

Establishing and Keeping Alpha Position

Letting your dog know you are the boss

(Top Dog)

Below are a list of rules every dog owner should follow to ensure your dog knows his place in your human pack. If your dog guards his food, or growls at humans in the family, these rules should be strictly followed. Dogs need to have a clear place in their pack. A dog lacking in this clear order is an unhappy dog.

Sometimes, a dog might not be showing signs of aggression, however the dog is suddenly showing signs of separation anxiety, such as destructive behaviors when you leave the house. A dog who steals food from human hands has no respect for the human, and therefore do not see them as pack leader. A dog who questions his place in the household pack can sometimes cause him to suddenly display destructive behaviors, as the dog is confused and taking his anxiety out on your house.

A dog who knows his place in his human pack is a happy dog. A dog who does not is a confused dog and can exhibit many unwanted behaviors because of it.

1. The number one way to communicate to a dog that you are his pack leader is to take him for a walk. Not the type of walk most humans take their dogs on but a pack walk where the dog is made to heel beside or behind the human who is holding the lead. This is most important for all dogs, as in a dog's mind, the leader always leads the way. A dog must not be allowed to sniff or eliminate anywhere he wishes, but where you allow him. One marking against a tree is enough for male dogs. The dog should be concentrating on following the human, not worried about leading the way. This pack type walk should be done daily. Not only will this release built up energy, but it will satisfy the dog's instinct to migrate, which all dogs possess. Dog's who have excess energy bottled up inside them and who do not have their migration instinct met will develop various instability issues that most people mistake for being breed traits.

2. All humans must eat *Before* the dogs, as the leader always eats first. When you give your dog its food eat a small snack first while he is watching, lay the snack near the dogs food so that he thinks you are eating out of his bowl (the leader always eats first).

3. No table scraps should be fed to the dogs during a meal.

4. Feedings must be at a scheduled time. (no self feeding dog food dispensers should be used, as this allows *The Dog to Choose* when he eats.)
5. Humans must not let the dog go through any doorways first. Or up or down the stairs first. Dogs must always go through the doorways or up and down stairs *After* the humans, as the leader of the pack always goes first. If the dog does not stay behind the humans, the dog must be told to "stay" and given the command to "come" after all humans have passed through. (Read [Training](#) to find out the necessary basic commands all dogs should know. These commands are vital in the communication between you and your dog and should always be taught.)
6. When you have left the house or the room, even for a minute and come back in the room, ignore the dog for a few minutes.
7. A simple obedience command such as "Sit" should be given before any pleasurable interaction with the dog. (i.e. play session, petting, feeding or a walk etc...) The children should give the dogs commands at least once a day and reward with a treat when the command is followed. A simple "Sit" will do. No treat should be awarded if the dog does not follow the command. Show your dog he does not get anything for free. His food, water, treats, even praise/love have to be earned by doing something. Even something as little as sit, come, or making him wait for the treat while you hold it in front of him. Make sure the dog takes the treat from your hands gently. Do not tolerate a mouthy dog.
8. You should not lay on the floor to watch TV when the dog is around and no one should roll around the floor playing with the dogs, as a human should never put himself in an equal or lesser height position than the dog.
9. You are the one who greets newcomers first, the dog is the last who gets attention (the pack leader is the one who greets newcomers and lets the rest know when it is safe to greet the newcomer)
10. If a dog is laying in your path, do not walk around the dog, either make the dog move or step over the dog.
11. During the time you are establishing your higher pack position, no hugs should be given to the dog by you, as a dominant dog may consider this a challenge of power.
12. If you establish eye contact with the dog, the dog must avert his gaze first. If the human averts first this reinforces the dogs higher power position. Tell the children *Not* to have staring contest with the dog, as if they avert or blink first, it will only reinforce, in the dogs mind, that *He* is Top Dog.
13. Ideally dogs should not sleep in your bed. In the dog world the most comfortable place to sleep is reserved for the higher members of the pack. If a

dog is allowed to sleep on the bed, the dog must be invited up and not be allowed to push the humans out of their way. Making them sleep at the foot of the bed rather than for example on your pillow is best.

