

## How Do I Get My Dog To Do What I Ask? Four Ways to Modify Behavior

### 1. Positive Attention

- ❖ Any time your dog does anything you like and want him to continue doing, give him positive attention (i.e., chewing on the appropriate toy, doing something cute, and every time your dog complies with what you ask him to do [sit, down, wait, etc.]).
  - The moment your dog stops an unwanted behavior give praise (leaves the cat alone, stops chewing on an inappropriate item, removes feet from the table top, etc.).

### 2. Interrupt and Redirect

- ❖ When you want your dog to 'disengage' from something you don't want him to engage with (i.e., chewing the wrong item, feet on the table, walking toward something inappropriate) make a short, sharp sound with your voice (i.e., Ah! or Hey! with a hand clap if needed).
  - This startles your dog, and you should get that "deer in the headlights" look. At that moment, praise your dog for disengaging.
  - Sometimes this is all you need to do to get your dog to leave something alone, but your dog may return to the source of interest, which means you will interrupt your dog again, praise when he stops engaging, and redirect him to do something else (i.e., ask him to sit, give him appropriate chew toy, ask him to come over to you, etc.).
- ❖ The 'startle' sound is much more effective than saying 'no.' He'll just naturally respond to the startle sound, but over time may tune you out when you say no.

### 3. Ignore

- ❖ Ignore any behavior(s) you want to disappear forever (i.e., jumping on you without an invitation, demanding attention by barking at you, demanding you interact with him by pawing, leaning, bumping, placing a toy in your lap, putting his head in your lap to be petted, jumping up toward your face, etc.).
- ❖ It is *VERY* important that you initiate all interactions with your dog. This is what a dog in charge does with other dogs (see the handout "Interactions and Personal Space" for details regarding interacting with your dog and degrees of responses to take).
  - In other words, your dog is to be ignored by you until you initiate contact. This is exactly how dogs interact, and it is very effective in teaching your dog to respect your personal space and ultimately listen to you much more attentively.

### 4. Negative Attention

- ❖ Giving attention to your dog in a negative way when he is doing something you don't like (e.g., yelling at him to get off of you, repeating his name several times to get him to stop doing something, chasing him when he grabs something he's not supposed to have so that you will chase him, etc.). This type of attention tends to be what most humans give their dogs; however, it is the one that should be **ELIMINATED** from your relationship with your dog.
- ❖ After all, negative attention is still attention, and your dog will take what he can get. If you replace negative attention with interrupt/redirect and ignore, and then add in positive attention at every opportunity, your dog will soon start to behave in a way that works for both of you.

#### A very effective training motto for life

When you want your dog to comply, say your command or interruptive sound only one time, give your dog two seconds to comply, and if he doesn't, immediately (and always) take action (i.e., lure him into a sit or down [rather than repeating the command several times], walk toward him to move him away from something if he ignores your interruptive sound, etc.).

By providing consistent, fair and loving leadership, you will find that you will both be happier and enjoy your relationship in ways that work for everyone!