

INTERACTIONS AND PERSONAL SPACE

Have you ever watched two or more dogs interact with one another? What you will notice is that the dog that is the leader is the one that ignores the other dog(s) until he/she decides it's time to interact. As the leader of your 'pack,' it is your job to decide when interactions will or won't occur. If a dog is trying to initiate interaction from the leader dog, that leader dog will turn his head or body away, ignoring the dog trying to engage with him. If he continues to pester the leader, the leader will make his message more clear by staring, growling/snarling and even chasing the dog away. Then the leader will go right back to doing what he was doing. We can imitate much of this type of interaction with our dogs. It will make sense to them because this is what they do with each other, and it will work so much better than trying to do things in our 'human' way, which doesn't make as much sense to dogs.

1. When your dog leans on you, brushes against you, steps on you, puts his head in your lap to be petted, or brings you a toy to play, he is deciding when things are to happen and/or disrespecting your personal space. When your dog initiates any interaction, decline the offer by moving him away, saying nothing and ignore. If you start talking to him when you're moving him away from you, you're giving him negative attention, which is still attention! If you move him away with your hands, be sure your body moves toward your dog at the same time. Wait long enough so that he isn't seeking attention from you (about 10 seconds), then if YOU want, invite your dog over to do something with you. It is perfectly fine to invite your dog to touch you or interact with you at any time, but ONLY when YOU say so! Be 100% consistent on this. Do the bump/move away and ignore 3 times. If your dog continues to seek attention, go to #2 below.
2. When your dog comes back the fourth time wanting to interact with you, give your dog a hard stare (even scowling at the same time) and use a low, growling-type voice, saying something like "Stop it" or "Knock it off" as you move your dog away from you, even standing up and walking into him to really make your point, then immediately ignore him. *Be sure to keep the verbal "growling" short and effective.* You really want to convey the message that your dog has crossed the line. This is how dogs communicate with one another, and your dog will definitely get the message. Do this 1-2 times. If that isn't effective, it's time for your dog to go into a time out (#3 below)
3. **Time-Outs** – It is important to be prepared ahead of time in case a time out is needed. In the room(s) that you are in most often, attach a leash (made of chain preferably to avoid chewing) to something very secure so that your dog won't be able to go anywhere. You can also use a baby gate, but it needs to always be handy in case you need it for a time out. It is absolutely necessary that you put your dog in his time out where he can still see you ignoring him (someplace safe where you can keep your eye on your dog, or put him in an area where your dog cannot get to you but can still see you). If you put him where he can't see you, after 5 seconds he'll start trying to get back in or will go off and do something else. Remember, dogs have to receive feedback from you as the behavior is occurring in order to understand what you expect. You have up to 3-5 seconds immediately after the behavior has occurred, but no more than that!
 - ❖ There will be times you will skip numbers 1 and 2 altogether. If your dog is completely obnoxious and 'over the top' (i.e., launching at you, constantly nipping at you, picking at you and then running away, uses your lap as a landing pad, etc.) *Do the time-out exercise every time needed.*
 - ❖ While your dog is engaged in the inappropriate behavior, in a happy tone "time out" and take your dog to the anchored leash or area you will be putting him in.
 - Ignore your dog completely for about 30 seconds, then release (*as long as he's not crying or barking*). Don't look at, talk to, or give food/treats/toys while he's in a time out. If your dog is still barking or crying after the 30 seconds, you will have to wait until you have at least 5 seconds of quiet before releasing him. If you release him and he's still vocalizing, he will think the noise he is making helped get him released! Absence of vocalizing for 5 seconds is what will get him released. **Note:** If the dog cannot be moved by the owner because he's too large or owner has a physical reason, then the owner leaves the dog and shuts a door in his face. Stay behind the door for 30 seconds, then return.