

The Happy Hound

Havin' Fun with Tricks & Good Manners!

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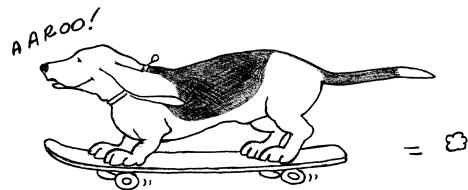
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Boundaries

An indispensable element to any happy and healthy relationship is a respect of individual boundaries. A happy, confident dog does not have to be in your lap ALL the time (some of the time is nice, but not all).

As well, it's important for a dog to know that she can be on her own for limited periods of time.

Dogs are not born with an innate sense of other people's boundaries. To a small dog especially, a big house make look more like unknown lands to explore—filled with vast expanses to urinate and defecate in as well as hidden caves crying for search and destroy missions. It's not "my home is your home" but rather "Hey!!!! What do you think I can do with this????"

It takes time for a dog to figure out what's appropriate and what isn't and it's unfair to let her figure it out for herself when you can be there to supervise and tell her.

Your new dog (or foster dog) needs to learn the rules gradually while being set up for success at each turn. "Bad" behaviors are inherently rewarding, you need to make sure she doesn't get to practice them at all.

There are several indispensable tools to use for teaching a dog boundaries. Among them are:

- * Crates;
- * Tethers;
- * X-pens; and
- * Dog beds.

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Crates are to be used when you can't be supervising your new dog. If you have to leave the house, the room, take a phone call, cook dinner and turn your back...the crate can be your best tool.

As well, the crate can be used as a positive time-out when you and your pooch need a break from each other. If your dog is misbehaving, put him in the crate, with a treat. Does that mean that you are using the crate as punishment? Using the treat as a reward for misbehaving? No. Dog's live in the moment. The VERY moment. So, the moment you remove your dog from a situation in which he is misbehaving, THAT's the punishment. Making that fun (albeit bad) behavior stop. Now the dog's in a new moment. The new moment is called "being in your crate." He gets a treat. Does he have to like being in the crate at that moment? No. But that's what he gets to do, and if he's smart, he'll enjoy his treat.

Never put your dog in the crate while you are acting out your anger at the dog. This is the South. Smile. Think to yourself something like, "Well, bless your pointy li'l head, I guess you're jus' dying to be in your crate! Here you go darlin'!" Say to your dog "Too bad! It's looking like a Time Out!"

Another great management tool is a **tether**. What's a tether? A leash, a short bit of coated cable, a piece of string—one end attached to the dog, the other end attached to an immovable object. If you use a leash, make sure it's a cheap one until you determine if your dog is a chewer or not. You can attach the tether to yourself, a door, a washing machine, an eye-bolt in the wall placed there for just that purpose.

When do you tether? When you want your dog to be around you, but not in your way. Include a **comfy dog bed** in the tether spot and then toss your dog some treats when she gets bored and lays down to sulk. A sulking dog is a well-behaved dog and deserves a treat!

Another great tool for boundary control is an **x-pen**. I love these and have cut a remnant sheet of linoleum (\$19.99 at Home Depot), edged with duct tape and placed it underneath. This is possibly your best house-training tool...especially if your living space is mostly carpeted. When do you use the x-pen? In the same situations that you would use a tether. ONLY when you are around. The key to the x-pen is to never let your dog get so bored or frustrated that he figures out how to climb out of it and run rampant through the house. A comfy dog bed and nifty toys will help.

When your dog comes home with you, figure out which room(s) you'll be doing most of your living in for the first few weeks. Let him explore these rooms on leash, then take him outside to relieve himself. Reward him OUTSIDE on the spot for relieving himself there instead of inside.

For the first day or so, the dog is allowed to be moving freely about the room for small increments of **supervised** time (5-10) minutes. And then is put back on tether, in the x-pen, or even in the crate for some quiet time. Over the next few days, allow your dog ever increasing periods of free time in the room (leave the leash on so that you have an easy-access handle in case you need to grab him quickly). Once your dog is fine for an HOUR of supervised time in the one room (with no accidents)...feel free to expand his horizons and start introducing another room. Since this new room is a completely new context, start back at 5-10 minutes of supervised hanging out time in the new room, and build up from there.

By doing this, you can teach your dog what is acceptable in each room of the house. Can he get on the furniture in the den, but not the living room? Fine. Be sure that there is a comfy place for him in the living room (just not people furniture) and be sure that there is an obvious spot on the couch in the den, that is his (go ahead and put a comfy dog bed on the couch, if you'd like).

Ideally, you want your dog to have one success after another, so move incrementally. If you do have an accident of some sort, move back to the time limit/space in which your dog was last successful and stay there awhile. Manage your dog's access to the house with tethers, x-pen, and crate. You'll have a much happier, long-lasting relationship if you do.