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**How to be a Top Dog Owner**

By Karl Matthews

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## **Please Read This First**

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## Hints from a Happy Owner

This is where I should trot out my academic qualifications, show you pictures of all the awards my dogs have won and letters from relieved owners whose dogs I've stopped from relieving themselves on the Persian carpet or the Persian cat!

But, I left school when I was only a few years older than most dogs are after their obedience training. My dogs have all been low-cost mixed breeds and the only awards they got were our enthusiastic applause and the odd bit of chocolate, before I found out how bad an idea that was.

But there has always been a contented, well-fed dog curled up near my feet while I've been earning my living in my home office over three decades or so.

This book is based on what worked with my dogs, many conversations with vets, until I learned they usually charge for the length of consultations, good ideas from friends and neighbors, and what I had actually seen them do – both good and bad.

I believe that you will learn things in my book that your dog wants you to know.

## Before you get Your Dog

My father was also a life-long dog owner. He frequently told me, as well as anyone else that would listen, "Owners should be tested and licensed – then there would not be hardly any trouble from dogs!"

I have heard of and seen enough instances of cruel treatment that ignorant people have inflicted on dogs in their care, deliberately or through carelessness, to think he had a point with licensing owners.

But, it's still the general rule that anyone can have a dog, just like anyone can take on the responsibility of having a baby!

**License:** In some countries, you will have to get a license for your dog, but the council officer that collects the fee won't really care if you know how to look after your new pal, just as long as you know when you have to renew your license and understand the map showing what areas of your city are now off-limits when you have your dog with you.

### Think First

I know that some people could probably take a dog that they thought was unsuitable back where they got it, but I think that my readers who've invested their money in this book will care enough to want to make the right choice the first time and not cause distress to themselves or any animal.

Before you get a dog or any other pet, please consider these points:

**Have you got room for your dog?** Whatever kind of dog you might be thinking about getting, it will need space around your home that you are probably using for other purposes right now.

Even the smallest and laziest dog will need running room, a place to sleep and somewhere to relieve itself.

You'll also have to prepare in advance how you can prevent it from getting into areas where you don't want it (**good luck!**)

Otherwise, you might want to get a parakeet.

**Have you got time for your dog?** With the demands of jobs and our social lives putting pressure on all of us, finding time to spend with your new puppy to teach it some rules and just have fun might be quite difficult to arrange.

Then, there's the extra time you'll need to keep your dog and your home clean.

But a dog is not a toy or an entertainment device that you can just switch off when you're too busy. Its needs companionship, care, and training will be constant and probably the greatest in the first couple of months after you bring it into your home.

If you don't have the time, but get a dog anyway, then you will both suffer.

**Have you got enough money to keep a dog?** You will have extra expenses when you get your dog. You won't be able to maintain your dog's health and temperament just by feeding it your table scraps.

But, it's not just the cost of dog food.

You will be facing a list of recurring expenses; visits to the veterinarian and clothing (leads, collars, coats) as well as bedding and toys, (even big dogs love toys, because it means their owner will spend time with them.)

I'll give you some tips about saving money in some of these areas in later chapters.

**Have you got the strength you'll need for your dog?** Dogs come in such a variety of sizes and temperaments that I'm sure you can find your perfect match.

But, you'll need to be fairly fit, both mentally and physically, to get the best out of your person/dog relationship.

Walking your dog will, of course, have health benefits for you both but you'll need to be able to keep up with your pal and stop it from going anywhere that you don't want it to until you've got it trained so it knows the rules of the sidewalk.

You'll probably have to lift your dog on to the examination table at the vet and lift it off your furniture on some occasions too.

You'll also need a reserve of emotional strength.

There'll be times when it will be very hard not to lose your temper or even hit your dog over some mistake. But, many of those errors, in my experience, happened because I thought that my dog thinks the way that I, a human, does.

In other words, we need to be able to step back, mentally and physically, and take a deep breath, then not do anything that, in a moment, could sour forever the strong bond we've built with our dog.

We also need plenty of strength for those times when things don't go right; your dog is sick or must be put to sleep.



## Purebred or a Happy Mixture?

I've never heard of any reliable research that shows that any pure-bred dog is likely to be naturally better behaved, more intelligent or a better companion than one like mine that has a more varied family history.

If you need one that is bred to retrieve dead ducks from a lake when you shoot them and protect or search out shaggy sheep on your forty acre farm, then you should stick with the breeds that have the natural instincts and training to do the job.

But, if you just want a canine friend to share some good times, then I think any dog, whatever their parentage, which you give the necessary patience, training and affection will grow to fill the position and reward your investment many times over.



Remember that your dog has a common ancestry with the wolves and foxes, though that is a lot more obvious with some ... than it is with others.



## Where to get the Perfect Pet

If you want to get a dog, you're spoiled for choice.

As well as registered breeders and back-yard hobbyists that farm dogs rather than chickens or rabbits, there are pet stores, friends and neighbors with sexually active pets and, of course, the animal shelters that are the tireless front-line in the battle to try to ease the suffering of the flood of abandoned animals from our throw-away society.

**Registered breeders:** It would be worthwhile to look for an association or club that is just for owners and breeders of the type of dog that you want. Only deal with breeders that are members in good standing because you can assume that they have to maintain at least a good minimum standard in the way they treat their animals and customers.

You may find that there are non-members that specialize in that breed too. While some may be at least as good as any that are registered, their absence from the Register could be a pointer to lower standards in their animal care or customer service.

A local veterinarian is another source of reliable information. They are professionals and their reputation is a valuable business asset, so they do not, in my experience, allow the listing of any poor quality provider of puppies, other pets or services on their premises.

