

Dog Obedience 101

by Cathy Fredrickson



One of the most frequent and varied questions asked about obedience always comes down to the same answer. Three common complaints are: "My two dogs have started fighting"; "My dog growled at me"; "My dog won't come when called." These behavior problems are all caused by one root problem: "Who's the boss". To fix these problems first you must understand there is no democracy in the dog's world. It's all about who's first. Hopefully as the owner you are first then there is an established hierarchy. If there isn't one, you must take control and establish the hierarchy. If you try to make two dogs equal they will have to fight. You are forcing them to fight to establish order.

To establish order in your home is very simple. Let's say your two dogs are called Sugar, a three-year-old female and Precious, a two-year-old male. Sugar was there first thus she is alpha or first; Precious is second. Sugar is fed first, greeted first and let out the door first. You can spend five minutes with Sugar and hours with Precious. Sugar will not care because she was first as alpha dog. It is Sugar's responsibility to take care of Precious. Result - no fighting.

Now problem #2: Your dog growls at you. Why? Because through your actions you have conveyed to the dog he is alpha and you're second. It's his job to discipline you if you're not following his rules. How to change? Simple, consider the steps taken to establish who is alpha in the first example. Now apply these to yourself: you're out the door first, you will give him attention at your discretion and not his. If he wants something, ask him to follow a command first such as, sit or lay down. If you have established yourself as alpha, the third problem of coming when called solves itself, since dogs follow the leader and obey the alpha.

Does it seem too simple? It is. Dogs are not as complicated as we would like to think. These are basic guidelines and apply in most cases. There are exceptions that may require consulting your veterinarian or a dog trainer/behaviorist.

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