14. Dogs must never be allowed to mouth or bite anyone at any time, including in play.

15. Any attention given to the dog, including petting should be given when the *Human* decides attention is to be given (absolutely *No Petting* when the dog nudges or paws you or your hand. This would be letting the dog decide and reinforcing, in his mind, that he is higher on the scale than the human.)

16. Games of fetch or play with toys must be *Started* and *Ended* by the *Human*.

17. Very dominant dogs who have a problem with growling should not be allowed to lie on your furniture, as the leader of the pack always gets the most comfortable spot. Dogs belong on the floor. If you do decide to allow your dog on the furniture, you must be the one who decides when he is allowed up and you must be the one who decides when he is to get off, by inviting him and telling him to get down.

18. No tug-of-war , as this is a game of power and you may lose the game giving the dog a reinforcement (in the dog's mind) of top dog.

19. Dogs need to be taught a "Drop it" or release command. Any objects the dog has in his possession should be able to be taken away by all humans.

20. Dogs own no possessions, everything belongs to the humans. They are all on "loan" from the human family. You should be able to handle or remove any item at all times from the dog with no problems from the dog. Even if you are taking a chicken bone out of the dog's mouth.

21. Dogs should not be allowed to pull on the leash. When they do this they are leading the way and it is the humans that need to lead the way and show they're higher up in the pack order. (In the wild, the leader of the pack always leads the way; the leader leads the hunt.)

22. When you put his food dish down, he must wait until you give the "OK" to eat it. Place his food on the ground and tell him to wait. If he darts at the food, block him with your body. You can point at him and tell him, "No, Wait" however do not speak much. Dogs are, for the most part, silent communicators. They feel one another's energy and your dog can feel yours. Yes, your dog can read your emotions. So stand tall and think "Big" and stay confident. do not be nervous, your dog will sense this and assume you as weak. It is this weakness that triggers a dog to try and take over (for the good of the pack, the pack needs a strong leader). Give the dog a command before giving them their food. If a dog

does not follow the command (i.e. to sit), he does not eat. Try again in about 20 minutes or longer. Repeat this until the dog listens to the command. When your dog calms down and waits patiently, (ears set back, head lowered even slightly, laying down is good if he is relaxed with his ears back, No signs of growling on his face) invite him to eat his food. The people in the family the dog growls at should feed the dog the majority of the time.

23. Small dogs or puppies who demand to be picked up or put down should *Not* get what they want until they sit or do another acceptable quiet behavior. They should not be put down unless they are settled quietly in your arms.

24. Dogs should *Never* be left unsupervised with children or *Anyone* who cannot maintain leadership over the dog.

25. To reinforce your position even more, you can make your dog lie down and stay there for 20 to 30 minutes a day. Tell him to lie down, then tell him to stay. If he tries to get up, correct him.

26. Last but certainly not least... when you are around your dog avoid emotions such as fear, anxiety, harshness or nervousness. Your dog can sense these emotions and will see you as weak. This will escalate your problem as your dog feels an even stronger need to be your leader. Think Big and Powerful and be calm, assertive, and consistent. Remember, there is no hiding our emotions from our dogs. They can in a sense, read our minds, in reading our emotions. This energy is the universal language of animals. Talk less, using more body language. Picture yourself, in your own mind as big, powerful and very sure of yourself. Pull your shoulders back and stand up straight. Your dog will feel this. This is your number one resource when it comes to communicating with your dog. Your dog will be happy and secure knowing he has a strong pack leader to care for him.

By incorporating all these behaviors in his normal day your dog will realize that you the human are alpha over him and he is beneath you. Obedience exercises and classes are great and very useful, however, obedience training alone does not address pack behavior problems.