



How to stop the 10 most common dog obedience problems



*A useful guide for you
and for your pal*

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Introduction

Every dog owner has been down this road before — the head-banging futility of trying to teach your dog, whether young or old, how to overcome a particular behavior problem. Unfortunately, in some cases, it can be downright impossible to get through to them and overcome whatever mental blocks and obedience issues they have.

There are a variety of reasons this could be. Your dog may have entirely too much energy, the result of not getting enough exercise. Your dog might be challenging your position as the alpha leader of the household — something that needs to be nipped in the bud immediately to avoid potentially worse problems. Or your dog just may never have been given specific boundaries to follow.

Whatever is causing your dog's obedience problems, know that 99.9% of all dogs are good-at-heart and capable of learning exactly how to behave. It's only a matter of finding the teaching method that works for them and being consistent in how you approach their issues.

That's why you're reading this — to find out what your dog wants and needs to see and hear from you to avoid the negative impact of these behaviors in your home. So, let's get started and take a look at how you can curb everything from a leaky bladder to flat-out aggression.

Before you read any further, please check out the following free video that uncovers the shocking truth about commercial dog food. This could be causing your dog to behave badly!

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1. Potty Issues

When it comes to a dog's bladder, there are many potential problems. It is not always an immediate issue of a dog not *wanting* to go outside — sometimes it is a matter of them not being able to hold it that long or simply not understanding the boundaries between inside and outside.

In reality, the last thing dogs want to do is go to the bathroom in their home. They are hardwired to go away from their dens, to avoid the impact of disease and parasites that can plague them in the wild. This is one of the primary reasons a dog will hold his urine for so long when you leave the house; he doesn't want to make a mess in his home.

The real issue comes in when a) the dog doesn't understand that the house is his home and is not trained to tell the difference and b) when the dog is not taken outside often enough to relieve himself. So, the first thing we need to do is determine which category your dog falls into and what the quickest and easiest way to solve the problem is.

Consistency and Small Breeds

Assuming a dog has been at least partially housebroken, the first thing you need to ask yourself is whether the dog is being taken outside often enough. This comes up most commonly with small breeds, such as pinschers, Yorkshire terriers, dachshunds, or pugs, dogs that have small bladders and minimal insulation.

When the weather gets cold or wet, owners will oftentimes minimize the amount of time they submit their dogs to the elements. They figure that allowing their dog to make a small mess inside won't hurt them, and it is easy to clean up.

Unfortunately, while a single mess might not seem like a big deal at the time, it can actually cause a number of problems further down the line. To start with, the dog does not *want* to do his business inside, especially if he has been trained to go outside. It is his home, and he is more comfortable going outside. Imagine how comfortable you would be relieving yourself in the kitchen sink instead of in the bathroom.

Secondly, a dog that is allowed to make a mess inside will never learn that the bathroom is outdoors. Dogs do not have a natural inclination to delineate between indoor and outdoor areas. You need to teach them.

Handling Potty Problems

If your dog makes messes on the floor, the easiest thing to do is to start from scratch. Crate training is a very effective tool because it gives the dog a smaller

space to claim as his own, tapping into that instinctual desire to not make a mess where he sleeps.

If crate training is out of the question, you should confine the dog to a single room and pay close attention to him. Create a routine that allows the dog to go to the bathroom at the same time every day, and when your dog does his business outdoors, make sure to praise him profusely. On the flip side, do not get angry if your dog makes a mess inside.

Attempt to startle him with a sharp noise, such as clapping your hands, and then take him outside immediately so he begins associating outdoors with relieving himself.

Just remember that punishing your dog for making a mess will have no impact. Your dog is incapable of understanding why he is being punished before he fully understands that he is not permitted to relieve himself indoors.

Additionally, it is a good idea to have your carpets thoroughly cleaned to remove any pet odor that may linger. Conventional cleaners tend to just mask the smell to human noses. Dogs, on the other hand, can still smell their markings and will return there later. If you have more than one dog, they may even attempt to mark over the top of each other, leading to a cycle that can be hard to break.

