



Your Smart Dog Is Your Dog Well-Mannered? *November 2005*

Some folks don't entertain the idea of training their dog because their dog is "just a companion, not an obedience dog." They think that a trained dog takes too much time, too much precision, too much effort. That logic is unfortunate because most, if not all, dogs could use a few lessons in good manners.

I have no desire to have a dog that sits exactly the "correct" distance from me or at precisely the right spot. I simply want a dog that listens when I speak to him, that's all.

To me, a trained dog is one with whom we can live with comfortably; a dog who knows the rules, who cooperates with the humans in the household and is a welcome member of the family. I have no desire to have a dog that sits exactly the "correct" distance from me or at precisely the right spot. I simply want a dog that listens when I speak to him, that's all.

Think of the skills that a well-mannered dog should have: walks well on a leash, knows sit and down, doesn't jump on people, comes when called, and isn't destructive around the house. These aren't hard skills to develop, nor do they require any exactness or precision. No, good manners are easily taught and are worth every minute that you spend teaching them.

Too many of my clients tell tales of fitting their lives around the habits of their dog, when it really should be the other way around. We're actually doing our dogs a disservice, not to mention a disservice to ourselves as well, when we tailor our routines around our dogs instead of just teaching them the things we'd like them to know. Examples of changing our habits to accommodate the dog include:

- not eating in front of the dog to avoid begging or barking
- sleeping on the floor with the dog so he won't bark all night
- making sure someone is always home so the dog won't have to be crated
- taking the dog outside every time he wants to play to avoid being pestered
- petting the dog every time he solicits attention.

The dog will likely be around for years –a few weeks time spent teaching your dog how to behave is a wise way to spend your time together.

In the time it takes you to help develop this habit, you could actually be well on your way to teaching your dog:

- how to lie quietly during dinner
- how to enjoy "down time" in the crate
- how to entertain himself
- how to ask for attention, not demand it



In addition to these bad habits that develop, we could avoid more troubles by simply teaching the dog the right way to do things. For instance, those dogs that pull their owners around the block on evening walks can easily be taught that pulling gets them nowhere fast. It will take about a week or two of focused training, but even if it took double that, wouldn't it be worth the investment? The dog will likely be around for years –a few weeks time spent teaching your dog how to behave is a wise way to spend your time together.

Dogs aren't dumb...they are capable of learning how to walk on a loose leash, coming when called, and sitting to greet people instead of jumping. Don't give up on your dog, teach him!

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