



COMMON MISBEHAVIOR PROBLEMS = NORMAL DOGGIE BEHAVIORS

What appears to be misbehavior on the part of your dog, is often just normal doggie behavior that is done at the wrong place or time. Wild dogs will often chew, dig, bark, howl, eliminate, and jump or play without it creating problems where they live. For our domesticated friend however, all of these behaviors done at the inappropriate time or place can get them into hot water quickly.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, only 35% of all family dogs live out their natural lives with their original owners. It is estimated that over 50% of the dogs surrendered to shelters across the country have a behavior problem that could have been prevented with early training, or could have been solved had the owners known some basics about dog training and behavior. Rather than let your newly adopted dog become a statistic, let's first find out why behavior problems develop and what we can do to solve them.

PROBLEMS ARE DUE TO:

Breed Traits: Dog breeds were developed to specialize the individual so he could perform a certain type of work better than any other type of dog. Knowing what breed or breeds that make up your Fido can help you understand and combat typical problem behaviors that are breed based. For instance, in the breed group known as terriers, these particular dogs were bred to hunt for small vermin and often in the process of hunting, go to ground (which literally means go under the earth and look for those pesky critters). Terriers tend to be very enthusiastic in the hunt, and therefore very vocal. A typical problem behavior you may have with terriers is that they like to dig, chase small animals, bark, and have a high energy level.

With problem behaviors that are breed-based traits, redirecting those behaviors into a safe outlet is by far the most effective method of problem solving. Redirecting a terrier's behaviors would involve providing him with a special place to dig (a digging pit), providing lots of exercise and teaching him the "QUIET" command. At the same time allow him barkathons at appropriate times, and teach him to chase a ball or Frisbee. You would invest a large amount of your training in working the "OFF" command

Since breed based problems are instinctive, they are very hard to extinguish, but can be redirected with amazing success. Find out what breed(s) make up your dog. Find out what he was bred to do so you can understand why he exhibits some behaviors so strongly.

Lack of Exercise: A tired dog is a good dog, because then he is sleeping and not digging, barking, or chewing. Not enough exercise results in your dog becoming bored and inventing his own games to play (which I'm sure you would not like too well!). Even if your dog spends his day in the yard while you are away, he is not exercising himself. He certainly isn't tired when you come home, is he? A young dog needs a minimum of two to three exercise periods a day that involve aerobic activity. A good rule of thumb for exercise is when you've given your dog enough activity; he will lay down and not move for a minimum of 20 minutes.

Good ways to exercise our dog are throwing a ball or Frisbee, teaching him to swim, blowing bubbles, teaching him to chase a soccer ball or having him chase a toy tied to a string. Be inventive when thinking of ways to exercise your dog. Fido will appreciate it, you'll have some fun, and because you will be spending time with him, Fido will become even more bonded to you. Avoid wrestling, tug of war and chase games as these teach your dog to pit his strength against TEETH against you. Walking your dog is fine, but usually will not result in getting him tired enough unless you are walking four to five miles a day. For young dogs less than 18 months of age, please consult your veterinarian before starting a jogging program. Jogging with young dogs is not recommended as it can damage your dog's skeletal and muscular system. Wait until Fido has completely finished growing before you take him out running with you.

Lack of consistency: Problems often develop when your dog is allowed to do something one week, then the following week he is severely scolded for repeating the same behavior. For instance, when your dog was small, he probably was allowed to jump on you (as it was easier for you to pet him). Perhaps he was allowed up on the furniture (after all he's just a little guy) and he was allowed to nip at your ankles (how cut and playful). Well, now that your Labrador has gained 40 pounds and 14 inches in height

you find these habits annoying, not to mention dangerous. Even an adult, ten pound Toy Poodle can be quite bothersome jumping on you, ruining your good pants, and can be quiet painful as he is biting at your ankles! Your dog's only crime was that he grew up. Your crime is that you did not treat Mr. Puppy as Mr. Adult right from the beginning. Dogs learn rules quickly if they are taught right from the start what is expected of them.

