

# 10 most common missteps dog owners make.

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During my career as a dog trainer and a person who has been involved with dogs and their owners I have dealt with many unwanted dog behaviours.

In my many years of experience, I've found that most unwanted behaviours are actually the result of mistakes on the part of the owners and that many unwanted dog behaviours are easily preventable. Here's a list of the 10 most common mistakes that dog owners often make which could stop **common** problem behaviours.

## **1- Letting Your Dog Walk You**

A poorly trained dog can pull you over while you're out for a stroll. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), tens of thousands of people end up in the ER every year because of pet-related falls. Many of these falls occur during walks — either when a person trips over a dog or is pulled or pushed by one. Obedience training is the best way to make sure your pooch doesn't take you down during the walk.

## **2- Keeping the Food Bowl Full or free feed**

With the best intentions, some people keep their pets' food bowls full at all times. This is one of the most common mistakes pet owners make. The problem is that dogs often eat more than they need. If food is constantly available, they will take in too many calories and put on too much weight. To avoid this, follow the suggestions on the pet food label or ask your vet for guidance. Free feeding can also suggest to your dog that unlimited food access is a leadership right and this may eventually lead to other behaviour problems.

## **3- Providing Too Little Exercise**

Just like people, pets need exercise to stay healthy. Couch potato pets are prone to obesity, which raises their risk of diabetes, heart disease, and joint problems. The right amount of exercise for a dog depends on the breed and size, but I recommend at least a half-hour each day. Taking brisk walks with your dog can help you get in shape, too. Providing enough exercise also removes pent up and un-wanted energy of your dog.

## **4- Misreading Body Language**

Sure, you love your dog. But do you really understand him? If you think a wagging tail is always a good sign, you could be in for a nasty surprise. When a dog wants to threaten someone, he may hold his tail high and wave it stiffly back and forth. Mistake this warning for a sign of playfulness and you could get bitten. To avoid misunderstandings, learn about your dog's body language by talking to Saro or taking a course.

### **5- Providing Too Little Attention or Too Much Attention**

Just like children, your pets will get bored if you don't play with them and if they don't get enough mental and physical stimulations. And boredom can lead to troublesome behaviors like chewing, digging, whining and excessive barking. Fight boredom by hiding treats for your pets to find around the house. Provide toys; teach dogs to play fetch, tug-of-war, or hide-and-seek. Also, paying too much attention to your dog 24/7 will cause your dog to become overly dependent on you for everything. Overly attached dogs often have low confidence levels and will develop stressful separation anxiety behaviour over time.

### **6- Not Socializing Young dogs with people**

It's important to provide puppies with positive human interaction during their first four months and on. This includes handling and play that fosters trust in people. Reputable breeders will begin this interaction, and you can continue the process when you bring your dog home. To develop a strong bond, play with your new puppy every day. Take your dog everywhere and get them accustomed to a wide variety of people.

### **7- Not socializing dogs with different environments**

Puppies and dogs in general need to be comfortable dealing with a wide variety of everyday situations. These include; other dogs, people of all ages and sizes, different places and objects of all kinds. Take your dog anywhere you can at any time will help create a dog with high confidence level.

### **8- Not Training your dog**

Dogs need constant training starting from the time they enter a human world. Training opens up a communication system between you and the dog and without it there are many ways that both humans and dog get lost in translation. If you have taken a training course in the past, you still need to keep on training (practicing) on daily basis always. All dogs and dog owners need refresher courses no matter how old the dogs are or how experienced the owners are.

### **9- Sharing Affection at the wrong time and the wrong place**

Dog owners tend to shower their dogs with affection at all times which cause instability and lack of confidence in both dogs and the owners. A dog that gets affection at all times will often interpret this as a sign of his/her superiority over the owner. Treat affection as a reward and use it often but only when deserved.

### **10- Not correcting bad behaviours**

Owners often ignore bad behaviour or worse still, don't correct their dogs enough or at all. People need to say "NO" each and every time their dogs misbehave. If you ignore your dog's inappropriate behaviour, your dog will not only continue to do it but may even escalate its frequency and duration. Learn to correct your dog properly so he/she doesn't interpret your actions as reward. If you are unsure about how to correct, I'd be happy to help you understand the difference.

**For expert, one-on-one or group training, please contact Saro at Jonah's Ark Doggie Playcare & Training.**

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