2. Aggression Problems

There is nothing more alarming than a dog with aggression problems. Such issues can be signs of a number of problems. If you adopted your dog as an adult, he may have been poorly treated as a puppy. If you raised the puppy without proper limits, he may be trying to assert dominance over those around him. If your dog is bored or has excess energy, he may have developed anxiety or fear issues that need to be assuaged by strong, alpha leadership.

This is a hard one to provide specific advice on because all dogs are different and each aggressive tendency needs to be handled with special care and specific actions according to the dog and his issues.

In many cases, it is a good idea to hire a dog trainer or behavior specialist who can help outline a plan to treat your dog's aggression. For general issues, however, here are some tips to get you started.

Pinpointing Sources of Aggression

To start with, you need to determine what is causing your dog's aggressive behavior. Some people may not catch the patterns until they stop and check it directly. Here are some common aggression issues that you may encounter:

- Food aggression
- Toward children
- Toward other dogs
- Toward strangers

Once you've distinguished what is causing the aggression in your dog, it is time to avoid those particular situations as much as possible for the foreseeable future.

If your dog is aggressive toward other dogs, don't take him to a dog park until you can determine if the behavior is curable. The same goes toward children and food. While addressing an aggression issue, it is extremely important to be careful.

Positive Reinforcement

The majority of training regiments will include positive reinforcement — the process of providing treats and praise to a dog when he acts as you want him to act.

One common way to do this is to have your dog on a leash and stand far away from the source of aggression. Give your dog treats and praise and then move closer to the source of aggression. He will eventually start to see that source of aggression as a source of reward and will get excited, rather than angry when seeing it.

The important thing to remember is that your dog will not react well to negative reinforcement. Punishment will escalate and can result in aggression or violence. You might even cause your dog to bite, as most aggression is a result of fear and anxiety; violence and anger only heighten that fear.

Additionally, never punish a dog for growling. That growling is scary, but it is a warning sign of discomfort. If you remove it, your dog may simply bite instead without the warning needed to remove him from the situation.

Food Aggression – If your dog shows signs of food aggression, there are a few things you should do. To start with, never punish your dog for that aggression. Instead, you need to retrain him to think differently.

Start by setting up a feeding schedule. Stop filling the bowl at all times, and start feeding him only two-three times a day with the same amount of food.

By becoming the source of the food, he looks to you for the food rather than attempting to protect what he feels is his. Additionally, you can try feeding your dog in a different room to remove the sense of ownership over that location, and you should always remove any other dogs from the room and feed them separately, if necessary.

Aggression With Other Dogs – Another common source of aggression is toward other dogs. If you have another dog in your home, this can be resolved by going on a walk together and letting them get to know each other on leashes.

If the dogs have been around each other for some time, it can be a sign that your dogs do not have a clear leader in their pack and are fighting with each other for that role. When this happens, you need to step up and take the alpha leadership position. Oftentimes, simply by showing clear leadership, you can negate any negative behaviors in the dogs of your home toward each other.

Avoid Rewarding the Behavior – The number one thing that all dog owners need to remember is that aggression is not acceptable and cannot be allowed. If your dog snaps at someone, don't pet him afterward or try to be reassuring. It will only reinforce the behavior.

Don't punish him either as it can be confusing and create worse situations. Your goal should be to address correcting the behavior, not directly reacting to it.

As you can see, there are many ways a dog might exhibit aggressive behavior and many ways to stall or eliminate that behavior. The one constant among it all is the need for you, as the owner, to be consistent in your actions and to provide strong, alpha leadership for the dog. Training your dog through obedience training is another important step as well.

If Things Go Too Far

Don't forget that there are options to help you control your dog while training him. To start, see a vet to ensure your dog is in good health and his aggression is not a medical problem.

Second, obtain restrictive leashes or muzzles if they are necessary in public. Finally, stop making a big deal about certain things like when another dog approaches or when strangers are nearby.

Your dog feeds on that anxiety and will react accordingly, especially on a leash. It all starts with powerful, strong leadership from the owner. If you can provide that, your dog's aggressive tendencies will be much easier to deal with.

3. Digging

Digging is one of many natural behaviors that dogs would perform in the wild. In this case, it is important because they will dig up den space for their pups and to hide food from other predators. So, when a dog digs, it is because of a deep-seeded need to do so.