**Hobbyist dog breeders:** I'm very wary of these because many treat their stock of dogs and puppies just as a source of profit. But, check the notice board at your local Vet or ask the receptionist for a few referrals.

**Friends and Neighbors:** I got one of my dogs from a neighbor whose dog had some puppies. Bart (so named because the neighbor's surname was Simpson, of course) was a little yellow ball of fluff that became an 18 pound terrier who helped me lose several pounds while we walked around the neighborhood.

The only problem with these deals is that they rarely happen when your home or schedule is ready for a new dog. Before you agree to the pleas of

the neighbor (or, more likely, their kids), take a deep breath and think the whole matter through.

And, if you miss out on that "Bart", be sure there will be other such opportunities in the fairly near future.

Many people apparently think that it's cruel or unnatural to have their dog neutered. I think the cruelty is from the unchecked production and abandonment of thousands of unwanted puppies that never can hope to find a loving, comfortable home.

**Animal Shelters:** These organizations provide a temporary sanctuary for unwanted puppies and abandoned pets whose owners didn't think before they got their dog (or cat) or just can't be bothered with it any more.

As well as arranging as many adoptions as they can, they often have arrangements with some local veterinarians to provide discounted neutering or other procedures for some pets whose owners genuinely cannot afford the regular fees.

They also euthanize many of the animals that arrive at their door, with more care and sympathy than the animals probably had ever experienced before.

You can help by getting your dog from them, though it can be very hard to choose just one from the dozens that are awaiting their fate in the metal pens.

The hoard of appealing puppies are generally luckier than the older animals that have been discarded and rejected from their former homes.

But, many of those older dogs have as much to give a new owner as any puppy and probably are already trained by their former owner.

Any animal that has been abandoned, whatever their age, may have some emotional baggage from that experience. But the shelter will have checked the animals for any disease and will be very honest about any sign of infirmity or emotional pressure that they are aware of, because they want to be sure that whoever adopts one of the dogs will have every chance of a

successful bonding without any nasty surprises that might cause a second rejection.

When you buy a dog's release from the shelter, you should ensure that it is checked, neutered and micro-chipped to ensure that, if it ever strays, the shelter or any vet will be able to locate you, so you can collect your dog, after locating and reading the tag underneath the dog's skin.

I can assure you that most dogs that are adopted seem to know that you've saved their life, and a very special bond often forms.

## Dog Training

Training your dog is an investment in your future together that pays big dividends.

When a dog is about six to 10 weeks of age, you can begin that serious training.

Patterns which the dog learns between then and when it is about four months will form the backbone of its behavior patterns for the rest of its life.

At the beginning, your dog's attention will quickly stray. So, keep your all sessions very short – no more than three to five minutes.

Use everything that you do together as a training experience. When you take it for a walk, ensure that the dog sits while you open a door and also at each corner.

Reward the dog for correct behavior, but go very light on punishment. After all, you're dealing with a baby of another species.

Some experts say that the whole focus of the dog's life is to win.

It is believed to be most receptive to instructions in the period between 4 and 6 months of age. All your training should include revision and also some light sessions that are as much play as "work".

Of course, these cannot start until the dog is fully immunized at about six months.

And it is extremely rewarding to accomplish as much as possible all of this basic training. With just you and the dog.

By six months, your dog's mental processes have started to form firm tracks so you need to make the best use that you can of that time, before formal training becomes available to you.

The first thing to do when you are ready to start training your dog is to decide exactly what you want to teach the dog to do or not to do. Unless you have a firm idea of your target. It is impossible to score a bull's-eye if you're not focused.

You also need to be aware of how experts believe that a dog thinks, although many of us like to graft human thought processes onto our dogs, they are quite different.

Dogs are more like wolves than we might like to think. They're pack animals and all their relationships are related to whether they are the dominant or submissive member of your pack.

You must always ensure that you are Top Dog but, especially, when you are training your new puppy.

It's very important that you keep your goals for the training in mind, and try not to make any mistakes or set in place any traits which will firm into an unacceptable behavior later on.

For instance, many dog owners play tug of war games with their puppy, not realizing that they are encouraging competition between themselves and the dog.

Training a dog to sit is fairly easy if approached with good humor and a pocket full of non-sugary treats.

Have the pup stand in front of you and looking at you. Put your hand containing a treat in front of its face and slightly above its head. Gently move the hand over its head and along its back but a few inches above it.

The dog will tend to move backward and sit. Immediately it starts to do so, you say, "Sit!"

Then, reward its behavior by giving it the treat.

You will have to repeat this tactic a few times. If the dog turns or jumps up toward the treat, remove the reward and bring the pup back to the start position.

Teach the dog to come to you when called. Try to use a firm but friendly tone and never chastise the dog when it comes to you or your training will set the wrong message in its mind.

Train your dog to walk with a lead. That could save its life in the city and the countryside.

Remember that many pet accessories are sold by appealing to the owner's vanity and not all are suitable for the dogs that they are bought for.

Look for a lead that is light, durable and not likely to cause any discomfort.

I personally think that a harness is better because the dog may rub its throat against the collar when it starts its walk after a long day inside.

If you use a collar, take the time to teach the dog to walk with you – don't let it rush ahead,

Even if your dog is micro-chipped, firmly attach a metal or plastic identifier disc, with your contact details, to the collar.

## Toys for Your Dog

I mentioned earlier that it was a mistake to play competitive games like tug of war with your dog. It encourages competition between you and the dog that you cannot afford to lose!

If that happens, the dog will start to assume that it has won the right to be Top Dog of the pack which leaves you nowhere.

Yes, it can actually be bad for the relationship you build with your puppy if you, out of misplaced kindness, let the puppy win those Tug of War games. This puts the thought in their little mind that they are the superior dog.

