

ACADEMY OF CANINE BEHAVIOR

Management Techniques

Taking responsibility for controlling the environment in which your dog lives, so he can be successful and his correct (good) behavior can be reinforced, is what we like to call “management.” Management is YOUR responsibility, not your dog’s! By showing your dog what you want, you set rules of the household and teach your dog what those rules are. Remember, your dog’s reasoning ability is that of a two-year-old child’s. Like a child, your dog needs leadership, education, and companionship *in order to learn how* to be your “best friend.” And like a parent, you’re responsible for your dog’s education. Combined with essential elements of basic obedience training and proper socialization, a good management program is a key component of your dog’s complete education.

I. PROVIDING YOUR DOG A DEN

Dogs are naturally and instinctively denning animals. An indoor kennel, more commonly known as a dog crate, is an inexpensive and practical way to satisfy your dog’s denning instincts. Dog crates are often misunderstood, thought of by new dog owners as a cage, or little prison. But to your dog, it’s a bedroom, a safe place to relax when there’s too much activity going on. It’s his own little piece of real estate right there in the house. With proper training and management, the crate is a positive thing. It prevents him from developing chewing problems and other destructive behaviors while allowing him to be more conveniently included in the family. When choosing a crate, ensure the dog has enough room to stand up, lie down, and turn around in. (See our separate handout “Providing Your Dog A Den” for complete how-to’s on choosing and introducing a crate.) Use your dog den when:

- **You must leave your dog alone.** Your dog is safe, comfortable, unable to soil or destroy anything in the house.
- **You are house training your dog or puppy.** Your puppy avoids mistakes, learns bladder control, and establishes a schedule.
- **You are unable to supervise your dog.** Your dog can relax while you study, work, or attend to other household activities.
- **You simply need a break from your dog, or suspect he could use a nap.** Your dog needs daily, quiet down time.
- **You must travel with your dog.** Your dog will feel instantly secure in new surroundings, safely within his dog den.

IMPORTANT: A crate is not an instrument of punishment. It shouldn’t be something you angrily consign your dog to when you find him chewing on your new pair of shoes. The dog should never be confined to a crate constantly, but he should be expected to relax in it while you are away, for as long as is appropriate for your particular dog.

II. SUPERVISED FREEDOM

To your dog, the house is not a den, but a den site, which must be explored. The desire for your dog to explore is perfectly normal. Unfortunately, your dog’s unsupervised exploring can be destructive and downright dangerous. Like a two-year-old child, your dog cannot be expected to run loose in the house unsupervised and “stay out of trouble. Giving a dog too much freedom in the house before he is ready (i.e., you haven’t spent enough time *educating* the dog about the house rules, and the dog hasn’t yet demonstrated his *understanding* of all the house rules) is unsafe, helps develop bad habits, such as stealing and destructive chewing, and usually leads to isolation of the dog away from the family. To manage your dog in the house:

- **Confine your dog safely within areas of the house where you can supervise him.**
 - In rooms such as the bedroom or laundry room, simply close the door behind you.
 - In rooms without doors, use store-bought baby-gates or other like barriers to cordon off doorways.
 - In open air, or great rooms, use movable wire screens to create a playpen-type area for your dog.
- **Remove all stealable items from within your dog’s reach,** to break old destructive habits and avoid creating new ones.
- **Put only a few items acceptable for chewing out at any given time;** rotate them every few days to keep them interesting.
- **When you are present (*and ONLY when you are present*), leave his leash on, attached to the buckle collar, so he can drag it around the house with him.** Your dog will easily get used to leash dragging and you can calmly reinforce your dog’s obedience by matter-of-factly taking the end of the leash, giving a correction with your “No.” Leash dragging helps you avoid grabbing for your dog in anger or frustration.

IMPORTANT: Give lots of attention and praise to your dog for desirable behavior during free time. And should your dog chew up something you inadvertently left out - don’t scold the dog: manage the environment next time!