Most often, dogs enjoy it, and at times, they can become obsessive. Digging itself is not harmful to your dog — in some cases it can be therapeutic for them, if properly channeled.

Unfortunately, whether your dog is getting a great deal of enjoyment out of digging or not, he is likely destroying your flower garden or your backyard in the process. So, you'll want to find a good balance that will minimize the digging behavior without stifling your dog's desire to play and use up energy.

The Root of Digging

The first thing to do is determine why your dog is digging. In many cases, digging is a result of excess energy and boredom — a messy combination in many dog breeds.

Common family dog breeds, such as Labradors and Retrievers, will often be full of excess energy. If they are not walked and played with often enough or if they are locked up in the backyard without anyone to keep them busy, they may turn to digging as an outlet for that excess energy. Dogs don't watch TV or read books when they're bored; they tend to destroy things, channeling their instincts into something *they* enjoy.

Breaking the Habit

Before attempting to change your dog's behavior, first spend some time determining what you can do to minimize the causes. Find more time to walk your dog, spend some time in the backyard exercising with him, and make sure you are attending his needs at all times. If you toss your dog in the backyard all day and leave him be, don't expect to find a pristine lawn when you return.

Next, protect any areas you don't want dug up. You can cover the areas that your dog likes to dig with something they cannot dig through, such as rocks or tarps. Your dog wants soft dirt to dig up, so if you can minimize the areas that he can access, you'll be able to cut him off easier. Another good trick is to sprinkle natural dog repellents, such as red pepper flakes, pennyroyal oil or citronella, all readily available.

Finally, you need to give your dog something solid to think about other than the destructive behaviors he has picked up. For many high-energy dogs, simple training or obedience school can help with this. Because you're giving your dog commands

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he needs to think about, you are replacing the urges and desires he has to dig with constructive actions that you can control.

Finally, if you really must leave your dog in a place where he can dig excessively, provide him with a toy or an alternative way to burn off that excess energy. Toys, bones or a second dog with which to play are all good ways to reduce the excess energy that gets unleashed on your poor peonies.

Creating a Special Digging Space

Another trick that works well for many dog owners is to provide the dog with a dedicated digging area that he is allowed to play in. Take a kiddie pool and fill it with dirt, possibly even with dog treats buried in the dirt.

Then, when your dog wants to dig, let him dig there. If you find him digging in your lawn at all, simply clap your hands and attract his attention. By doing this, you can claim the backyard as your space and tell your dog that he is not permitted to dig in it, but that he has his own space in the kiddie pool.

4. Barking

Every dog barks occasionally. They may do it to exhibit excitement or to tell you they are bored. The problem is that some dogs get carried away and do not stop barking. They grow agitated at any sound they hear inside or outside the home, or they simply bark for the sake of barking.

In these cases, an owner will quickly grow impatient, as will their neighbors. So it is important to take action sooner than later, communicating to your dog that barking is not permitted for the sake of barking.

Why Your Dog Barks

To start, know that your dog is likely bred to bark. Almost all breeds were bred to make noise in some form or another. Hunting dogs and terriers barked to alert their masters to the fact that they found something. Herding dogs were bred to bark and nip at the animals they were herding. Even some working dogs were bred to become vocal when necessary. And of course, dogs bark naturally as a sign of excitement or aggression. I could outline what all of your dog's barks mean, but you likely have a good idea based on the tone and body language of the animal — he is just communicating.

Minimizing Barking

The real goal then, rather than stopping your dog from barking completely, is to minimize that barking. There are very few situations in which your dog should bark endlessly, even when communicating to you. But, at the same time, you want your dog to be able to warn you if there is danger, communicate when he needs to go outside and keep other animals away if he is uncomfortable or afraid.

- **Exercise** – Make sure your dog gets the exercise he needs to release any pent-up energy that could be leading to excess barking. Oftentimes, barking can be the result of boredom or anxiety; exercise will help to reduce that.
- **Don't Reinforce the Behavior** – The number one reason dogs continue to bark, after energy level problems, is simply that their owners reinforce the behavior. They feel bad for the dog when they whine or simply want them to stop barking when they are angry. So, they give them attention, give them their food or take them outside.

