



and by learning to read your dog's body language. If your dog has already started to show aggression, you should consult your vet or a behaviourist and consider putting a muzzle on your dog in situations where he is likely to be aggressive.

Getting advice

If you need to have your dog assessed you should ask your vet to refer you to a behaviour specialist.

Be a responsible owner and neuter your dog – it's simply the best choice for you and your pet.

If you are interested in rehoming a dog, supporting Dogs Trust or for more information and factsheets about all aspects of dog ownership, please visit www.dogstrust.org.uk or contact:

**Dogs Trust
17 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7RQ**

Tel: 020 7837 0006

**Reg. Charity Numbers: 227523
and SC037843**

- **Fears and phobias:** dogs that are not socialised effectively at a young age can develop fears of certain experiences, especially loud noises such as fireworks. Thorough socialisation of puppies should prevent common fears developing, but if your dog is already frightened of noises or situations some positive, reward-based training will help them cope. For more severe phobias, your vet or a behaviourist will be able to help.
- **Aggression:** dogs may show aggression for many reasons, usually because they feel threatened or that their 'resources' (e.g. toys, food etc) are in danger. Dogs that are in pain or ill may also growl or even bite so we must always be aware of how our dogs are feeling and be sensitive to this. You can prevent aggressive behaviours with proper socialisation of puppies,

Good Dog Behaviour – An Owner's Guide



Every dog owner wants a well behaved, happy dog. However, we all need to put in some effort to achieve this! The way that a dog behaves is more to do with how it is brought up than anything else, including its breed. It is particularly important that puppies up to the age of 12 weeks (the socialisation period) are introduced to a wide range of situations.

How to prevent common behaviour problems

Socialisation

Getting your dog used to strange experiences, places, other animals and people is very important in order to prevent your dog being scared of them in the future. Socialisation is essential for all puppies and you should start as soon as possible with unfamiliar objects in your house. Once your vet says your puppy can go to public areas you can get them out and about and meeting people and other dogs in safe environments is the best way to raise a happy, friendly dog that you will be able to take anywhere.



Training

You should start training your new dog or puppy as soon as they have settled into their new home – whatever their age. Using rewards in training will help your dog to link good behaviour with something nice happening, and will encourage them to behave well again and again. This is much more effective than punishing him for doing something 'bad' which will make him scared of you and will not encourage a good relationship between you.

Beating boredom

Some dogs just have to be busy – all the time. If they don't have enough to do to occupy themselves at home they will get bored and they may resort to destructive or antisocial behaviour to amuse themselves. You can prevent your dog getting too bored at home by leaving 'challenges' for him such as hidden treats or Kong toys filled with food around the house. When you take your dog for walks, use games or toys to exercise him further. Why not try retrieving games or hide and seek to use both his mind and body to

the full? If your dog is really energetic you can also look for activity clubs in your area and try out agility, flyball or obedience training to make full use of that mental and physical energy.

Understanding dog behaviour

Understanding why dogs behave the way they do will help you predict and manage your dog's behaviour, so you will always feel in control.

- **Training:** dogs need to be properly trained (and housetrained!) to avoid problems developing. Attending a good training class and being consistent with your training will lead to a happier, better behaved pet.

- **Attention-seeking:** dogs that crave attention see any reaction from their owner as a reward in itself, even if they are being told off. They will do anything they can to focus your attention on them. Whining, barking and other tricks can be discouraged by ignoring them, although you will need a strong nerve to do this!



Photo by Andy Catterall