Make sure everyone in your family understands and enforces your household rules for Fido. Dogs learn to test to see what "rules" are in effect, especially if different family members have been allowing assorted behaviors. They learn who is easy prey for a sad look or a tentative paw up on the couch. Enforcing commands becomes harder because your dog is confused as to what exactly is or is not allowed. Your dog lives in a black and white world with no shades or gray. It is either yes or no.

Schedule your dog's life so he knows when it's time to eat, play, sleep, and work. Fido will become calmer and much more confident because he knows what to expect and when to expect it. When changes do occur in your household, such as a marriage, divorce, a new baby, change of residence, or a new cat or dog added to the family, you can expect your dog to exhibit some changes in behavior. Keeping the routine the same will help reduce his stress.

Lack of Leadership: Dogs are pack animals and look to one leader for guidance. If there is no strong leader in your dog's pack (your family) then he will place himself as leader. Leaders pretty much do whatever they want, whenever they want. If your dog has this dictatorship view of life, then he probably has more than one habit you do not like. Start by taking your dog to a quality-training program to adjust his view of your family pack.

Lack of social interaction: It is estimated that 70% of all problem behaviors are due to a lack of social interaction or isolation. A dog that resides exclusively in your backyard feels isolated and therefore can become stressed. Dogs are very social creatures, more so than humans. They need daily social interaction or they can become stressed. Stress in a dog exhibits itself in many ways. The most common signs are digging, chewing, and barking.

Leaving your dog in the backyard or garage will not prevent destructive habits from developing unless you take preventive steps. Because you do not live in your yard or garage, you are not there to supervise your dog. So excessive barking, territorial aggression, escaping, digging and chewing can develop quite easily. Dogs not educated

in proper household etiquette must be safely confined to limit damage, not only to your property, but to themselves as well. Many common plants in your yard are poisonous to dogs; there are many toxic substances in your garage and yard (such as snail bait, fertilizers, paint thinner, anti-freeze and rat poisons to name just a few). Outdoor dogs are subject to teasing or harassment by children, prone to theft, and poisoning from an outside source.

Argument for keeping your dog in your house: By having your dog live with you in your house, he can learn what is expected of him. Inside dogs have fewer problem behaviors than outside dogs, and because you have a better relationship with your dog, problem solving becomes much easier. Inside the house you can control the environment to solve problems that may develop. Inside dogs bark less since they cannot be teased by the neighborhood kids; they are inside the "pack's den" and therefore feel more secure, and they have less "territory" to protect from real or perceived threats. An outside dog is not a good theft deterrent since what most burglars want is inside your house, not in your yard. Only a dog **INSIDE** your house will deter a burglar.

As a minimum, your dog should be kept inside your house whenever you are home, including sleeping inside at night. If you must keep your dog outside during the day, then put up an escape proof dog run, away from the yard fence. This will keep your dog from ingesting toxic substances or plant, keep him from being teased, keep him from being a theft object, and keep him from destroying your yard. The dog run should be large enough so he has ample room to do his business in one end and still have room to walk and stretch in the other. Provide enough shade in the summer months and a doghouse to get out of bad weather in cooler months. Please make sure that your Fido has had plenty of exercise before he is confined.

FIDO'S GOT THIS NASTY HABIT – PROBLEM SOLVING

The best way to solve a problem is never to let your dog acquire bad behaviors by training your dog at a very early age, such as eight weeks. Sometimes that is not always possible or perhaps you have adopted an older dog who was never trained properly, so what can we do now that Fido has a habit we do not like? There are actually several different ways you can deal with problem behaviors. The best results are obtained by combining several of the different methods below.

Prevent Access or change the environment: Does Fido steal your socks and dash off? Close your bedroom door so he can not get to your things or put Fido in a crate when you can not watch him. Bury a taller hamper or one with a lid so he can not get into it. Try learning to be a better housekeeper so he does not even see a sock lying around to steal.

Prevent the behavior from happening by removing the motivation that starts it: Do you react to Fido's sock stealing by chasing him all over the house? He probably is doing it because it gets your attention. Try ignoring him when he has a sock and see what happens. Does he become bored and drop it? Pay attention to him when he is playing with his own toys.