Your goal should be to never give your dog what he wants when he barks. If you need to wait him out, do it. Giving him what he wants when he barks at you will only teach him to continue doing it.

- **Anger and Shouting Causes Confusion** – Yelling at your dog or getting angry will only cause confusion. As with most of their behaviors, they don't

know they're doing something wrong, and they will only get confused if you start yelling at them.

Along these same lines, avoid any punishment-laden treatments, such as shock collars. They are inhumane, and most dogs will try to learn how to get around them.

- **Training** – Simple training can be very helpful in minimizing barking in your dog. Teach him to sit, lie down or shake, as well as to speak and be quiet.

These simple commands cause dogs to shift focus to you and away from whatever they are barking about. Additionally, teaching them to bark and stop barking on command gives you more control over their vocal habits.

- **Controlling Their Outdoor Behaviors** – If your dog barks continuously outside, he will never learn to stop inside. Rather than yelling from the back window, go outside, attract his attention and divert it whenever he barks.

Your goal should be to teach him that there are other ways to communicate with you and that his focus should be on you and your home, not whatever is beyond your fence.

Barking is one of the harder things to control in a dog, largely because of how natural it is for them to do it. However, with proper training, exercise and attention to what might be causing your dog's outspoken behavior, that barking can be severely reduced or even stopped.

As a side note, for those considering extreme measures, such as de-barking surgery, please think twice. The surgery does not actually stop the barking behavior — it just quiets it.

Additionally, it is unsafe to ever put an animal under anesthesia and into surgery, and to do it for cosmetic reasons is unnecessary. If your dog is barking so much that you're considering surgery, the odds are that he has a greater, deeper lying fear or anxiety issue that needs to be dealt with anyway. A veterinarian, behaviorist or dog trainer can all be more helpful in addressing your concerns than a medical procedure.

5. Chewing

Chewing is another of many built-in instinctual actions that a dog can get caught up in. For many dog breeds, chewing begins as a puppy, when teething and excess energy get channeled into chewing everything in sight.

Chewing is not abnormal, and while it is important to teach a dog otherwise from a young age, you also need to take precautions, such as puppy-proofing your home to avoid unnecessary damage.

As your dog gets older though, chewing can move beyond youthful indiscretion and into the territory of serious behavioral problem — one that needs to be addressed with specific actions and careful training.

Why Do Dogs Chew?

Chewing occurs for a number of reasons, but you should know that it will happen no matter what you do. Your goal should be to direct it toward the right mediums and to minimize it where it can cause destruction.

Even then, some dogs may just be psychologically wired to chew more than others. That is when you'll need to make adjustments to their environment to reduce what they can access.

Retraining a Dog's Instinct to Chew

First, know that most dogs learn their chewing behaviors as puppies. When teething, they seek out anything in sight to chew. Owners who give them old socks, shoes or toys from the house are basically telling them that those items are OK. If your adult dog is constantly raiding your closet for shoes or old T-shirts, try to remember if you did this when he was young.

Even if you did not give your puppy household items to chew on, you'll need to retrain him to understand that those items are *not* OK to chew on. Simply yelling at your dog will almost never have a positive impact. He is doing something natural, and until you show him that your belongings are not OK to chew on, the behavior will persist.

To start, you may consider crate training your dog. By removing your dog from an environment as large as your home, you can control what he does when you're not home. To that end, when you are at home, make sure you have a chewing substitute to hand him when he starts chewing on a shoe, a cushion or whatever else in your home is enticing.

A rawhide is often a good substitute if he likes leather, fabric or suede. Some dogs are partial to certain toys, so you may want to take him to the pet store with you to have him choose a chew toy from the racks there.

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Deterrents from Chewing

If your dog continuously finds new things to chew around your home, there are other proactive ways to stop the chewing behavior. There are sprays sold by most pet stores that are unpleasant to a dog when he chews. Bitter apple spray works for many dogs, as does cayenne pepper spray. Make sure to get something organic and chemical-free. It should be humane and just taste bad. You don't want it to cause physical pain.

This kind of deterrent is especially useful for a dog that has a habit of chewing on carpets or cushions and clothing. Additionally, you should teach your dog to "leave it." This common command forces your dog to drop what he is doing immediately, as you take control of the item.

