in their life. They also must learn that it's their job to watch *you*, the pack leader, not *yours* to watch them.

To do this we use the stuff of life itself -- food. The dog learns that in order to eat, he or she must please the leader.

And, this is one way to accomplish that:

- Prepare the dog's breakfast, but don't give it to her. Instead, carry it around with you for perhaps a half an hour, maybe longer. If the dog isn't hungry, put it away, and don't feed her. Take it out 4 hours later, and begin walking around with it. The dog should be hungry.
- After she's followed you around for a while, call her to you, make her sit (or down -- something she does well), and give her a small portion of her meal. Then carry the bowl around with you again. Every fifteen minutes or so, repeat the process until the food is gone. It should take a couple of hours to feed her one meal.
- You can be doing other things while this program is going on; in fact, you should be. Prepare and eat human food, read a newspaper, watch TV, whatever you want. However, you should NOT be paying attention to the dog, unless you are demanding that she do something for you.
- When she begins offering you behaviors, become capricious. Ask for a different exercise, or wait a couple more minutes until you feed her.
- If at any point in your program she barks demandingly, or becomes aggressive, completely ignore her for at least half an hour.
- After you have done this for three to four days, then begin fixing your dog's food...and going for a walk with it in a baggie! Every few minutes stop, make her sit, and reward her as before. She is earning her food...and she is learning that she gets rewarded for eye contact.

Trish King
Director, Behavior and Training