Change your dog's behavior: Sock thievery still high at your house? Try booby trapping your socks with hot pepper juice. Teach your dog not to even sniff or look at any socks, by training the "OFF" command; leave a long, lightweight leash on him so you can stop the chase game.

Accept the behavior: Wear wet, slobbery socks (possible with holes in them?!)

Get rid of your dog: Give him away, keep him outside, or euthanize him.

Booby traps: Booby traps are anything negative that happens to your dog at the precise moment he is exhibiting an unwanted behavior. They are initially used when you are home with your dog but are not watching him directly. Once your dog's problem behavior is reduced by the use of booby traps while you are home, you can then start to leave them up while you are gone from the house. This progression is done so your dog does not learn to set the booby trap off and still continue down his "wicked path" since you will initially be there to see if the whole process worked.

Examples of booby traps are putting chicken wire on the couch, piling empty soda cans on a piece of paper on the counter (so when Fido puts his paws up, they come tumbling down), putting Tabasco sauce on your shoes, and putting mouse traps in the trash with a light sheet of paper over them. The effect is that your dog thinks the environment is delivering punishment, not you!

Booby traps can be very elaborate but the important thing to remember is that they are not to injure your dog in any way. Their purpose is to provide a very unpleasant experience to your dog and prevent him from wanting to experience doing it again. If the motivation behind the unwanted behavior is so great, most booby traps, short of injuring your dog, will not work. There may be a component to your dog's behavior that you are missing, that the Animal Behavior Helpline can help you understand, so you may be able to avoid using booby traps altogether.

Sound booby traps should not be used with dogs under six months of age or with very shy dogs as they can cause problems with extreme fearfulness.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO COMMON BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

The following table is not meant to cover every possible problem that your dog may develop. This table is included to help you understand why a behavior in your dog may be occurring. To solve a problem, usually a combination of several different solutions has the highest success rate.

BEHAVIOR	POSSIBLE CAUSES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Jumping on people	Reinforced for doing it – petting, shoving, getting picked up; fed treats while jumping.	Do not pet or pick up while jumping; do not feed unless all four paws are on the floor; keep on leash when guests come over; teach sit/down stay.
	Urge to greet/lick muzzle of leader	Teach “off” & “sit” as a greeting.
	Mounting or dominance.	Spay & neuter early; provide strong leadership.
	Social isolation	Use time buffers; more exercise.
Excessive Barking	Breed characteristic.	Teach “SPEAK” & “QUIET” command; have barkathons.
	Social isolation – boredom.	More exercise; reward quiet behavior; train trick behaviors; keep indoors.
	Outside stimulation.	Teach “QUIET”; keep indoors; desensitize to sounds; keep radio on.
	Being teased or harassed.	Keep inside; keep behind sight proof dog fence.
Digging	Too hot or too cold	Provide warm doghouse or cool shady area or wading pool.
	Nesting behavior in females.	Provide a “nest” or doghouse with old blankets; keep inside.
	Attempt to escape Boredom Desire to mate	Keep dog inside; keep in escape proof dog run; have neighbors discourage dog if he gets out; increase exercise; spay or neuter.
	Separation anxiety or stress	Time buffers; more exercise; have someone let dog out at lunch; provide special toys.
	Breed characteristic.	Provide digging pit; teach “DIG” & “OFF” command.
	Inadvertently rewarded.	Remove garbage or tasty plants; provide toys.
Fearfulness/shyness	Breed trait Poor quality individual.	Research breed before obtaining; never buy pet shop dogs; research breeder before buying; very active socialization.
	Inadvertently rewarded	Do not pet or soothe in fearful situations; use JOLLY routine instead or ignore.
	Lack of socialization Poor training	Don’t hit; provide consistency & proper timing; active socialization; use only positive training techniques.
	Early traumatic experience	Slow socialization to traumatic situation; JOLLY routine.
Physical limitations	Use dog check for hearing & vision	