For that reason, it's probably best to avoid Tug of War games altogether.

Another risk is that you might misjudge the force that your pup's still-developing frame can safely deal with and injure it.

## Toy Safety

I should probably mention here that all the toys that you can buy for your dog are actually marketed to owners without regard for any potential benefit to the dog.

That's why you'll see plenty of soft rubber toys, which might harm a dog if it chews and swallows bits of the rubber.

Each year, there are also lots of problems with toys that have squeakers inside them. All is okay while the toy remains intact but dogs are persistent chewers and can get into trouble when they tear the toy open and accidentally swallow parts of the crushed plastic squeaker.

Remember that, many times, you might leave the dog alone with the toy and that could be the time that it manages to rip the soft rubber, plastic or fabric apart and expose the squeaker.

A prime example of marketing to owners without regard for the value (or safety) to the dog are some of those really cute toys with hard plastic eyes in them. The eyes or other plastic parts can cause serious injury to your beloved pet if it removes and swallows them.



I've also noticed that many of the soft fluffy toys offered for sale in pet stores and regular toyshops contain bags of small plastic beads. In my area, it's illegal to have any small plastic item in toys that might be bought for young children because it's a significant choking hazard. I think that they also would be a potential danger for dogs, especially small ones.

Balls are one of the most popular toys with dogs. You can get them in plastic, cloth, rubber and other materials.

Obviously, I suggest you be very careful about balls that contain squeakers. But, a friend of mine recently had a scare when she bought her dog a plastic ball that was covered with glued-on fluff (possibly flock – shredded felt).

The dog had a great time for a day or so with the new ball, but then my friend noticed that its droppings contained a hard wad of the fibers. She immediately took the ball away from the dog and its suffered no lasting effects but the potential for the dog to get a larger wad in its stomach or bowel, which might have required surgery to remove if that was even possible, made her determined to only give it regular tennis balls in future.

I suspect that the glue which was used to fasten the fibers to the ball was also making the fibers that the dog swallowed matt together. Both owner and dog are fine, but the dog probably owes its life to the owner's careful monitoring.

Strangely, the ball showed no evidence of having been chewed – there was still a complete covering of the fibers when she cut it up and discarded it.

Another point to watch when selecting balls for your dog to play with is that they should be of a size that the dog can comfortably get into its mouth but not so small that it might become a choking hazard.

Be careful about offering your pet a ball that is so hard that it might injure the dog's teeth. This is especially important with a puppy which still has its needle-sharp but fairly soft first teeth.

## Choosing Your Dog

Selecting a companion for (their) life from a pet shop, breeder or shelter is never easy, though it's probably most emotionally draining to choose one from all the deserving and desperate temporary residents at a shelter.

You know that it's not a good idea to choose an obviously sick animal.

Most of us would be inclined to immediately pass by a dog that was showing any sign of aggression, especially if we want a dog that will be a companion for our children.

That's probably wise though the unfortunate animal may only be showing the effects of what it had endured before arriving at the shelter.

Shelters, like all other establishments vary in quality though I've never doubted the dedication or competence of the staff at those I've been too.

Most require that all dogs that are adopted from have full health checks and be neutered before release.

It's important that you have your pet dog neutered, unless you have a pedigreed animal or a working dog where there will be a strong demand for the pups.

Most pet-shop owners and staff have a genuine desire to find good homes for the animals that pass through their businesses but there also just a few and some breeders for whom their need to sell as much as possible means they don't care too much what sort of person buys their stock.

## Fitting into Your Family

Some people believe that no family is complete if they do not have a pet of some kind.

But there are some important things to consider before you do that. Please read the [Think First](#) section carefully.

A friend told me that he felt that their children learnt as much about life from the pets that they'd had as they had learnt from their parents.

I'm sure that's overstating it but I believe that the children will learn much that will help them in their relationships and other activities in later life, provided that we insist that the children do whatever is suitable for their age to help care for and train the pet. Because of their relatively short life-span, they can help us to explain the cycle of life and the need to respect other creatures, especially those that may depend on us.

If, however, we take the "easy" road and assume all responsibility for the pet's care if our children lose interest, then we will not be fair to them, the neglected animal or ourselves.

### Dogs and Children

Most dogs will usually be alright with children though there are, of course, exceptions.

Another important thing to remember is that most children are alright with dogs but all vets regularly treat loved pets that have been injured, some very seriously, by their juvenile owners.

#### **Dogs and children should always be supervised.**

Please, never give your child a dog or any other pet as a gift without discussing it first with all members of the family and ensuring that the child is capable and willing to share the responsibility and the work as well as the fun.

Puppies, like young children, need some rest periods every day.

You should teach the children to not approach the dog when it is asleep or eating.



Give them the chance to select the actual animal within any guidelines you need to set with regard to type, size, cost etc. That will help to build a bond between the child and the animal and make the child more aware that the little creature is more than just another toy.

This is very important for both of them. You'd probably be surprised to know that a large percentage of the dogs abandoned or taken to shelters are perfectly healthy puppies that families have tired of after the first few exciting, fun weeks.

Give Me My Space.

You need to organize a shelter that your new dog will be able to claim as its space.

Puppies can be partly comforted during the first few weeks by putting a hot water bottle in their sleeping box each night.

Many people also put a small clock – digital or old-fashioned is fine so long as there it is wrapped in cloth to prevent chewing or being damaged if the dog wets it during the night. But it must have a loud tick that could remind the pup of its mother's heartbeat.

If possible, you should use a box that is large enough for there to be an area with bedding and another with blank newspaper.

