

## Dog Tips

Your dog gives you a lifetime of unconditional love, loyalty, and friendship. In return, she counts on you to provide her with food, water, safe shelter, regular veterinary care, exercise, companionship, and more. Take care of these ten essentials, and you'll be guaranteed to develop a rewarding relationship with your canine companion. Outfit your dog with a collar and ID tag that includes your name, address, and telephone number. No matter how careful you are, there's a chance your companion may become lost—an ID tag greatly increases the chance that your pet will be returned home safely.

Follow local laws for licensing your dog and vaccinating him for rabies. Check with your local shelter or humane society for information regarding legal requirements, where to obtain tags, and where to have your pet vaccinated.

Follow this simple rule—off property, on leash. Even a dog with a valid license, rabies tag, and ID tag should not be allowed to roam outside of your home or fenced yard. It is best for you, your community, and your dog to keep your pet under control at all times.

Give your dog proper shelter. A fenced yard with a doghouse is a bonus, especially for large and active dogs; however, dogs should never be left outside alone or for extended periods of time. Dogs need and crave companionship and should spend most of their time inside with their family.

Take your dog to the veterinarian for regular check-ups. If you do not have a veterinarian, ask your local animal shelter or a pet-owning friend for a referral.

Spay or neuter your dog. Dogs who have this routine surgery tend to live longer, be healthier, and have fewer behavior problems (e.g., biting, running away). By spaying or neutering your dog, you are also doing your part to reduce the problem of pet overpopulation.

Give your pooch a nutritionally balanced diet, including constant access to fresh water. Ask your veterinarian for advice on what and how often to feed your pet.

Enroll your dog in a training class. Positive training will allow you to control your companion's behavior safely and humanely, and the experience offers a terrific opportunity to enhance the bond you share with your dog.

Give your dog enough exercise to keep him physically fit (but not exhausted). Most dog owners find that playing with their canine companion, along with walking him twice a day, provides sufficient exercise. If you have questions about the level of exercise appropriate for your dog, consult your veterinarian.

Be loyal to and patient with your faithful companion. Make sure the expectations you have of your dog are reasonable and remember that the vast majority of behavior problems can be solved. If you are struggling with your pet's behavior, contact your veterinarian or local animal shelter for advice, and check out The HSUS's Pets for Life campaign information.

## **Do you know doggie body language:**

Here are a few tips on how to read a dog's body language. This is only a guide - please exercise common sense and caution whenever you approach a dog.

"I'm Feeling Relaxed, Normal ... "

My posture is calm and relaxed, just kinda standing around. Please ask my owner before you approach me or pet me, just to be on the safe side.

"I'm Afraid!"

My tail is probably tucked between my legs, and the front part of my body may be a little lower to the ground. My ears may be down or back as well. I'm feel scared or threatened by something or someone ... please give me some space, because I'll bite if I think I need to.

"Stay Away!"

I'm feeling protective ... I kind of look like I'm afraid (which I might also be) because my tail is tucked between my legs ... but you will notice that my hackles are raised too. Keep away from me - I might bite!

"Will You Play with Me?"

My tail is wagging and my forequarters are on the ground, my butt in the air. Please remember to ask my owner first if you can play with me - just to be safe!

"I'm a Shy Dog ... "

I'm a little timid. I will probably roll over on my back to show my submissiveness. Please ask my owner before approaching me - I may be a little frightened too.

"I'm Feeling Aggressive!""

My hackles are raised, my teeth are showing, and my tail is all fluffed up. Don't run away from me - stand still and be calm, and do not make eye contact. I could bite!

## **Letting your dog run off-leash:**

Generally speaking, your dog should be on leash unless in a designated off-leash area. Some cities set aside certain parks or natural areas for dogs to run free. Check with city offices to see if this is the case for your area.

- Keep in mind that because there are so many dogs running free there is a potential for problems. Some things to remember include:
- Keep your dog up-to-date on vaccinations. There is a high potential risk of your dog contracting diseases from other dogs at the park or from feces that

have not been picked up.

- Keep your puppy away. Puppies do not yet have fully developed immune systems. Puppies can also be overwhelmed by the sheer number of dogs in the park. Keep them safe by keeping them away from off-leash areas until they're at least 6 months old.
- Aggressive dogs do not belong in off-leash areas. Whether the dog is people-aggressive or animal-aggressive, he or she is not a good candidate for off-leash areas. They present a danger to people and to other pets, even if you keep them on a leash. Kids or other dogs can still run up to your pet - a recipe for disaster.
- Make sure your dog comes when called. "Off-leash" is not the same as "out-of-control". If your dog does not come when you call him, take him to a good obedience class or find a dog trainer.
- Consider using a flexi-leash. If your dog does not come when called, you can purchase a retractable leash that will let him run several meters and yet allow you to retain control. A great compromise!

Use common sense. For example, if you have a big strong playful dog that has a tendency to jump up on people, temporarily put him on a leash when passing young children or elderly people. Play safe.

### **Introducing children to dogs:**

For those of you considering adopting a puppy: be prepared.

