



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Communication

- For a newly adopted dog/puppy: a clear understanding of house rules is more important than unsupervised freedom. Socialization with humans and dogs is especially important for young puppies. Introduce them, gradually, to a variety of well-behaved humans. Enroll in a puppy kindergarten class that includes off-leash playtime. Adult dogs may need socialization, too, but the process may require time, patience, and help from a trainer or behaviorist.
 - So-called behavior problems are only problems from our human perspective. From the dog's point of view, they are normal, natural, and even necessary activities. Preventing or solving these problems does not mean squashing them but rather redirecting them.
 - Good two-way communication is the key to a strong, mutually satisfying relationship with Fido.
- Rewards are valuable teaching aids. They include food treats, praise, affection, playtime -- the list will vary from dog to dog. Use the rewards that are built into his day by preceding them with a simple obedience command, and you will be laying the foundation for good communication.
- Reprimands play a very small, but necessary, role in communication and training. Do not hit your dog! Physical aggression can make him fearful, distrustful, and handsy. It also sends the message that aggression is acceptable. Reprimands should be short and well-timed, for example time-outs, a negative marker word, removal of owner's presence, etc. If it doesn't work, don't repeat it: you'll be decreasing its value as Fido learns to tune you out.
 - Delayed punishment confuses the dog. If you don't catch him in the act, you're too late.

For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.