It is an alpha leadership command that is very important for a dog when you take him out of the house. The last thing you want is a dog with a home bone or a dead animal in his mouth and he won't drop it. The "leave it" command can be taught with treats or a clicker and a whole lot of patience.

Potential Health Concerns

Something to keep in mind when your dog chews chronically is that there are certain health conditions that lead a dog to chew on things, such as plastic or rubber, or to swallow items whole in place of palatable food. This isn't just a dog acting out. This is an issue that should be addressed by your vet as it can lead to poisoning or intestinal blockage. If your dog eats a coin or a rubber band, you may be able to chalk it up as an accident. If it occurs repeatedly and cannot be curbed with sprays or training, see a vet to learn what options you have.

6. Jumping

Dogs love to jump on things. It is a way of showing their excitement coming to meet someone, and ultimately it purges excess energy that they tend to build up.

However, it can be dangerous, especially if your dog is big or if there are small children or elderly people around. The last thing you want is your dog knocking over your grandmother and breaking her hip or taking down a neighbor's child on accident.

Why Dogs Jump

In their world, jumping is a sign of endearment and a way to parlay excitement when someone returns. Puppies will jump up on their mothers when they are young and their mother returns, and as a result, that behavior translates to greeting an owner or a new person to the house who excites them.

In some cases dogs will also jump up to exert dominance over another dog or another person. If you've ever seen a dog jump onto the back of another dog's neck, this is what he is doing — showing that dog that he is superior.

Stopping the Jumping

Jumping can be stopped in a number of ways. However, many people don't utilize the proper techniques, instead giving their dogs attention they don't need and reinforcing that jumping behavior. Think of it this way: If your dog were able to talk, he'd be saying, "Look at me! Pet me! Play with me!" If you look at him and give him attention, you're doing exactly what he wants, effectively rewarding the bad behavior.

So, responses like grabbing his paws or pushing him away — while they are effective immediately — will not work in the long run. He'll simply do it again, knowing that additional attention is incoming.

When it comes to yelling or showing anger, you'll only confuse your dog and in some cases, create potentially dangerous situations when a dog doesn't know how to greet a stranger to the home.

Properly Ignoring Your Dog

Like many attention-seeking behaviors, jumping can be dealt with best by simply ignoring the dog. Turn away from him and continue about your business. You should not make eye contact, talk to or touch your dog for the first few minutes you enter the door. This can be very hard to do, and if you have a family, you'll need to lay down strict rules about how to greet the animal, avoiding that anxious, jumping behavior.

For many dogs, that early attention can even breed separation anxiety and causing them to react when you leave or come home.

Of course, you don't need to ignore your dog forever — just until he relaxes and stops moving. He might stand patiently waiting, or if he is well-trained, he could sit or lay down waiting for your attention. Once he has given you his calm attention, you can reward him softly. Don't get him excited again, but offer him a bit of attention and even a treat, if you have any. The goal here is to teach him that your attention will only come when he is calm and patiently waiting for you.

7. Bolting Out the Front Door

One of the scariest things any dog owner can experience is their dog getting out the front door without a leash on and attempting to run away. Yet, many dog owners struggle daily with animals that attempt to do just that.

Because dogs are not like cats and have no desire to go anywhere without us, why do they so eagerly burst through the front door whenever it is opened? It is important to not only understand why they do it, but also specifically how to stop it to keep your dog safe and to maintain your peace of mind.

Why Dogs Run Out the Door

Dogs run out the door because they don't understand the danger. When that door opens, they smell a whole new world — one reminiscent of walks and other animals and a whole number of ways to have fun. It is impossible to tell your dog that if he goes out there, he'll be subject to cars, other animals, your neighbors and any number of other possible problems that could cause him harm. Once a dog has escaped out the door the first time, he'll try repeatedly to do it again — hoping to get that taste of freedom once more.

Setting Household Rules

Before you do anything else, you need to establish clearly stated household rules that will keep your dog from running out the door before you can properly train him. First, make sure anyone living in the house knows not to open that door until they know where the dog is and that he is safely beyond range of getting in or out. If someone must hold the dog until it is possible to safely get in or out, do so.

