



Be the Leader Your Dog Will Want to Follow

It's important that we don't try to gain the leadership role with force or intimidation. The myth that humans should be "dominant" causes fear and aggression in dogs. Gaining your dog's trust and respect will result in the type of dog who will follow your lead with unwavering reliability.

Leadership Exercises

- Make training part of your daily routine. Before meals, play time, letting them up on the couch, or anything else they want, ask them to do a behavior for you first. Then the food, play, or cuddles they receive afterwards is a reward for making good choices.
- This is an easy way to fit little training sessions into your everyday life. You can use simple behaviors to do this like sit, down, stay, or come. Asking for a behavior before earning something they want is reinforcing them for giving their attention to you.
- Always be on the lookout for good behavior to reward. Whether it's a random sit while you're waiting to cross a street or when they see the mailman go by and don't bark, reward it with praise or treats.
- These practices encourage them to continue looking to you for direction. You will see them habituate good manners, good listening skills, and good decision making. Just like with humans, this takes time and consistency in our message.
- Make training fun and exciting! Your dog will sense your energy and it will make them more eager to work for you and follow your instructions.
- Teach your dog that they can trust you by never forcing them into situations they are uncomfortable with. Be attentive to your dog's body language and respect their limitations.
- A dog who is stressed or overstimulated will not be able to learn or perform as they normally would. If your dog senses you becoming impatient or frustrated they are likely to freeze up or shut down. In these situations we have to manage our expectations and adjust the situation before continuing onwards.