

It is not Satan ... it's just a puppy!

by Patty Janssen

This is the 8th article of the series by the Educational Committee. The articles of this series continue to be available in the library on the Members Only part of the ASA website.

Are you a first time puppy owner? Or has it been a while since you owned one? Some behavior, such as nipping, biting, jumping, barking, just to name a few, can be quite annoying, when not properly understood and corrected.



FIRST, a few basic rules that apply to almost all behavior. When you remember these rules it will make you understand your dog better and help you discourage unwanted behavior.

1. Dogs do what is most rewarding to them. They do not think in terms of good dog, bad dog; but in terms of *what is in it for me?*
2. When behavior is rewarded, it will be repeated and when it is repeated it becomes ingrained. At that point your dog does not even know why he is doing this anymore, but it has always been a good thing, so he will keep doing it.
3. A dog is a pack animal and loves interaction. He will do whatever gets the most interaction, whether positive or negative; any kind of interaction is **BETTER THEN BEING IGNORED**. For example: Your dog is lying nicely by your feet, chewing his toy and being a good dog, while you are watching TV. You ignore this behavior, because you take it for granted. Then, the dog jumps on you and barks and you tell him: 'NO, OFF!' Guess which behavior will get more attention and which is most likely to be repeated?
4. Timing is very important. You have 3 seconds to reward or discipline behavior. Focus not only on what you don't want; but also on what you do want. Example: You do not want your dog to jump. Well, what **DO** you want? Instead of saying: 'I don't want my dog to jump!', you could say: 'I would like my dog to sit for greeting.' By focusing on the positive, you are more likely to get

the behavior you want.

Q: Do all rewards come from you?

A: NO! You left a pork chop on the counter and your dog jumps to get it. Very rewarding! (Dog thinks: Let's do it again!) and you now have a counter surfing dog. You did not give the dog the pork chop but he got it anyway.

SECOND, a few tips how to discourage certain behavior.

NIPPING AND BITING: A growing puppy nips for a number of reasons: *Teething, playing and discovering the world* by putting things in his mouth. Whatever the reason, teeth on humans is never acceptable.

Teething: When your puppy's gums are swollen, give him proper chew toys, or – what can really help- is something cold, such as flavored ice cubes (plain yoghurt, diluted apple juice, salt free chicken broth) or get a puppy Kong, and put a carrot stick in the hole. Add some kibble, cooked chicken, or blueberries, mixed with a little yoghurt or canned pumpkin and freeze it. Let your pup chew on the frozen Kong; it will bring the swelling down and keep your pup busy.

Playing. When puppies play with each other they mouth each other, it is just natural. But they need to learn not to do it to us.

When a puppy starts chewing you, let out a high squeak: OUCH! Like one pup might do to another when they are being too rough. Or, gently push your hand back, and the pup will spit your hand out. Do not pull your hand away abruptly -remember a Staby has a strong prey drive- so when something moves, your pup will want to chase it.

If you feel that your dog is not letting up, you can try the 3-strikes-you're-out rule. How does this work? Well, you probably have noticed that your pup has an hour or so a day when he goes totally crazy (the witch

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or "totally insane" hour). When it is that time, put a light weight leash on his flat collar and let him drag it around, keep a toy handy and when the pup starts biting you, say 'eh-eh' in a firm voice, and give his toy. If he tries to bite you again - strike two - 'eh-eh' and once again give the toy. If he jumps a third time, pick up the leash and put the dog in time-out. Do not talk and do not touch the dog. Remember, the worst thing you can do is interact with him. By picking up the leash and ignoring the dog, time-out has begun. Time-outs last 30 sec. or until the dog is calm. Why the leash? Because if you grab the collar you are rewarding behavior, you interact. When grabbing the collar, you must touch the pup AND this gives the puppy another opportunity to nip at you.

Two things you should not do:

1. Play fight. You teach your dog it is ok to put teeth on people (pack members),
2. Holding the dog's mouth shut.

Discovering the world: During the puppy stage, put valuables away, shoes in the closet and Barbie in the toy box. Most of all, get excited and reward your dog when he grabs things he is allowed to play with. Remember, dogs will do what gets them the most interaction, and if grabbing Barbie gets him nowhere (everybody ignore the dog), but grabbing his ball will make you happy, then the dog will want the ball rather than Barbie.

JUMPING: Jumping is one of the hardest things to undo, because this is behavior that is unintentionally rewarded. When your dog jumps on a stranger and the stranger says: "I don't mind" and pets your dog, the behavior is rewarded. When you come home and react to the dog right away, by saying "I missed you too!" or "No, get off me!" you interact with the dog.

Remember rule 3?

When teaching a dog not to jump on people, everybody has to be on the same page and very strict.

Again, focus on what you DO want, rather than what you do not want, and you are more likely to implant

the behavior you want. Example: you want four paws on the floor, or the dog to sit. Ignore the behavior you don't want by turning your back. Wait for the 4 paws to be on the floor and then calmly greet the dog.

When your dog jumps on people and they say: 'I don't mind', tell them you do mind and ask them to ignore the dog until he sits.

When you expect guests, put the leash on your dog and let him drag it around. When guests arrive and the dog gets excited, pick up the leash and slowly walk away and let your dog calm down. Do this instead of starting chaos by saying "No! Off!" and running around trying to catch the dog. When the dog has calmed down, let him walk up your guests. Tell your guests to ignore your dog unless he is calm. You could give everyone a treat and let them give it when he greets them nicely. Tell people to give the treat under handed. Coming from over the dog's head might encourage him to jump up to get the treat.

Two things you should NOT do:

Encourage your dog to jump on you. When you are training your dog not to jump on others, you must be strict; it cannot be okay one moment and not the next.

When your dog jumps up, do not step back: Many people try to correct jumping by taking a step back and pushing down on the dog. This is just inviting your dog to jump right back up. Your dog will see this as an invitation to move into your space, and pushing down can be interpreted as play; when dogs play with each other they constantly push each other.

Tip: Try to say the word 'Off', rather than 'Down', 'Down' is often used as a command to lie down. 'Off' sounds sharper. When you say 'off', point at the ground, dogs look at where you are pointing and when a dog looks down, he most likely will not be jumping up.

We hope these pointers will help you; if you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact a member of the education committee. Or, refer to past articles on our member's only web site.

