

How To Ruin a Perfectly Good Pet

Consider these three philosophies:

- “Dogs should not be restricted by rules and expectation”
- “Dogs should be completely uninhibited”
- “I just want my dogs to be my friends”

If you want to raise a well-behaved dog, those three philosophies don't work. You will end up with an unrestricted, uninhibited dog all right, **but he will also be uneducated, unruly, unreliable and ultimately unhappy.** Both of you will be unhappy.

Is your dog rude? What do I mean?? How can a dog be rude?

Well, lets count the ways!

- Talking back – does your dog bark back at you when he doesn't want to do something?
- Staying just out of your reach – when you reach toward your dog to try and catch him, does he move back just out of reach so you cant?
- Hanging onto thing – Does your dog refuse to let things go when you tell him to drop?
- Pestering you – does he constantly nudge or pester you for attention?
- Stealing food – does he steal food off your plate, from other dogs?
- Grumbling when annoyed – does he grumble or growl at you when you wake him up, or move him off a chair, or reach toward his food bowl, or make him do something he doesn't want to do?
- Struggling during grooming?
- Running away from you when you call him?
- Getting back at you – does he chew things or pee in the house when you leave him or he doesn't get his own way?
- Jumping on people?

Why rude behaviours are bad.

These behaviours are rude and disrespectful. If a dog is allowed to do things that are rude and disrespectful, he starts believing that he is higher in the pack order than you are. The pack order is like a ladder of hierarchy. Dogs are sociable animals who like to live with other sociable animals in a group or pack.

All packs have a pecking order. At the top is the most dominant animal, the pack leader. He or she establishes the rules and makes the decisions for the group.

Next in line is the Number Two animal, who can tell everyone else (except the pack leader) what to do. Then the Number three and so on, right down to the most submissive one of all, who can't tell anybody what to do.

In our household, the pack order goes:

1. Me & other members of my family
2. Abbey – Entire Bitch
3. Rusty – Neutered Bitch
4. King – Entire Dog

In a normal pack situation, it would be more common for the entire dog to either be the top dog or the number 2 dog with the entire bitch being top dog. However in this situation, I have purposefully forced King to the bottom of the pack, because he does have a tendency to become quite arrogant and challenging when Abbey comes into season, which is a perfectly normal behaviour, however I don't want that kind of situation around my household, so I take control and put him in his place.

Now you might think this kind of structure sounds harsh, but pack animals love it. They know instinctively that the well-being of the group depends upon each member being able to handle his or her respective position. With a pecking order, they know exactly where they stand with each other. They know who is who in the pack.

The pack instinct is built into your dogs genes, and it's a good thing too. It's why dogs wedge themselves so tightly into our families, rather than prowling along the fringes, like many cats do.

When a dog joins your family, even if your family consists only of a single person – YOU – a pack is formed. In his mind it certainly is, and his instincts compel him to seek out its structure. His two major questions are:

Who is the leader? Who is the follower?

Whoever is allowed to establish the rules and make the decisions is the leader.

If this structure isn't clearly established or the dog thinks that the leader is not able to handle the pack, this is when the dog will start to challenge the pack order and try to establish leadership as top dog. Now you will start to see these rude and disrespectful behaviours. Your dog isn't really being rude, he is simply carrying out his role as pack leader. Since you haven't assumed the role, he has to do it.

“I don’t want to rule or control my dog, I just want him to be my friend.”

Your dog can never be JUST your friend, because friends are equals. A dog is your dependent. He depends on you for his food, his health, his safety, his very life. There are times when you need to do things with your dog that he doesn’t understand and doesn’t like, such as giving him medicine that tastes awful, taking something dangerous from his mouth, rolling him over to remove a tick from his stomach.

Your dog doesn’t understand that medicines will help him, that some things he puts in his mouth will poison or choke him, and that ticks carry disease. Without this knowledge, your dog doesn’t know what’s best for him. For his own safety, he has to accept YOUR greater knowledge and judgement. For your own peace of mind as your dog’s leader, you must feel confident that you can restrain and handle him in any way you see fit, at any time you see fit.

But if your dog won’t even accept minor things like clipping his toenails or giving up a toy or sitting quietly while you attach his lead, then he’s certainly not going to accept something major that you might need to do with him to protect him or save his life.

A lot of people worry that if they start to take charge of their dog that he will resent them. Quite the opposite actually, he will start to RESPECT you and your position as top dog. It will not only make him behave well, it will make him feel happy, secure and content knowing where he belongs.