

## Dealing with a dominant dog

A dog is naturally inclined to compete for food, objects, space, and pack position, but a dominant dog is more prone to bite and fight over these issues. This personality type will challenge and manipulate anyone who is a pushover. A dominant dog will not 'outgrow' this trait and behaviors escalate over time. Fortunately, most dogs are easily rehabilitated when the owner understands how they contribute to the problem and make the necessary changes.

Dominant dog behaviors include:

- demanding petting or playtime
- barking incessantly
- biting when groomed
- protecting space or objects
- ignoring commands
- stealing or hoarding objects
- not releasing a toy
- growling for control
- urinating on you or your personal items
- pulling on the leash
- jumping on people
- owning the furniture
- counter surfing

You reinforce dominance by:

- allowing him to push past you in doorways or on stairs
- allowing him to pull on the leash
- allowing him on the furniture
- treating him like a baby or carrying him everywhere
- not socializing
- not training and/or inconsistent training
- bribing with too many treats
- ignoring the growls, bites, and barking
- rewarding him for doing nothing
- overall lack of structure, management and supervision

### Steps toward rehabilitation

First accept that you and your family need to change your habits then create a training plan for everyone to follow. Learn how to teach your dog how to make a better choice. If you want to stop your dog from jumping on company, then train him to 'go to his bed' when company comes over.

Simple strategies include:

- Make him sit and wait for his meal.
- Ignore him when he pushes your hand for attention.
- Make him do something before you pet him—don't just pet him to pet him.
- Give him structured exercise like a 30-minute 'training' walk.
- Keep him off of the couch/bed or teach him an "off" command.
- Make him sit to put on the leash, to wipe paws, or for grooming.
- Do not tell him 'it's okay' when he whines.

More advanced methods:

- Redirect him when he barks or growls.
- Put the leash on when you have company to control his jumping.
- Teach him to sit at doorways.
- Practice 'controlled' stairs while on leash.
- Teach a "wait" command.
- Learn how to walk your dog with a loose leash.
- Teach commands like "leave it," "quiet," "no bite,"
- Expose him to new places.
- Practice obedience skills with distractions.
- Teach your dog how to be alone.
- Teach him some tricks dog to increase trust and strengthen your bond.

The owner that understands how to '*out think their dog*' will eventually change a dominant dog into a dog that is more pleasant to be around. Work with a trainer privately or enroll in a group obedience class if you need guidance.

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