

Training Your Dog

There are three reasons why it's important to train your dog. The first of these is simple; because it's your responsibility. You need to make sure that your dog can behave safely, and is not going to be either a nuisance or a danger to the general public.

The second reason is because it's in your dog's interest. The more confidence you have in your dog's behaviour, the more freedom you're likely to give him. A dog that is allowed to roam off-lead in the garden or on walks has a much better quality of life than one who isn't.

You may find the third reason more persuasive. Not only is training your dog in the public interest and your dog's interest... it's also in your interest! A well trained dog will be better behaved at home, and will respond in a more positive way to you and other members of your family. Make the effort to train your dog well, and he will be an asset to your daily life, not a hindrance!

Most dogs are trained by their owners. There are many different levels of training, and it's up to you how much you choose to do. You may decide to just teach your dog basic obedience, such as coming when called, or not fussing around the dinner table. Some owners go further and treat training as a hobby, even entering their dogs in competitions.

If you do decide to train your dog yourself, to whatever level, remember you're not alone. There are a lot of resources available to help, and you could get advice from a professional dog trainer. If you need help, ask for it!

Below, we've shared some tips for successful dog training.

Start early

Training a dog is easier the younger they are. Your new family member may be cute when he first arrives, but don't let him get away with unacceptable behaviour. The sooner you're able to start training him, the faster he'll learn.

Get his attention

When you're training a dog, it's vital to make sure you have his full attention! Get and maintain eye contact with your dog during training.

Balance training and rewarding

One of the best ways to train your dog is to use a positive reward technique. This means that you reward your dog for good behaviour – normally by using a dog treat. When he behaves badly, try to interrupt or divert him rather than punishing him.

Be consistent

Whatever method you choose for training your dog, it's important to stick with it! Dog training will only work if everyone involved is consistent. Make sure family members are

using the same techniques, and that your training efforts are being reinforced, not undermined.

Be quick

When you're rewarding or punishing behaviour, those rewards or punishments need to be given within a second of the behaviour taking place. Any slower, and the dog won't know what he is being rewarded or punished for.

Offer alternatives to bad behaviour

Remember that training your dog is supposed to be mutually beneficial. It's fine to train your dog not to play in a way that is harmful to itself or other animals (such as chasing squirrels) but make sure you encourage other types of play (such as chasing tennis balls).

Dog training is important, but it's also essential to have a loving relationship with your dog. Make sure you don't overdo it with the training, and that you also take plenty of time to bond. You can never give too many cuddles!