



DOG FACTS



HOW TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR WITHOUT PUNISHMENT

When dogs behave in ways we don't like, punishing them feels like the best way to teach them "not to." But scolding, squirting, swatting, or other aversive methods usually cause more problems than they solve...they also don't teach your dog what to do. Instead, follow these tips for better behavior:

Manage the Environment

If an unwanted behavior continues to happen, it is being rewarded by something. Food, access, and attention - even negative - are all reinforcers. Managing the dog's environment to prevent the behavior prevents the reinforcement. Example: Put dog behind baby gate to prevent jumping on guests.

Balance of Exercise-Rest-Enrichment

A tired dog is a good dog, but exercise, alone, isn't enough. Dogs need at least 12 hours of rest each day, as well as mental stimulation. It is the balance of all three that add up to a healthy, well-adjusted dog. Example: In addition to daily walks, feed meals from puzzle toys and provide quiet areas for rest.

Reinforce Anything "Good"

Look for any behavior you would rather see instead and reinforce it immediately. This may not be perfect behavior or the final behavior you want in the end, but it starts the training process.

Example: "Four-on-the-Floor" (standing) instead of jumping.

Teach (and Practice) New Behavior

What behavior would you like to see instead? Now, teach your dog, practice often, and generously reward until your dog can reliably perform that behavior around distractions.

Example: Lying on a mat is incompatible with jumping on visitors.

Stress-Related Behaviors

Destruction, aggression, reactivity, and nonstop barking are types of behaviors caused by stress (boredom, fear, anxiety, frustration, pain). You MUST address the stress to change the behavior. Rule out health-related causes, then seek the help of a behavior consultant to learn how.