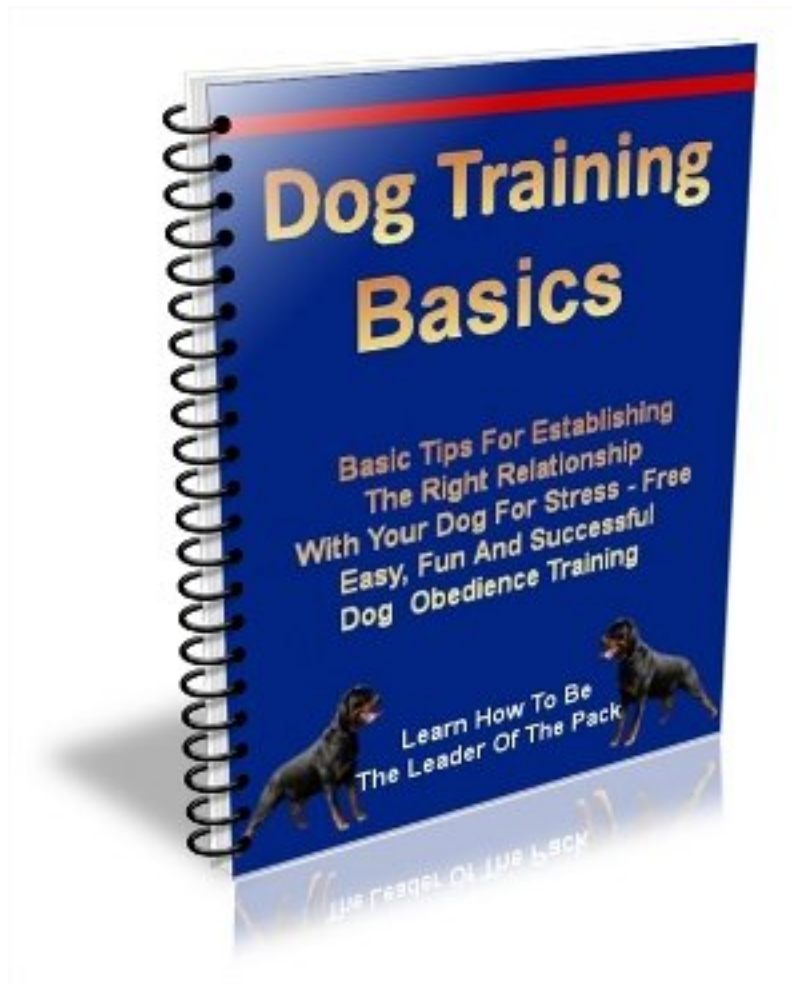


Dog Training Basics

How To Be The Leader Of The Pack



There are thousands of dogs surrendered to shelters and dog homes every week, all over the country. The people who owned them didn't set out to have to surrender their pet, but something went horribly wrong with the relationship between the dog and its human family.

Too many people don't take pet ownership seriously enough. They think that their dog will just turn out alright, with very little input. The cute little puppy quickly grows into a demanding and boisterous adolescent, and the humans have no idea how to cope.

If you have a dog in your household, you are responsible for its health, safety and training. A trained dog is a pleasure to have around and adds a new dimension to your life. A trained dog has good manners, is friendly to your visitors and becomes a welcome companion as you go about your day-to-day activities.

An untrained dog, on the other hand, is not a pleasure to have around your home; it has no manners, displays inappropriate behavior around other people and is impossible to take out with you. These dogs are often labeled problem dogs, difficult, uncontrollable and disobedient. They are relegated to the back yard, starved of company, chained up and often surrendered to dog shelters because the humans in their life can't cope with their behavior and don't know how to correct it.

Who is to blame for a dog's bad behavior?

A dog doesn't know how to be obedient; he doesn't know what your rules are and he certainly didn't come with the ability to follow your rules, even if he did know them.

The dog you have chosen to share your life needs you to teach him how to fit in. You are the one who will teach him manners and acceptable behavior. You will indicate gently but firmly, what behaviors are not desirable.

You will teach him where to pee and poop, because to him, any absorbent surface will be appropriate. He can't tell the difference between your expensive carpet and the grass.

You will teach him where to sleep, what things are his and which ones are yours. He will look to you for every need – food, water, shelter, companionship, love, games, exercise, fun and entertainment. You own the food, the water dish, the toys and the lead. You always win the games, even though you both have lots of fun playing.

Why will he look to you for everything? Because, to him, you are the leader of the pack.

How does he know you are the leader of the pack? Because you have taken that position from the very beginning. You are the boss, the top dog, the leader. If you do not step up into the position, the dog will, and that's where a lot of the problems start.

It all comes down to understanding

Do you speak 'dog'?

No?

Neither does your dog speak English (or any other language). He does NOT understand everything you say to him, no matter what you might think! But he does understand the tone of your voice and your body language.

If you speak in a fun, happy way, he will know you are talking about a game or a walk. If you speak to him with a growl in your voice, he will know that you are not happy with him. If you growl a "No!" at him, he will associate your displeasure with what he is doing at the time. He won't get it right away, which is why you have to be consistent and "No!" him every time he repeats that behavior. He will eventually cease the behavior because he doesn't want to make you cross with him.

Do you understand your dog's body language? What is he trying to tell you?

When he drops to his elbows, with bottom in the air and tail waving like a flag in the breeze, his body language is saying "let's play." If you get down and adopt the same position, he will know what you mean too!

When a dog wags its tail, does it always mean it's happy? Actually, no; he might be confused and unsure of how he should act.

When your dog puts his ears back, flat to his head, is he going to attack you? No, but he may be unsure or scared.

You will learn lots about your dog and his "language" just by watching him and being tuned in to what he is doing.

Why is it so important to be the leader of the pack?

Dogs have descended from wolves, and wolves live in packs. Even though the dog has been domesticated for 15,000 years, they still carry much of their wild ancestors' ways.

So the dog is a pack animal, with an inbuilt sense of the complicated pack hierarchy that has been passed down through countless generations. There is only one leader in a pack, and only the very strong would dare to challenge his authority.

The leader of the pack always eats first, and the others eat in turn according to their position in the pack. The pack leader decides where the pack will travel, where they will sleep and what they will attack for food. He quickly puts all other dogs in their place, which is downline from him.

Does this help you see why you must be the top dog in your pack? Even if your pack is just you and him, you have to be the pack leader; otherwise he will think he has to lead you. He will try to put you in your place – under him.