Make sure that the box cannot be tipped over because the dog will try several times. Check there are no hard edges or holes where the pup could catch its claw or a very fragile leg.

That's my reason for never using wicker baskets for my dog. I always use a bed for the grown dogs which has a removable, washable cloth cover.

### ***A New Arrival.***

If you bring home a new baby, your dog will need positive, on-going re-assurance that the new arrival has not taken its place in the pack.

Be sure to include your dog in as many of your activities where you take the baby as you can, just like you did before.

If you work, give the dog a few minutes of your time every time that you return home, so that it is re-assured that its place is secure.

When you buy a toy for the baby, try to remember that the dog is probably used to getting toys too.

Ask your visitors, who naturally will be focused on having some time with your baby, to please treat the dog as they have done before.

## Your Neighborhood

One question that you must answer before you choose and bring home your new dog should be, "Will it be safe and comfortable in this area?"

There are different, but equally important factors to be considered, depending whether you live in the center of a big city or have lots of open space on a farm.

First, you must ensure that you know and abide by any local regulations about which areas where you can walk with your dog, cleaning up any droppings that it puts on the street and keeping it on its leash except in designated areas where it can be exercised.

This is an especially important point if you have moved to the country. The locals will all be very aware that they must not let their dogs roam. People that have seen the cruel damage that dogs can cause to farm animals have no sympathy or patience with stray dogs.

Letting your dog roam on to other properties in the countryside could be a fatal mistake.

Our cities can be as dangerous for a dog as it might be for an unwary person. So, keep your dog on a leash and under control at all appropriate times. And, always carry plastic bags and a scoop to collect its droppings.

If you are renting your home, you might find it very hard or even impossible to get permission to keep a dog or other pet.

The extreme pressure on the available supply of rental properties in most areas means that landlords are easily able to let whatever sort of property they have to offer and on just about whatever terms they decide.

"No Pets" is an easy one for them. That means less hassle with tenants, neighbors and councils, less cleaning and possible damage to their fittings and property.

Of course, it means that many tenants have had to give up their pets when they've moved to a new home or just been denied the option of having a non-human companion.

It's very unwise to even try to keep a pet, if your home is rented and subject to a "No Pets" clause, even if you have been told that, "That's only enforced if there's trouble."

Get it in writing for your peace of mind, so that you and your pet can be relatively secure and not worry every time there's a knock at the door.

### **Loud and Lonely**

Probably the most frequent pet-related cause of friction between neighbors and even complaints to the local authorities is the dog or dogs that howl incessantly whenever they are left alone.

This is something that you should try to avoid by coaching your dog, even if you don't believe it is or will become a problem for you.

Dogs may be aggressive in some situations but they are not, unlike some humans, spiteful by nature.

Dogs of any age that have not been trained to feel secure when left alone will naturally cry, bark, clear their bowels and even start chewing just about anything that's handy.

Many owners feel that their dog is trying to punish them for being left alone but it's just the dog's way of expressing fear and frustration.

They live mostly in the moment and don't remember much of what happened more than ten minutes ago. So, a lonely dog may quickly become frightened unless it has been schooled with care and love to understand that it is safe and its owner will return.

Any young animal that is suddenly separated from its parent will naturally call to try to get it to return. That's all a dog is doing – a very natural reaction even if it's highly irritating to most of your neighbors.

But, it's your responsibility, as Top Dog in your pack, to deal with the problem and minimize the effects on your neighbors as well as your dog and your lease.

It will take time, understanding and probably loads of reassurance from you to the dog and probably a few of the more sensitive neighbors as well.

You need to set up a situation where the dog is likely to be noisy so that you can tell it that behavior won't be tolerated when it is doing it.

There's no point to coming home, hearing a complaint from a neighbor or your landlord and then chastising the dog – remember, they live in "now". If you do this sort of thing, the dog will start to associate your return with hassle and punishment, not affection and comfort.

So, I suggest that you set up a small, secure area with a favorite toy and just a little water and food.

Then, cuddle the dog and talk gently to it. Tell it that you will be back very soon, then leave – don't drag out your departure because that will heighten the dog's discomfort.

Stay close by and go to the dog as soon as you hear it start to become noisy. This is a time for gentle training, not punishment.

Most dogs will start to sound off within twenty minutes or less after you've gone.

Repeat the training several times the first day and be prepared to keep it up every day until the dog settles.

You should start to notice longer periods before the dog becomes so uncomfortable about your absence that it cries or barks. Be sure to tell at least a couple of your neighbors what you are doing and even ask if they would let you know when and if they hear your dog and you are not around.

Most people will realize that you are taking action and will be a good neighbor – it's in their own interest that the dog learns this lesson.



I turn on my answering machine and mute the ringer on my phone because this dog can quickly become upset when the phone continues to ring without being answered. With another dog, I used to leave the radio on a music station because it seemed to like the pleasant background sounds.

When you really go away from your home and leave the dog alone, don't put out much water or, especially, food, for it. Many dogs will eat all the food you provide when they are fearful because food is central to their sense of well-being and they're suddenly in a situation where they don't know when or if they will get more.

A generous helping of food that is quickly consumed will put extra pressure on their bowels and give you more cleaning up to do when you get back.

Puppies, by the way, will not have any more control of these basic functions than a human baby until they are about fourteen weeks old. That's when serious house-training will work best.

## Happy and House-trained

Training your puppy to go outside to relieve itself is essential and can't come too soon for owners.

But, remember, that the pup's physiology doesn't give it full control of these functions until it is about three or four months of age and, even after that, there might be occasional "accidents".

These usually relate to too much food or water being consumed, something in their food causing the evacuation, sudden stress or the dog becoming too absorbed in a game or other activity so that it delays letting you know its need to go out until it is just a bit too late.