BEHAVIOR	POSSIBLE CAUSES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Doesn't come when called	Something negative was done to discourage dog from coming	Don't call dog & then bathe, clip nails, or flea spray; reward with praise, treats, & toys for coming; re-teach command using different word.
	Outside stimulation.	Keep on leash & teach command initially in less distracting situations, gradually working up to very distracting ones.
	Off leash privileges give too soon.	Keep leash or long line on whenever in an unenclosed area; re-teach command in controlled environment.
Thievery	Called only once during walk & then taken home.	Call dog many times during walk to check in & then go play.
	Inadvertently rewarded – ate food; got a good game of chase out of you; other family members think it's funny & encourage it.	Put food out of reach; set up booby traps; ignore dog when he has stolen item; put a long line on dog to stop chase; re-establish household rules with family members.
	Inappropriate toys given – shoes, towels, stuffed toys.	Give toys that do not resemble household items; Kongs, Tuffys, Nylabones, Boomer balls; teach "OFF" & "GET YOUR BONE"; supervise or confine.
Excitability	Playing inappropriate games.	Stop playing games that encourage dog to grab things from you; teach fetch; teach "DROP" & "TAKE IT" commands.
	Inadvertently rewarded – hyped up with games; petted or fed while "wild".	Avoid playing excitable games; do not feed or pet unless sitting or lying down.
	Breed trait Poor quality individual	Research breed before obtaining; never buy pet shop dogs; research breeder before buying.
	Social isolation.	Keep dog inside so he learns manners; have neighbors visit dog; teach down/stay.
	Lack of exercise.	Provide structured, controlled exercise; teach fetch.
Chewing	Poor training or lack of training.	Teach "DOWN" with progressively longer periods that dog has to perform; time rewards correctly; get involved in obedience or agility to further training; desensitize to exciting stimuli.
	Inappropriate chew toys given – shoes, towels, stuffed animals.	Give toys that do not resemble household items: Kongs, Tuffys; Nylabones.
	Separation anxiety – boredom	Use stress reduction ideas from separation anxiety handout; increase exercise.
	Pleasant taste/smell	Clean spilled food/drink; use bad tasting booby traps (bitter apple/orange or Tabasco sauce)
	Breed characteristic Teething	Supervise; confine; give ice cubs; give proper chew toys.

BEHAVIOR	POSSIBLE CAUSES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Escaping	Boredom, no bond to family.	Increase exercise; keep inside when family is gone; make more a part of family; take a training class.
	Separation anxiety	Keep inside house (either in single room or crate); provide special toys (Kongs or chew bones) when family is gone.
	Pleasant experience in past – rewarded with food and/or play with neighbors or their dogs.	Keep in escape proof dog run (chain link); run electric fence wire at bottom & top of yard fence; have neighbors discourage dog when he gets out.
	Outside stimulation - kids teasing dog through fence; other dogs running lose.	Keep inside; talk to neighbors if they are bothering dog; have neighbors keep their dogs in their own yards; build sight proof chain link dog run in middle of yard (away from yard fence).

COMMON SOLUTIONS TO ANY PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

As you probably found out by glancing through the preceding table, there are some common solutions to all behavior problems. They are:

1. Spend time training your dog.
2. Make your dog more a part of your family.
3. Increase exercise.
4. Don't inadvertently reward bad behavior.

The first two points on the above list should be emphasized. Most dogs develop problems because they were never taught what to do or what not to do! Take the time to train your dog so he does become the perfect, well-mannered pet that you have always dreamed about! Behavior problems are never solved by isolating your dog to the backyard, in fact, they may become worse. You are your dog's pack and it is up to you to teach him the correct way to behave, by making him more a part of your family.

RECOMMENDED READING

Dog Problems, The Gentle Modern Cure. By David Weston & Ruth Ross

Perfect Manners For The Modern Dog. By Gwen Bohnenkamp

HELP! My Dog Has An Attitude. By Gwen Bohnenkamp

If you have any questions, problems or concerns please call the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley's Animal Behavior Helpline at (408) 727-3383, extension 753.