Second, make sure to communicate these rules to visitors. Other dog owners without this problem will often assume the dog won't attempt an escape while non-dog owners simply don't think about it.

Training Your Dog to Stay Indoors

Of course, no one wants to spend the next 10 years playing footsie with your dog at the door to keep him from running into the street. So, while the above rules are important and should be established immediately, you should also start training your dog to stay clear of the door and stop attempting his daring escapes.

Start with the basic commands — sit, stay and down. These commands are incredibly important for getting and holding your dog's attention long enough to maintain his position in a single place without running out the door. It will not solve the problem immediately, but to even start the training process, he needs to know these commands. As you progress, you'll be teaching your dog that the door is your territory and that he cannot go near it without your specific permission.

Maintaining Position

While teaching a dog to sit and stay is important, you should go a little further when taking control of the door. Here are some tips to follow:

1. **Introduce a Hand Signal** – Along with the “sit” verbal command, teach your dog to obey a hand signal, such as an upheld hand, like a crossing guard.
2. **Creating Distance** – Choose a line beyond which you don’t want your dog going when you open the door. Have him sit and stay there and then walk toward the door. If he gets up at any time, have him sit again before moving.
3. **Holding the Position** – If your dog comes toward the door at all, do not simply have him sit again. Return him to the original position and start from scratch. He needs to learn that there is a barrier that he cannot cross, and you need to hold steady to it.
4. **Practice** – You will need to practice this command repeatedly and enforce it whenever the door is opened. It can be distracting to make guests wait when training your dog, but it is important to teach your dog that he needs to wait patiently away from the door whenever it is opened.

Make sure, when you are practicing to reward your dog when he performs the action correctly. If he moves forward at all, start over again. But, if you can get to the door, turn the knob and open the door without him reacting, reward him for following your commands.

8. Pulling on the Leash

Walking your dog should be a relaxing, enjoyable experience — for both of you. Yet, for millions of dog owners, a walk can be one of the most stressful experiences of the day.

An overanxious dog that pulls on the leash or refuses to listen while out of the house can lead to shortened walks (and less exercise for a hyperactive animal), and ultimately a less enjoyable experience with your pet on a daily basis. Luckily, there are a few simple things you can do to alleviate that constant pulling.

The Walking Relationship

A dog has an instinctual desire to push back when you push on his chest. By wrapping a collar or harness around him and attaching a leash, you are putting pressure on him that he returns in kind. It's an instinctual reaction, and it isn't abnormal. But, it can make walking your dog a painful experience. To avoid this from happening, you need to keep your dog from putting that pressure on the leash. The more pressure he creates, the harder he ends up pulling.

As the owner and the holder of the leash, your control over the walking experience is absolute — or it should be. The walk begins the second you pick up the leash, the moment your dog realizes that he is about to go for a walk. Training to control a pulling dog must begin at this exact moment — reigning in all that excess energy before it can be transferred into pulling your arm out of its socket.

Starting the Walk

When you start the walk ritual, always have your dog sit and stay first. You need to put him into a calm, submissive state where his energy is being directed into following your commands.

Remember, something as simple as “sit” and “stay” takes a serious amount of mental energy and concentration from a dog, especially when he is that excited. By channeling that energy, you can eliminate the bouncing around that he performs before taking him out. What is important here is that you put the leash away if he exhibits excitement and jumping. Don't reward the behavior.

Once you've attached the leash, make sure the dog awaits your command entirely. He should not move toward the door or try to pull you in any way until you've given him leave to do so.

You should be able to make it to the door without the leash pulling tight. The second your dog begins to pull, return to the original position and start over again. It can take time to teach a dog that he cannot pull excitedly, but if you return to that position over and over again, he will get it eventually. Excitement won't get him out the door.

The same goes for opening the door. Do it slowly and calmly and stop if the dog starts to get too excited.

You should never have to punish your dog. After all, you have the one thing in the world he wants most — a walk. By withholding that, you have a powerful reward for him when he finally follows your commands correctly.