Never use the old, almost medieval punishment of rubbing the dog's nose in its fresh droppings! That could quickly start to damage the strong, loving bond that you're working to build with your pet.

Also, you can imagine how unpleasant and unclean you would feel if that happened to you? Then, remember that a dog's sense of smell is many times stronger than the average human.

And, it has a very strong desire, which dates back to when its ancestors hunted and were hunted in the wild, to keep itself clean. Then, a dog which was able to keep from increasing the smell that it gave out that might be picked up by its enemies or its potential prey was likely to be safer and eat better than one with a coat that was fouled.

This is another task that will take significant time and need your close attention, but it is vital to your happy co-existence with the dog in years to come.

If you can't afford the time or effort, don't get a dog in the first place.

The training is based on setting a new routine for the dog. Every day, you need to take it to where you want it to relieve itself at the same times and after the same events in its current routine;

when it wakes up,

after each meal or snack,  
when you come home from work or shopping and  
last thing before its bedtime

You will also have to pay close attention to the pup during the rest of the day. Whenever you see it start to twitch or look for a corner which might indicate an imminent need to relieve itself, pick it up or, if it's too big, call it outside immediately.

You'll probably suffer a few false alarms and also may miss the signs before some incidents, but patience and re-enforcement will improve your hit-rate fairly quickly.

Always praise the dog when you get the right result and be gentle with your criticism because it's a big change in its thinking that you're trying to instill.

You'll have to provide an area where it can relieve itself when you are away. If you don't have a secure and 100% safe outside area for your dog, you should put down some paper for it to use.

Many people use their old newspapers for this, but I believe that the ink might be harmful if the paper becomes wet and ink gets on to your dog's fur and skin.

Blank newsprint might be safer. You can probably obtain it from local craft or art supply stores, but the cheapest source might be your local newspaper company. Ask them if you can buy the end of a roll when it is too short for them to use. You might get several months supply for just a few dollars.

## Removing Stains

I've got a special chapter with tips that I believe will help to keep your home and your dog as clean as possible. But I'll mention a couple of things here for when almost inevitable accidents happen.

Your use of any suggestions is solely **at your OWN RISK**.  
There is such a wide range of materials used in modern homes and variations in formulations of cleaning products etc, that

no-one can be sure what worked for me or anyone else will work for you - however careful we are.

**You are entirely responsible for whatever you do.**

Removing urine from your carpet is not always easy. Most carpets have instructions from their suppliers attached to the underside of the carpet or supplied with the receipt and warranty. Always follow these instructions if they are available. If your carpet is fairly new but you cannot find your instructions, contact your supplier or the manufacturer's help-line or web site. They are the experts.

Otherwise, this is what I have had reasonable success with:

You need to get it before it dries.

Lightly press paper towels on both the top and underside of the carpet if possible. Too much pressure will force the urine deeper into your carpet.

Some special super-absorbent sponges and cloths may be more effective (and much more expensive) than regular paper towel.

Some people use a half-teaspoon of MILD kitchen detergent in a half-gallon of water – apply sparingly. I use these quantities in my description to make it easy to prepare but you only use a very small amount in one application.

Or, you might try a pint of water and an eighth of a cup of vinegar together.

Then, use more paper towels to draw as much of the remaining urine from the carpet. Remove each paper towel as soon as it becomes wet with urine, then add some more until the carpet is touch dry.

Don't let anyone on the carpet until it's dried out or any remaining urine will be pressed deeper into the pile.

Lastly, vacuum the carpet and apply a quality deodorizer if you have one.

## Feeding Time

Your dog won't mind if you feed it three meals a day, slip scraps from your plate to it while waits under the dinner table, then drop a few treats into its open mouth to keep it going between meals and keeping its food bowl heaped with dry food in case you're a little late with its dinner.

But, you are not doing your pal any favors with that thoughtless behavior! You're probably feeding your own ego, telling yourself that you are a truly generous and loving owner by the way that you are "looking after the overweight dog with bad teeth that shares your home".

**Water** is the one essential that should be available to your dog right through the day. It's advisable that you check its bowl a few times daily in case the contents have been spilled or spoiled by the dog dropping some food or other material in it.

**Dry food** should be set out only twice a day and no more than your dog will comfortably eat in about 15 minutes.

Giving the dog too much will not improve its energy or general strength and the excess food that it doesn't eat is likely to become unappetizing or be invaded by ants within a short time. Either way, that excess will have to be discarded.

It's unsafe to use any chemical that might kill the ants anywhere near your pet or its food. The best way to prevent ants getting into its dinner is to put the food bowl in another wider bowl that you have put about an inch of water. Just make sure that your dog doesn't lap up any ant-infested water, if possible.

Bones can be a very risky proposition for your dog. Be careful and consult your vet. I'm sure that the vet will tell you about many operations that he has had to perform because of damage from a bone that a loving owner has given their dog.

Whether its steak, chicken, pork or other bones - I've heard horror stories and some have had very sad endings.

If your vet advises some real bones, then make sure that the dog only has them when you are in the same area and able to carefully supervise. This is no time to be distracted by your telephone, television or that great website on your lap-top.

When the dog has chewed the bones down (never give sharp, broken or brittle bones to your dog, clear away and discard the remaining small pieces.

I've said in another chapter that I give my dog an occasional rawhide treat that has been twisted into a shape resembling a bone. I have never had a problem but that, of course, is no guarantee that they're entirely risk free. I never let the dogs swallow small pieces and, if the treat becomes hard after the dog has chewed it, then I discard it immediately.

**Chocolate** is something that dogs tend to like as much as we do but giving any to them is sort of like loving them to death or, at least, a toothless and unhappy old age.

