

# *Pawsitive Results Critter Academy*

*Where people learn to lead...and pets love to follow!*

pawsitiveresults@sbcglobal.net (707) 292-5862

## **Positive Leadership Program**

Many of our dogs get to eat, sleep, and play when and where they want to, and we give them attention whenever they ask for it. We provide for their every need...and they get it all for free! Is it any wonder that some dogs act like they're in charge?! The Positive Leadership Program is a non-confrontational way to show your dog that being calm, well-mannered, and attentive to you is the way to get what he wants. You can still provide for your dog's every need - but he will be earning his privileges by following the directions of his leader- YOU! If your dog ignores you, is pushy, or is simply driving you crazy, try implementing at least some of the suggestions below. The more exercises you do, the faster you'll get results. These exercises are about you taking control, but please do not confuse control with physical force. If you are using physical force, this is a sign that you DO NOT have control over the pack's resources and decisions. It is a sign to your dog that the leadership position is open if he is interested in fighting for it.

*Fighting with the dog will make things worse, so if any exercises result in confrontation or signs of aggression, leave them out and call me for further assistance.*

## **Control the Environment**

You can unintentionally reward behaviors you don't like by giving the dog attention every time he does them. Even negative attention can cause a behavior to continue! Also, some activities - like barking at the mailman- are self-rewarding. This means that just doing the activity gives the dog a thrill. Remember, it is the leader's job to schedule activities. By controlling the dog's environment, you will be controlling what he gets to do and when he gets to do it. You will also help break the cycle of bad habits so you can concentrate your efforts on teaching and rewarding appropriate behaviors instead.

- ◆ **Keep your dog safely confined.** Do not leave him somewhere that allows him to "practice" undesirable behaviors such as barking at passerby or chewing on furniture. You may need to block access to windows or certain rooms that are "trouble spots".
- ◆ **Have your dog drag a light nylon leash** from a flat buckle collar whenever he is with you. This will allow you to interrupt undesirable behaviors without touching, talking to, or chasing after the dog- all responses that could encourage the behavior.
- ◆ **Make your dog's world smaller.** The more space your dog has, the more choices he has. It also makes it harder for you to supervise him, so it may take you longer to interrupt an undesirable behavior. Close doors and put up baby gates to confine him to one room with you. Have him dragging a leash for even more control. You can also keep him with you by having him on leash and attaching the leash to your belt or by putting him on a tie-down close to you.

## Control the Space

Leaders control the space around them. Followers respect that space and move out of the leader's way. If you allow your dog to invade your space, or you relinquish space to him, you are sending your dog the wrong message. Controlling space means expecting your dog to:

- ◆ **“Wait” at doorways and stairs.** You don't have to take every doorway and staircase ahead of your dog, but your dog should not be pushing past you. Your dog should learn that waiting calmly at doors is what gets them to open. If your dog tries to barge past you, step across the space to block it with your body (don't grab at the dog with your hands).
- ◆ **“Move” out of your path.** Do not walk over or around your dog to avoid disturbing him or bumping into him. Instead, tell him to “move” and then shuffle into him with your body if he doesn't move on his own.
- ◆ **Get off the furniture when asked to, and only get up when invited.** If you don't want your dog on the furniture, that's OK too. *If your dog ever growls when on furniture, then his privileges should be revoked immediately!*

## Control the Interaction

As group leader, interactions should be initiated and ended by you. This doesn't mean that you can never pet your dog when he approaches you or play with him when he brings you a toy. It just means that the activities need to start and stop on your terms and should only be granted for good behavior. Controlling the interaction means that:

- ◆ **Attention must be earned.** Ask for a sit or down before giving your dog any attention. Never give attention to your dog when he is barking, nudging you, or doing anything else you don't like. Behavior that gets your attention will be repeated! Instead of putting energy into scolding your dog for his errors, try shunning him instead. Averting your eyes and completely ignoring the dog sends two important messages: you are a confident, self-controlled leader, and behaviors you dislike will lead to exile from the group.
- ◆ **Food must be earned.** Turn feeding time into training time by hand-feeding your dog while practicing various obedience exercises. If your dog isn't interested in working for his food, then put the food away and try again at the next mealtime. If you stand firm, he'll soon realize that his free meal ticket has been revoked and he'll become a dedicated worker.
- ◆ **Play must be earned.** Initiate play sessions with a few obedience exercises, and interrupt play sessions with several short obedience breaks. If your dog loses control during play and grabs your clothes, mouths/ bites you or jumps on you, immediately stop the play session and actively shun him for 1-2 minutes.

## Exercise is a Must!

Most dogs need to run at least 1-3 miles a day to get adequate exercise. If your dog has energy to burn, it will be much harder for him to exhibit self-control. Provide appropriate outlets for your dog's energy so he won't be forced to create his own games.

- ◆ **Fetch** is a great way to exercise your dog. If he won't bring toys back then play with multiple toys and have him drag a leash to avoid games of keep-away.
- ◆ **“Busy toys”** can be stuffed with food and treats to keep your dog's attention and to keep his mind busy.