

Dog Training by PJ

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So your Dog is an Adolescent! Now What?

A puppy leaves puppy hood (the cuddly times) and enters adolescence approximately at 6 months of age; then you will have the "adolescent dog" for sometime! Actually a very long time comparatively speaking to the puppy hood stage.

NEWS BULLETIN: The dog generally doesn't leave adolescence until 24 - 36 months of age. The most challenging age is usually between 9 and 18 months. Statistics show most dogs are surrendered to shelters at this age. While a few dogs breeze through this behavior developmental stage - the typical adolescence dog drive their owners crazy and the owner can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Remember, there is light - it is going through the tunnel that becomes the challenge!

Now, adolescent dogs have insatiable curiosity about the world. These adolescents explore through all their senses, including taste. They have no idea what things are supposed to look like, or how much they cost and they don't know what cars can do to them. They don't understand that people on bicycles are really people - to the dog, they can be moving objects, and moving objects are there to be chased and nipped. Other bad behaviors can include:

- Digging - can you travel to China by way of your yard?
- Chewing - These new molars need exercise and drip systems, furniture, house trim, spa and pool covers seem like a good place to begin.
- Jumping up - many adolescents are extremely rough. They greet and play with you and each other as though both are Superman.
- Running away - remember when your three month old puppy stuck to you like glue? Well, no more - this dog has places to go and people to jump on.
- Growling or snarling - some dogs figure this is as good a time to "claim everything" as theirs.
- Obedience. Obedience? They've never heard of the word and don't understand the concept - Did you attend puppy kindergarten or basic? Well -

that was just a starter! This adolescent dog really needs additional, consistent, patient training...get back to class.

So ... what do you do about it? Pull out your hair, wring your hands, and clean up the mess and MANAGE YOUR DOG. Let us begin by recognizing your dog is a phenomenally active adolescent. Expect and continue to dog proof the home against the damage that can be inflicted by your adolescent dog.

HERE ARE SOME RULES YOU CAN USE TO KEEP YOUR HOUSE & SANITY:

- **Earn the right to roam.** Many people crate train their puppies to help housetrain them. Continue to use your crate for sleeping purposes, and to put your dog in when you need some time to yourself. But don't stop there. Limit your dog's space in the house to a manageable size until you are pretty sure he's trustworthy - a kitchen, or family room blocked by baby gates is one alternative. Then you can *CATCH* him as he begins to chew on that table-leg. And you can take *ALL* potentially attractive items off low tables - or even high ones if he's a big dog! T

Though many people use a doggie door, it's usually not a good idea to let the dog have complete in and out privileges, certainly not at night. That gives him a very large space and encourages behaviors such as barking, fence fighting or digging. Instead, let him use his doggie door when you are home, and confine him when you're gone for longer periods of time. Give him more space as he matures and learns the rules and limits.

- **Learn to play politely.** If he has a habit of jumping on guests, even if he's just overly friendly, take away his greeting privileges by only being allowed to greet with a leash attached. Set up a tie-down - a short leash attached to an immovable object or your hand and when guests attach the dog to his tie-down. When he's quiet and they've settled in, you can let him off his tie-down, however, you may wish to leave a leash on for control but allow him to socialize.

This is better than putting him outside, where he will feel ostracized and may whine and bark, which you certainly can't control while you're entertaining your guests. While he is quiet - reward the dog. If he whines or barks—walk away, be patient and return only when he has calmed down.

If he jumps on you, try this method to discourage the behavior. **REPLACE** the behavior with a more acceptable one, and only reinforce that behavior. For instance when you returning home and he's jumping all over the place, stay calm, protect your body, tell him to sit (Once! It does no good to repeat the command to an excited dog), wait. When he backs off and sits, pet and praise him.

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Punishment will not teach the dog what NOT TO DO - unless the punishment is so severe the NEVER want to do it again—but PUNISHMENT CAN create fear, anxiety or other behavioral problems—INSTEAD concentrate on what you want your dog TO DO ...and train them what you want.

- **Control that mouth.** If your dog chews on you, it's called "mouthing," and you should treat it as a serious problem. It's an instant signal that playtime is over. If a dog is under three months of age, you can squeal like another puppy and stop playing for a few seconds. But for any dog over three months and make sure they know it's not allowed. Stop playing abruptly, freeze and loudly say "NO" (one of the few times you should say that word, which loses its value the more it's over-used.) When the dog backs off, smile and begin playing again. If necessary re-direct the mouth onto something appropriate to mouth (a toy) and if the mouthing continues use a 30-90 second "time-out" for the dog, then begin again. If it continues consult a Certified Pet Dog Trainer—your dog may need some remedial lessons to teach better control of his mouth.
- **Teach your dog to say please.** Teach your dog to sit before he gets anything he wants - food, attention, petting, whatever. Better yet, take him to back to school (join a class at Dog Training by PJ) where he can learn how to behave in a human-like manner. Obedience classes often improve a rocky relationship, and can be fun for both owner and dog.
- **Rough play?** Your dog should learn that though he shouldn't play roughly with you, he could play roughly with OBJECTS. So the same time you teach him not to mess with your skin, teach him to play tug of war with a toy he likes. The tug part is easy - teaching him to drop it can also be easy. Have some treats handy, and while the dog is tugging, you say, "drop it," and push a treat on his nose or the side of the dog's mouth. He'll let the toy go and take the treat. Praise him, and start the game over again. Within minutes, he'll be tugging and letting go at your request - after all, this is a win-win situation! (See Resource Materials on Superior Games vs. Desirable Games.)
- **Sharing is good.** In the dog world, what's mine is MINE, and they need to learn that food and objects are really yours. Play games that will build a good relationship where you can take away the food, toys, etc.- try trading. Food away - get a treat. Play this game a lot, puppy hood and through adolescence! Don't let your dog become the "owner" of the toys, food, bed, crate, etc.

- **Exercise is essential.** The only good adolescent is a tired adolescent. Play good games to activate their body and mind. Try dog day care facilities where the dog is supervised. Engage their mind - Have you ever tried a training class for your puppy or dog? You will remember how tired you both were—was it because of the physical exercise - well - no.it was the mental stimulation. Hire a dog walker if you are gone for long periods of time, create a stimulating environment. (See Reference Materials on Reducing Boredom.)

The best news - things will get better - if you manage your adolescent and when your dog is 3 or 4, you'll have the dog you always dreamed about - remember Lassie? Patience and consistency is your key to success!