I'm told that there is a chemical, theobromine, in chocolate which can cause serious problems for dogs if they eat enough of it. I haven't seen theobromine or anything about it on the label of any chocolate and I don't know if it can accumulate in their bodies.

Why take the risk to puff up your self-image as a generous owner at your dog's expense. Get an image as a real caring owner; say, "I never let my dog eat chocolate."

Kids are different. Any parent that said, "I never let my kids eat chocolate" unless there was genuine medical reason like there are with dogs would qualify for counseling in my opinion!

**Candy** is not likely to be any good for your dog except if you or your kids share just very small portions of a sweet with the dog occasionally. That's part of bonding which will do you both some good.

**Alcohol** is not just bad for dogs – it's dangerous. Very small amounts can cause permanent damage to your dog and a dog affected by alcohol isn't funny, it's sick!

### ***Changing Your Dog's Diet.***

Sometimes you have to change the type of prepared food that you give your dog. While it will probably not cause significant harm to give it one brand today and a completely different one the next, my vet advised me to make the change more gradual; adding a little of the new dry food to a slightly smaller amount of its usual mixture and increasing the proportion of the new brand over, say, a week.

I give my dog dry food, always making sure there is clean drinking water close by, and some cooked meat. The canned and semi-moist dog foods are okay too.

I ask the vet at each regular visit any questions that I have about what I've seen on the TV or the Internet but not very many – I want him to be able to give all his attention to my dog and I don't want to be billed for an extended consultation except when the dog needs some extra attention.

Don't believe everything you hear or read – research is ongoing and I'd not be surprised that one scientist has, after 15 years of research disproved what had been accepted as good advice for the previous hundred years.

Researchers make mistakes just like the rest of us and the equipment that the new guy had access to was not even dreamed of when the previous advice first came out.

One thing I found that had been moved from "okay in moderation" to "do not give to a dog" was the grape.

A few years ago, the dog I had at the time loved to share two or three grapes whenever I got some. I don't believe that it ever showed any ill-effects from them.

But, just last year, my vet told me that recent research raised some concerns about their effect on dogs and so the advice had changed.

## Exercise



Your dog needs regular exercise, just like we do and the benefits include better health, digestion and temperament.

Some people expect their dog to exercise itself; they push it out into their yard or build an exercise area with a wire fence around it, then leave the dog alone.

You probably realize that the dog needs encouragement and direction so that it doesn't just wander around or even have a sleep!

Try to give the dog a variety of things to help it exercise all parts of its body and to prevent boredom.

You don't actually need a huge yard to give your dog some exercise but you do need to vary the games that you give it and not just doing the same thing every time.

It will help you to improve your own fitness with much less effort and expense compared to visiting a gym or buying one of those chrome-encrusted miracle machines of the TV marketers..

I always throw a ball or a Frisbee® and never use a stick because there is a possibility that the dog could be injured either by the sharp end when picking up or catching the stick or by swallowing a small piece that could lodge in its throat or stomach.

Never throw anything directly at your dog and always check the area where the dog will run for hazards before starting any game.



## **Your Dog's Second Best Friend – the Vet**

Every dog will need veterinary attention from time to time.

It might shock you when you find out the level of fees most charge for routine consultations and procedures.

This is something you must take into account early on when deciding whether or not you can afford to get a dog or other pet.

A good vet is a valuable ally in ensuring that your dog has the best life possible, so take time to find out from friends or other dog owners you know whether they have any recommendations for you to check out.

Another factor is how far you need to travel, the cost and ease of transporting your dog to and from their location. If you have to leave your pet there all day while you work elsewhere and then pick it up on your way home, that adds extra pressure for the animal while it is in strange, and often frightening, environment and extra cost and time pressures to your day.

Try to make a casual visit to the Vet that you are considering without your pet. Ask them about their charges, whether some groups that you may be part of get any discounts and whether all bookings must be paid for at the time or if you can set up an account.

Vets generally suffer from a high number of slow or no-payers, so don't be surprised if most places have a firm cash or credit card only policy. After you've established a reputation with a particular vet, you may be able to pay an unexpectedly large bill in installments but don't count on that method being available.

Most, if not all, vets do some free work for people in real need or animal welfare organizations but they cannot let everyone that asks to get the benefit of their expensive training and experience for almost nothing. The cost of constantly updating their own knowledge and skills, finding and keeping suitable staff, maintaining equipment that costs about the same as that used on humans, covering the cost of unpaid accounts and their own

high insurance payments as well as making a good income is high and ever-increasing.

### ***Can I See The Vet's Assistant?***

If you don't need the Vet's expertise, like if you get your dog's toenails clipped, that can probably be done by a staff member and could cost you less than a full professional consultation. The staff are, of course, properly trained.

## **Pet Insurance**

One method that can reduce the impact and stress of unexpected bills that can be near as large as we humans face in our hospitals is to pay for pet insurance.

But, it's more like a lottery than an investment – worth the cost if you have a sudden need of the money to prevent the suffering or even untimely euthanasia of your pet but, at current rates, it can be a significant dent in your budget every month.

Some companies have already stopped offering this type of insurance, so make sure, as best you can, that any policy you consider is backed by a reputable company. The policies that are offered by some animal welfare organizations are, of course, produced and maintained by the same insurance companies which offer their own policies to pet owners. They pay the welfare organization an agreed amount of the premiums that you pay and the organization endorses and recommends the policy.

I suggest you seriously consider these policies because they are likely to have been carefully scrutinized by the organizations experts or consultants.

But, any decision you make on a particular policy or whether pet insurance is worthwhile for you must be focused on your own situation and needs, not colored by a desire to support the welfare organization.

