

The Happy Hound

Havin' Fun with Tricks & Good Manners!

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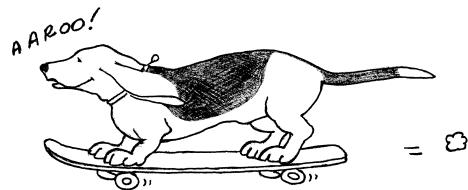
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Spanking and Punishment

DO NOT spank or hit your dog for any reason—with your hand, knee, foot, or any other object. Period. Ever. If you get to the point where you feel your dog needs to be hit, remove your dog and yourself from the situation. Calm down. Have a soothing cup of tea and rethink the whole situation. There's always a management strategy that you can put in place now to prevent a future situation where will feel compelled to use violence on your best friend.

Shake Cans—will increase fear and reactivity in sensitive dogs. May even prevent you from drinking anything out of a can again....because your dog will freak out at the sight of a Coke Can.

Water Bottles—generally don't work over the long term (only "work" when the spray bottle—and you!—are in sight) AND prevent you from using medication in spray bottles (e.g., treatment for hot spots).

Hand on the muzzle to stop biting—more likely to teach the dog to not trust hands rather than to not bite.

Yelling-- will increase fear and reactivity in sensitive dogs. Generally doesn't work over the long term.

Choke Chains (including nylon slip), Prong/pinch Collars, Shock collars (including electronic containment fences) will increase fear and reactivity in sensitive dogs.

Rubbing your dog's nose in an "accident" teaches him nothing about housetraining except that next time, he'd be wise to hide it from you completely. So you'll have a dog who waits for you to leave the room before he goes.

Dogs that are not fearful or reactive, will most likely adapt to punishment and develop what is called a "punishment callous"—which means increasing amounts of force must be used to control the dog. More yelling, more spanking, more shocks. Oh, and the dog—who is the receiver of these actions—is held responsible for them. "I just had to...."

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Sounds like an abusive relationship to me.

However, physical punishment does "work." Here's how and when:

- * The dog has to actually find it aversive.
- * Timed exactly so that the behavior is associated with the punishment
- * The degree has to be just right so that it's not so much as to cause emotional/physical damage and not so little that it sets the dog up to become habituated to it.

If you're delivering the physical punishment more than three times, the dog is already habituating to it (developing a punishment callous). No point in continuing that punishment, you'll have to do something different.

There are two more things amiss with physical punishment. First, physical punishment is aggressive. In order to physically punish your dog, you are aggressing. Whenever any creature aggresses, a chemical bath is released in the brain that has an analgesic and euphoric effect. Aggression is addicting. For both you and your dog.

Second, and possibly most important, is that punishment doesn't teach a dog what to do. You are much better finding ways to reward your dog for doing the right things than you are punishing your dog for doing the wrong things.

Thanks to Pat Miller of Peaceable Paws here is a three step solution to most behavioral problems:

1. Envision the behavior you want your dog to do.
2. Prevent the behavior you don't want your dog to do.
3. Consistently and generously reward the behavior you do want your dog to do.