Walking Your Dog

Once you finally reach the sidewalk, it is extremely important that you follow the same steps from before. In some cases, it requires that you exhibit even more patience than your dog, but if you're serious about maintaining the discipline of the walk without being pulled on, you need to make sure the dog doesn't get rewarded for pulling. Bring a bag of treats with you (or a clicker if you're using that as a training tool) and whenever your dog properly walks forward at your side with a slack leash, reward him.

If your dog pulls too hard or starts going in front of you, calmly take a few steps backward and make him sit and stay until you are comfortable moving forward again. Always pull gently on the leash to return to the original positions. Never do anything in anger or put too much force on the leash or the dog can misinterpret your actions and pull even harder.

It may seem a little abstract, but the goal here is to teach your dog that when the collar goes tight on his neck, he should stop moving. Your voice will not be nearly as effective as that single, sharp physical sensation. It takes longer than many other training exercises, but eventually, your dog will learn that he doesn't get to move forward with your walk until the leash is slack. This forces him to walk beside you without pulling and hopefully without too much excitement.

9. Whining

A dog that whines can be very hard to deal with. The exact causes of the whining are often hard to pinpoint as it is not quite barking, nor is it quite an anxious act. It is simply whining, and it can be related to excess energy, separation anxiety or a desire to reach something they cannot get to. Because the source of whining is hard to pinpoint, it can be hard to stop the behavior, but with these tips, it should be easier to narrow down what you need to do and react to it.

Why Do Dogs Whine?

A dog's whine is very different than a bark, and oftentimes can be harder to stop. It generally means they are in pain or scared, but in many cases, it can relate to their being upset about something, usually the result of anxiety.

In domesticated dogs, which are rarely in pain because they are safe indoors, a whine is often a symptom of feeling abandoned by his pack or upset about something in his home. This whine is his way of alarming you to his condition so that you can come and rescue him. Your goal, however, should be to train him to avoid that anxiety.

As a side note, if your dog never whines or starts whining when nothing apparent is wrong, it very well might be a symptom of pain or illness. If this happens, you should see a vet immediately to have your dog checked out.

Anxiety-Related Whining

When a dog whines because of separation, it is important to teach your dog how to accept your absence. If not, that simple whining can advance to damaging and noisy anxiety-driven behaviors.

In extreme cases, an anxious dog can destroy your furniture or make messes on the floor when you leave the house. Here are some tips to reduce whining before it becomes full-blown separation anxiety:

1. **Choose Your Dog's Den** – Many people will give the dog the whole house as his territory. This is fine if your dog is well-behaved and doesn't have any problems when you leave. But, if anxiety is an issue, you'll want to consider relegating a single room or a crate for your dog to inhabit when you leave. By having his own space that he can go to as his "safe spot," he will feel more comfortable when you leave.
2. **Learning to Ignore the Dog at Key Times** – Another issue that can create whining in a dog is giving him too much attention before leaving and when returning. There are two things at play here. When leaving, if you give too much attention, he will feel that separation immediately. When returning

home, you will be rewarding whatever anxious behaviors he exhibited when you were gone, teaching him that whining worked to bring you back.

- 3. Teaching Him to Be Comfortable** – To teach your dog how to be comfortable when you leave, you need to practice doing it while still in the house. With crate training, this can be done simply by putting the dog in a crate and leaving the room.

If you place your dog in a separate room, the same applies. In many cases, you will need to listen to him whine for a while, but it is important that you don't return to the room before he stops whining. It will only reinforce the behavior.

Not all whining is anxiety-related unfortunately. In some cases, it may be just to get attention when you're in the house already. In some cases, this can be a side effect of dogs having too much nervous energy and not getting enough exercise.

In other cases, it may be the result of dogs trying to get additional attention. In such cases, it is always best to ignore them than to react. If the behavior continues, it could be a sign that you don't have full control of the household and need to do some additional training to assert alpha leadership.

10. Separation Anxiety

A dog is a very social animal. They live and die in the wild with their pack. In your home, you are their fellow pack members and that means, when they are left alone as you go to work or run errands, they grow anxious and worried that you may not come back.

However, just because a dog is anxious that you are leaving does not mean that he should react so strongly. From barking and whining to destructive behaviors, such as chewing, digging and tearing, a dog with separation anxiety can be very hard to deal with.