There is not likely to be much difference in the benefits or restrictions of policies whether you buy one that is endorsed by a welfare organization or one that you get directly from the insurance company.

Restrictions may include some or all of the following:

Regular vet consultations and procedures are not covered.

There may be a period of maybe several months between payment of your first premium and when you are able to claim any benefits under the policy.

That "no benefit" period may not start until the premium has actually landed in the insurance company's bank account.

The amount of reimbursement for particular procedures may be capped to a certain dollar amount or a percentage of the fees charged. This could leave you with a substantial "gap" amount that you still have to pay directly to the vet.

As with human health insurance, hereditary and pre-existing conditions do not attract any benefits

Read the terms and conditions very carefully. Compare at least two policies. This will probably cost you a significant sum over the pet's life and deserves careful scrutiny. Ask ALL your questions before you sign anything.

Also, ask your vet for their recommendations and, especially, whether their practice accepts payments through the plan that you are considering. Some insurance companies are masters of delay when making payments, so this may affect the answer.

Some people I know have started payments and then decided to drop it - that it's too expensive for them or for the benefits they might get.

One financially comfortable friend started an interest bearing Bank account for her new puppy a month before she got it just as she had done for her nieces. She said that way was much more sensible for her than to pay the money to any insurance company.

If the pup had a good life and there was money in the account when it passed on, she could use that to protect the next pet or, if she decided not to get another dog, then she would be able to make a reasonable donation directly to her favorite animal welfare organization.

## Setting the Rules

You have to set the rules for your dog to follow. These tips will help you to shorten the training period and make it more pleasant for both you and the pup.

Be sure to reward it when it does the “right” thing. That doesn’t have to be a treat – dogs respond to praise and pats just like most humans.

This reinforces the lesson and strengthens your dog’s desire to keep doing it that way and getting the reward again.

Always reprimand the dog when it doesn’t follow its training. But you shouldn’t be harsh. I mentioned those throwbacks that tell you to rub your pet’s nose in its own droppings.

One council website suggested that you could stop a dog from digging holes by filling a hole with water, then calling or dragging the dog back to the hole and pushing its nose under the level of the water for several seconds. That’s blatant cruelty and plain stupid. The dog will probably not associate its action in digging the hole with the retribution.

But, it will start to learn that coming when it’s called can have dire consequences and that you are not to be trusted – just to be feared.

Be especially careful with a puppy that’s still growing or whenever there are external factors that may have caused the wrong response.

### ***Be consistent***

This is something that many people discount the importance of. If you lead your pup to do a certain positive action seven times and then respond negatively on the eighth occasion, you will probably destroy any benefits from the earlier episodes.

The same effect will happen if you stop your dog from doing something that you don’t want it to do, but then allow or ignore it when it happens again.

Remember that every dog is the product of its forebears and is naturally a competitive carnivore with a veneer of civilization not thicker than our own.

If we let it take advantage by ignoring the rules we set for it, it's naturally going to do that again next time!

### ***Speak the Same Language***

I have an elderly friend that dearly loves her dog but becomes annoyed because she can never get the dog to get off her lap.

I asked her what command she used to get the dog to get off and she told me, "Down!"

A few minutes later, the dog was on her lap. When she decided to make us a cup of coffee, she looked at the dog and almost shouted, "Get OFF!"

The dog shivered and stayed put.

I suggested that she give the dog and herself a minute or two to become calm, then pat the dog gently and just say, "Down!"

That worked to everyone's satisfaction. Then, I gently pointed out that the dog had responded correctly and instantly when it heard the command it had been taught.

After that, she has consciously remembered to always say, "Down!" in her usual gentle voice and there's no doubt she's learned something that we all need to remember.

Our dogs don't speak our language – they react to our actions, moods and those strange noises we make. So, we need to always use the same noise (word) when we want a particular reaction.

### **Feeling Good**

You need to encourage your pup to be comfortable being handled by yourself, other members of your family and, of course, the vet.

So, it's a good idea to handle it gently and often.

You're not just petting it –it's a vital part of its training!

## **Don't Touch**

The most important lesson in your pup's socialization is to teach it not to jump on everyone that comes within range.

Start with your own interaction with the dog. You probably like the dog lying on your lap – that's fine.

But you're Top Dog and you must make a rule that the dog only does that when invited by you.

If the dog jumps on uninvited just say, "No!" firmly, grab the dog and lift it down on to the floor.

Don't push the dog or slap it. Your lap is a place of refuge and comfort, but you have to persist until it knows the rule and always obeys it.

Ignore any whining and reprimand it if it barks for attention.

If it jumps on again, give it a gentle tap with a rolled piece of paper and then lift it on to the floor. Dogs dislike being ignored and this is usually more effective than all the shouting in the world.

When the dog is consistently doing the right thing, invite it on to your lap and pat it generously.

Now, you need to adapt what it knows to how it treats other people whom it comes into contact with.

Always ask them to cooperate and you'll probably get their full support.

A few times through the routine and you'll have a dog with an above-average rating with your visitors. That will also enhance your dog-ownership rating with them too.

## **I See, I Chew**

Dogs chew because that is what dogs do.

And they'll try to chew almost anything, sometimes with expensive or even tragic, results.

A puppy chews to find out what's good to eat, to relieve the irritation of its growing teeth (they can be as painful as for human babies) and because they're bored.

Notice that I didn't say to upset the people that love them or to show everyone how clever they are? Most puppies are better behaved than many human teenagers really.

But, this natural inclination to probe clothing, electrical cords, furniture and expensive furniture with those needle-sharp teeth has to be changed, firmly but gently.

Remove from the pup's view and reach anything that is likely to be tested by tasting. That's just about anything you can.

