

Disobedience: Hints and Tips

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How can I prevent my puppy from becoming a disobedient dog?

Vigorous and frequent exercise sessions and an early start to training are necessary to prevent puppies from becoming too rowdy. Waiting to train your puppy until it is 6 months of age can often let these disobedient behaviours take hold. Then we have to undo behaviours we don't like in order to get the ones we want. Puppies have very short attention spans. You must motivate the puppy to perform using positive reinforcement. With early training, excitable puppies can often have their behaviour channelled in the correct direction.



Hints and Tips

A common problem is giving your dog a command, and if there is no response, you repeat the command. This sends the message that 2 - 3 repetitions of the command are needed to get the desired behaviour. When you ask your dog to do something, be sure that you can get the dog to perform the behaviour. If you tell the dog to sit and he does not, make him sit if possible, or walk away. Don't repeat the command. Do not ask for a behaviour unless you know that the dog can perform it on command and is not distracted so much that it cannot pay attention.

Reprimands and punishment are also often unsuccessful. Punishment may reward behaviour by providing attention. Punishment that is too harsh may lead to anxiety, fear of the owner and problems such as aggression or submissive urination.

In summary, let's look at the excitable and unruly dog. Many owners shout at or physically discipline these dogs, but, as discussed, this may further reward the unruly behaviour. Then, when these dogs are relaxed or tired out, owners (perhaps thankful for the peace and quiet) ignore them. Demanding behaviour is rewarded while quiet behaviour is ignored. If this is what is happening in your home, deal with it by treating all demanding behaviour with inattention (or disruption techniques) and reward calm, non-demanding behaviour with play and attention.



This brings up another vital issue in controlling excitable and disobedient dogs. Many owners are so frustrated that the only interaction that they have with the dog is negative. They have lost the joy of pet ownership. Worse than that, they do not reward the behaviours that they do want. It is just as important to tell the dog when it is doing the correct behaviour as to discipline the bad. It is also important to practice the training that you may ultimately need.

An example of this is training the dog to sit and stay in the front hall.

How will the dog know to sit and not run out the door when people come to visit, (a highly excitable event), if the dog never practiced doing so when things were calm?