The Root of Anxiety

In the wild, a dog lives and dies through the pack around him. So, it is natural that he sees you and your family as his pack. However, in some cases, a dog may start to panic at the thought of being left alone. He feels as though he is being abandoned, and his survival instincts go a little haywire, causing him to bark, make messes and even tear things apart as he loses general control of his faculties.

When you return home, he might be frantic and unable to control himself. At first, it might seem like he is very loving, but the messes, destroyed property and angry calls from neighbors can be stressful for even the most dedicated dog owner.

Avoiding Separation Anxiety

First off, you need to rule out the possibility that your dog is just bored. A dog that doesn't get enough attention or exercise will often behave in the same way — barking, destroying things and overreacting when you return home. However, boredom is much easier to fix. It just requires a bit of extra attention and exercise for your dog. Give him some extra walks, a few toys and train him with some basic tricks to avoid destruction at unwanted times.

When it comes to anxiety, your dog's first symptoms will key in on your actions. He can tell when you're about to leave by how you put on your shoes, grab your coat or pick up your keys.

In extreme cases, he will know you're leaving as soon as you wake up, turning him into an utter mess before you even get to the door. To adjust for this, change your routine. Sit down randomly, put on your coat at different times and change when you feed your dog. The less regular your routines, the harder it is for your dog to associate them with leaving and the lesser that anxiety will be when you leave.

Solving Existing Anxiety Issues

For many people, anxiety is something that already exists, but it can be resolved before it becomes too destructive. Here are some important tips to help reduce or stop anxiety issues early:

- **Leaving and Returning Home** – When you leave and return home, it is *vital* that you don't give your dog too much attention. It can be hard, especially with a new puppy, but that extra attention only highlights for them the fact that you are leaving or were gone.

For moderate anxiety, simply ignoring your dog for a few minutes before you leave and after you return home will reduce his anxiety greatly. For severe cases, other steps will be needed.

- **Controlling How Long You Are Gone** – This is a very complex process and can be hard for anyone who has a regular job and no one else to leave at home. But, it does work well, so if your dog's case is severe enough, consider finding a way to do it.

The goal is to start leaving your dog for very short periods of time — only one-two minutes or even less if your dog is extremely anxious. Your goal should be to only go outside long enough to show your dog you will return, before his anxiety builds. Don't give your dog attention when you return. Just keep everything quiet, and wait for your dog to relax. Then, step back outside again and do it all over.

Over the course of days, or even weeks, you will increase the time between these sessions, stepping outside for five minutes, then 10, then 20 and up to an hour or longer, until you can leave for an entire day and not worry about his anxiety.

- **Consistency** – By far the most important thing for a dog with anxiety is to be consistent with how you handle it. If there are multiple people in the household, they all must ignore the dog when returning and leaving. You must maintain the behaviors over time to make them stick.

If things don't click right away, it can take a little time to advance. However, if extreme cases of anxiety persist, you may want to consider talking to a behaviorist or even a vet. There are advanced solutions to this problem, but only if all training attempts are unsuccessful.

Conclusion

Your dog is a good dog — regardless of how he may act right now. He just needs to be given the tools and the support from his owner required to overcome unwanted behaviors. That's where you come in. As the owner and de facto pack leader of your home, it is your duty to give your dog structure, providing him with the rules to live by that all animals need.

By giving your dog that leadership, as well as stimulating him intellectually and wearing him out physically, you will be surprised by just how many behaviors on this list will slowly (or not so slowly) disappear for good.

But, even if the behaviors don't disappear overnight, it is important to be persistent and consistent. Your dog may not learn immediately, but when it finally sinks in and he understands that he cannot chew on your TV remote or pee in the front hallway, he will likely remember that for the rest of his life, striving on a daily basis to make his owner happy and to follow the boundaries you have set.

It all starts with you and a desire to have a happier, more wholesome relationship with your dog. If you're ready, you can bet your canine friend is as well.

Important video for you to watch ASAP

What's really in commercial dog food?

Those "scientifically formulated" dog foods might sound great, but did you know that they could actually be killing your best friend? This free video shows you what's really in commercial dog food:

<http://www.labradortrainingspot.com/go/dogfood>