

Dogs – consideration for others



**Revised
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pdsa responsible pet care

Dogs – consideration for others

What is it?

Dogs are an important part of many people's lives, but a disobedient or destructive dog, or a dog that is not cleaned up after, can become a nuisance and even a danger to people or other animals. Allowing your dog to chase, jump up or be aggressive can cause fear in others. These are things that responsible pet owners should consider and think about, preferably early in their dog's life to avoid later problems.

Aggression

A frightened or distressed animal may become aggressive. If your dog's aggression is a reaction to pain, you should take it to a vet as soon as possible.



If your dog is aggressive because it is scared or threatened by something that may not actually be dangerous, such as people cycling in the park, you should try to train your dog to accept this as part of its everyday environment.

To prevent this type of behaviour, put your dog on a lead and introduce it in a controlled way to whatever it views as a threat or danger. Let the dog see the perceived threat or danger from a distance, and gradually bring the 'threat' and the dog closer together.

Each time your dog tolerates or does not react to the 'threat', reward them with a savoury treat or attention. Over time, your dog will begin to accept the situation. Your dog will pick up anxiety from you, so it is important that you always remain calm during this training.

Aggression tends to be more common in male animals due to the hormone testosterone. Some types of aggression may be reduced after castration, an operation to remove the testicles. Your dog's veterinary surgeon will advise you about this.

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Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Owners of certain breed types, for example Pit Bull Terrier-type dogs, have legal responsibilities under The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. The Act states that these owners have to comply with specific requirements and that the particulars of the dog must be reported to the police. The specific requirements for owners include keeping the dog muzzled and on a lead at all times in a public place, having third-party insurance for the dog and having the dog permanently identified and neutered.

Further information for owners is available from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs via their website www.defra.gov.uk or from their telephone helpline 08459 33 55 77.

Chasing

It is natural behaviour for some dogs to chase other animals, such as cats, squirrels and rabbits, but this can be upsetting to other people and may cause accidents.

It is relatively easy to direct this natural chasing behaviour in young dogs towards pursuing toys instead of other animals. Unfortunately, older dogs can

sometimes be harder to retrain and may require specialist coaching. For example, to train your dog not to chase joggers, start off with your dog on a lead. Let some joggers run past at a safe distance, while telling your dog to 'sit'. Hold a savoury treat in your hands to make sure that your dog pays close attention. Reward your dog with the treat for the correct behaviour.

You can encourage your dog to accept cats by introducing it to a cat in a supervised and controlled environment. Your dog should be on a lead, and, should it start to chase the cat, pull the lead quickly but gently. You could also shake a tin containing pebbles (noisy tin) to distract your dog. Reward your dog every time its behaviour is acceptable.



Jumping up

Although jumping up is not so much of a problem in young puppies or small dogs, it can be dangerous in adult

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or larger breeds of dogs, as they can knock people over. To prevent your dog from jumping up, it is best to greet it at its own level. Focus your dog's attention on your hands rather than on your face by concealing a savoury treat or toy in your hand. If your dog continues to jump up, distract it by shaking the noisy tin. Once your dog has all four feet on the ground, reward it.

If this technique fails and your dog continues to jump up, turn away from your dog and ignore it when it jumps, folding your arms and looking up into the air. Once your dog is back on all four feet and is calmer, then you can greet it since attention should only be given on your terms.

To prevent your dog from jumping up at visitors, make your dog wait until you've got through the front door and taken off your coat before you greet it.

Excessive barking

Dogs communicate distress, curiosity, play and threat using their bark. It is quite normal for dogs to bark from time to time, but it is a problem if they bark continually for no apparent reason. If you leave your dog alone for a long period, it may bark because it is upset, which can annoy neighbours. Such



dogs need to understand that their owner will eventually return. Leave your dog alone for short periods at first and eventually it will understand that you always come back and there is no need for it to be anxious.

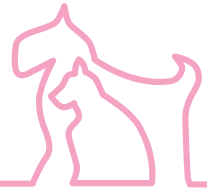
Your vet can advise you about how to overcome a dog's separation anxiety.

One of the best ways to prevent excessive barking is training your dog to 'bark' and 'not bark' on command. You can do this by saying 'speak' when your dog barks, or 'shush' when your dog is quiet. Give your dog a savoury treat each time it obeys your commands.

Cleaning up after your dog

Dog faeces can cause problems on pavements as well as in parks, play areas and sports grounds. Dog mess is unpleasant, unhygienic and unsightly and can spread diseases such as *Toxocara*, a parasitic worm that can cause blindness in humans.

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Responsible dog owners should always clean up after their dog and dispose of the mess properly. This is a legal requirement, which means that dog owners should always carry with them 'pooper scoopers' or plastic bags when they go out for a walk. The bag should then be put into the special bins that are located in parks and other areas. If there are none of these bins available, completely seal your dog's mess in the bag and dispose of it carefully when you get home.

Unsupervised dogs

Dogs should never be allowed out on their own and should only be let off the lead when it is absolutely safe. They are naturally pack animals and if allowed out off the lead may meet dogs in a similar situation, which can cause a nuisance and even accidents both to themselves and others.

Insurance

Pet insurance is an important consideration for owners when thinking about their liability for a pet's behaviour. Claims for compensation are becoming increasingly common and it is

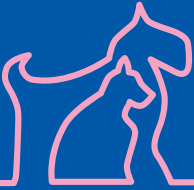
a good idea for pet owners to insure themselves in case their dog causes damage to someone else or their property. It is best to shop around to make sure that any insurance policy is suitable for your pet and your needs.

Why do it?

Consideration for others is a vital part of responsible pet ownership. It involves making sure that other people aren't caused offence or fear by your pet's behaviour.

Ideally, it's about others liking your pet as much as you do!

Nearly all dogs can be trained to fit in with society, and the saying 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' is not strictly true. While training an older dog can sometimes be more challenging and take longer than training puppies, it is not impossible. The extra effort required is well worth it, as you will have a well-behaved and well-liked pet.



PDSA vets advise:

“Consideration for others is a vital part of responsible pet ownership.”

To find out if you qualify for PDSA veterinary care,
freephone **0800 731 2502**.

For more information on PDSA and its work,
email: **info@pdsa.org.uk**
freephone: **0800 917 2509**
visit: **www.pdsa.org.uk**

PDSA Head Office
Whitechapel Way
Priorslee, Telford
Shropshire TF2 9PQ

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for pets in need of vets