III. SUPERVISED TIE-OUTS

A supervised tie-out is yet another way to manage your dog so that he gets lots of opportunities to be rewarded for good behavior. (*Supervised* tie-outs are not to be confused with simply tying your dog to a tree and then leaving him unsupervised and fending for himself; that is never acceptable.) Unfortunately, most new dog owners forsake tie-outs in favor of giving their dogs total freedom in the house - and inadvertently set their dogs up for failure. To work on a supervised tie-out, tie the handle of a 4-6 foot chain leash around a doorknob, and attach the snap to your dog's buckle collar. This should allow the dog enough room to sit and lie down comfortably. Keep an eye on your dog, and when he offer behaviors you like, such as sitting quietly and lying down, catch him in the act and praise him ("Fido, good down!" and "Fido, good sit!"). Use your tie-outs when:

- **You are house training your dog or puppy.** Your puppy avoids mistakes, learns bladder control, and establishes a schedule.
- **You can actively supervise your dog and reward him for good behavior.** This includes when guests arrive, too!
- **You are training a dog to be on his rug** (below.) Set the rug underneath the dog on the tie-out, praise the dog when he is on it.
- **You want your dog to settle himself when in the house.** For most people, this is a priority for having the dog inside.

When your dog is on a tie-out, ignore any undesirable behavior, such as lunging against the leash, barking, or excessive whining. Give attention at the first sign of good behavior - even if it's only for a second. Your dog will quickly learn that good behavior will get your attention. It is imperative that good behavior is rewarded, or your dog will not understand he should be offering good behaviors - he will simply believe that he is, well...tied out.

IMPORTANT: A dog should be on a tie-out when supervised. A tie-out is not an instrument of punishment. The dog should not be tied out constantly, nor should he be tied out on anything other than his buckle collar. It is recommended you use a chain leash, so the dog cannot chew through it and get into trouble.

IV. "GO TO YOUR RUG!"

Giving your dog his own rug is another useful way of giving him manners and a secure, "reserved parking" spot in your house where he can be involved with the family but out of the way. When you come in from that walk in the rain, you can send him to his rug until his muddy paws dry out. Your dog can easily be taught to go to his rug and stay there for short periods of time, however this training requires more attention and patience on your part than dog den training. Using the tie-out technique described above until the dog is solid on the rug can be particularly helpful. The best sort of rug to get is one that is washable and rubber-backed, so it won't slide all over the place. Use your rug when:

- **You want your dog with you, but not underfoot.** This includes waiting on his rug when guests arrive - no more ambushing!
- **You are trying to contain the spread of dirt, hair, and dander.** This is especially handy in households with animal allergies.
- **You must travel with your dog.** Your host and/or hostess will appreciate her ability to lie down comfortably, out of the way.
- **Your dog needs a place to go when there is too much excitement in the house.** This is often needed with visiting children.

Be sure to show your dog that the rug is his, by patting the rug, playing with him on the rug, and making it a fun and positive place to be. Use lots of praise and treats when teaching your dog to go to his rug. Stand a few feet away from the rug, show your dog a treat and then toss it onto the rug. Let your dog follow the treat onto the rug, and praise him with "Good go to your rug!" when he is on the rug. Gradually increase your distance so that you can send your dog to his rug from a distance, around corners, and from far away rooms in the house. This takes practice, but with patience and solid positive reinforcement, your dog will seek out his rug much of the time on his own, it is such a nice place to be.

IMPORTANT: Get a rug that's the appropriate size for your dog. Make sure children or strangers are not allowed to pester the dog while he is on the rug. Avoid engaging in activities on the rug that your dog may view as negative, such as de-matting or clipping toenails; follow through on those activities - just do them elsewhere, not on the rug. Should your dog fall asleep on his rug, understand that chances are he won't remember his was on a "rug" command, and adjust your expectations accordingly!