Remind all your family that the pup will chew anything – anything at all. So, they must be sure that, as far as possible, they should be extra careful with anything that might be a hazard for it. That includes all kinds of tablets and other medication, batteries (especially, but not only, small mercury ones), pins, needles, clothing, footwear, money (I'd like to have the unchewed equivalent of the dollars that I've read about dogs chewing in just the last 6 months!), and just about anything else that it can reach.

I've used a time-tested preparation called, I think, "Bitter Aloes", very lightly applied to edges of carpets, cords and mats. Wear gloves and avoid letting the vapor contact your skin. Make sure the area is completely dry before letting your pup near it. The deterrent effect may only last about a day or so. But, do not apply it except very lightly.

Another product that many people use is a "Bitter Apple" spray but I believe that its deterrent effect only lasts a very short time because of chemical changes after it contacts the air.

I give my dog rawhide bones as a treat or reward. But I always make sure to remove them when the dog has chewed them into pieces as I don't like the dog swallowing dried, fairly hard pieces. I don't get the white rawhide bones

because I understand that they have been bleached and I don't like the thought of any residual bleach being swallowed by my pet.



## Enjoy Your Dog

A dog brings with it responsibility, significant expenses and a steady demand on your time.

But, any dog that is given a fair chance will repay you a thousand times over.

For some people, it's very important to have a dog that is of the currently fashionable breed or, believe it or not, the right shade to complement the color scheme of their furnishings!

Those dogs are doomed and their owners should not be allowed to keep any animals.

For the rest of us, the unquestioning acceptance of whatever food we provide and whatever we do with or to it, is amazing.

But, I hope that you will not get too busy to enjoy the different phases of your friend's all-too=short life.

As some people with demanding jobs come to realize and regret missing some of the little joys in their children's early years, I know some people that hardly ever play with or just spend a few minutes talking to their canine friend while they both get some healthy exercise.

Try – it will do you both some good.

## Saying Goodbye

The hardest part of owning a dog or other cherished pet is when they get sick and, finally, they must be put to sleep.



When a faithful friend like this becomes frail, the devoted owner has to put the real needs of the dog above their own fear of loss.

The strong attachment that almost all of us enjoy with our canine friends makes it very hard for many of us to decide when the best option is to let them go and end their suffering.

But, as a vet told a friend of mine, "If they are in pain or can no longer enjoy even one day like every dog deserves to be able to, this can be the best favor that you can do for them."

The loss of a long-time friend, human or animal, can affect us deeply but it's probably hard for some people to understand the level of distress which losing your pet can have on people; men as well as women.

But, we share many of the most significant times, both good and bad, with them and find comfort that we all need at some time in their unquestioning acceptance.

Then, they're gone.

Every person will be affected differently and some will find it harder to deal with than other people do.

### ***"Where Shall I Bury My Dog?"***

The following article, which I found in the on-line reference site that is known as "the free encyclopedia", [Wikipedia](#), is credited to Ben Hur Lampman (27 November 1886 – 2 March 1954) and was published in [The Oregonian](#), the famous newspaper in the Pacific Northwest around 1926 and later reprinted in his book, "How Could I Be Forgetting."

Since then, it has given comfort to many people over the whole World.

### "Where Shall I Bury My Dog?"

A subscriber of the Ontario Argus has written to the editor of that fine weekly, propounding a certain question, which, so far as we know, yet remains unanswered. The question is this -- "Where shall I bury my dog?" It is asked in advance of death.

The Oregonian trusts the Argus will not be offended if this newspaper undertakes an answer, for surely such a question merits a reply, since the man who asked it, on the evidence of his letter, loves the dog. It distresses him to think of his favorite as dishonored in death, mere carrion in the winter rains. Within that sloping, canine skull, he must reflect when the dog is dead, were thoughts that dignified the dog and honored the master. The hand of the master and of the friend stroked often in affection this rough, pathetic husk that was a dog.

We would say to the Ontario man that there are various places in which a dog may be buried. We are thinking now of a setter, whose coat was flame in the sunshine, and who, so far as we are aware, never entertained a mean or an unworthy thought. This setter is buried beneath a cherry tree, under four feet of garden loam, and at its proper season the cherry strews petals on the green lawn of his grave. Beneath a cherry tree, or an apple, or any flowering shrub of the garden, is an excellent place to bury a good dog.

Beneath such trees, such shrubs, he slept in the drowsy summer, or gnawed at a flavorful bone, or lifted head to challenge some strange intruder. These are good places, in life or in death. Yet it is a small matter, and it touches sentiment more than anything else. For if the dog be well remembered, if sometimes he leaps through your dreams actual as in life, eyes kindling, questing, asking, laughing, begging, it matters not at all where that dog sleeps at long and at last.

On a hill where the wind is unrebuked, and the trees are roaring, or beside a stream he knew in puppyhood, or somewhere in the flatness of a pasture land, where most exhilarating cattle graze. It is all one to the dog, and all one to you, and nothing is gained, and nothing lost -- if memory lives. But there is one best place to bury a dog. One place that is best of all.

If you bury him in this spot, the secret of which you must already have, he will come to you when you call -- come to you over the grim, dim frontiers of death, and down the well-remembered path, and to your side again. And though you call a dozen living dogs to heel they shall not growl at him, nor resent his coming, for he is yours and he belongs there. People may scoff at you, who see no lightest blade of grass bent by his footfall, who hear no whimper pitched too fine for mere audition, people who may never really have had a dog. Smile at them then, for you shall know something that is hidden from them, and which is well worth the knowing.

The one best place to bury a good dog is in the heart of its master.

- *Ben Hur Lampman*

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