When I was a little girl, I had a tiny Pekingese named Tyke. He was a good little puppy; the most he ever destroyed was a Kleenex box. He was quickly housetrained, and was a content little creature happy to just sit on a cushion and look outside, pondering deep doggy thoughts.

So imagine my shock when I adopted a young American Eskimo puppy - one complete with a set of sharp puppy teeth and a little snout to help him get those teeth into practically anything.

Rundle, as this deceptively angelic-looking pup was called, was a complete terror. He tore up the carpet. He chewed the only set of chairs we owned. He munched up our table. He gnawed the walls. He peed riverfulls onto our carpet, our bed, wherever he felt the urge to let loose. He dug up plants and scattered their mangled carcasses all over the house.

The only things he never chewed were shoes and dog toys. Go figure.

Rundle managed to cause this massive destruction after he was let out of his kennel. We watched him 99% of the time, but when we turned our backs to him - for just a second! - he would somehow transform into a miniature chewing machine. He was always good as gold while he was in his kennel: he'd happily snooze the time away, paws twitching with his puppy dreams.

Take it from someone who's been there, done that: if you're thinking of bringing a puppy into your family, be prepared for:

- Mass destruction. Okay, maybe I'm exaggerating just a little. But be prepared

- for your puppy to chew up the occasional treasured belonging. They're puppies: they chew.
- Kennel training. This will do a few things: first, it will keep your pup from destroying the house while you're away. Second, it will teach him bladder control (puppies need to be relieved every few hours, so make sure you take him straight from the kennel to the spot outdoors where you want him to go). And finally, if you do it right, it will teach him not to be afraid of the kennel - it can be warm, safe place for him.
  - Teaching them the meaning of "No!" When Rundle was a puppy, every third word out of my mouth was "No!". You'll need to be consistent. Don't hit your pup, but firmly tell him no when you catch him in the act of doing something wrong. Praise him when he does what you want him to do.
  - Enforcing rules. Set limits while your puppy is young. Dogs are pack animals and YOU should be the pack leader. Remember, no hitting! Slowly counting to one hundred is perfectly acceptable, of course. Taking your pup to a socialization and/or obedience school is a great way to bond with your new pup while setting rules.
  - Accidents. Hey, they're going to happen, no matter how vigilant you are. Before I adopted Rundle I was a tad squeamish about cleaning up. Now it barely registers. Good commercial cleaners made expressly for this purpose are available from pet stores everywhere.
  - Lots of love.

If raising a puppy doesn't exactly sound like your idea of fun, consider adopting an adult. They bond just as well to their new people and have plenty of love to offer!

Regardless of whether you choose to adopt a young puppy or an older dog, please consider going to your local animal shelter. Shelters often have puppies and adults both, of all types and sizes ... all waiting for a loving home. Adopt from a shelter and save a life!

P.S. If you're wondering how Rundle turned out: he's a marvelous dog. He's smart, obedient (most of the time!), playful, affectionate ... I couldn't ask for a better dog!

### **The young pooch's fondness for chaos and destruction:**

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## **A love affair with dogs:**

I remember the day my love affair with dogs began.

When I was just a little child, I was terrified of dogs. More specifically, I was absolutely wide-eyed with fright with the vicious dog across the street.

No one seemed afraid of him. But he couldn't fool me; I knew what a monster he was. Every time he saw me he'd start barking - straining and lunging at the end of his leash as if he wanted to chew me to bits and then roll happily in my mangled remains.

I'd been fairly lucky up until then; his owner, another kid a few years older than me, would always keep the snarling creature away from me.

Then one day, I was outside zipping around on my bike. Laughing and having a great time, I flew into the schoolyard - only to be confronted with the gaping maw of the crazed neighbor-dog. He was loose!

I was absolutely frenzied in my panic to get away. The blood thundered in my ears, my heart pumped so hard I thought I'd drop dead ... away I raced as fast as I possibly could in my desperate bid to outdistance the snapping beast lunging towards me.

Then my front wheel hit the lip of a sandbox.

I abruptly flew over the handlebars of my bike, landed in a broken heap, and immediately started screaming. I expected to feel the tearing pain of sharp teeth sinking into my vulnerable flesh. I even imagined I could hear it's eager blood-lust panting.

As I lay quivering in abject terror, "Muffy" pounced on me and licked my face, his 10-pound body wriggling in pure joy.

And so began my love affair with dogs. For the next several years, my parents no doubt got tired of hearing, "Can we PLEASE get a dog?". We did eventually get a regal, impossibly stubborn little Pekingese named Tyke. Tyke lived for nearly 15 years as a much-loved member of our family.

While the Muffy-incident seems humorous now, it sure wasn't back then. Those of us with dogs have a responsibility to remember that not everyone loves dogs and some people - especially children - are very frightened of them. When you're out in public with your dog:

- Keep your dog on a leash unless you are in a designated off-leash area.
- Maintain control; do not tolerate lunging, jumping, barking, etc. even if your dog is just being friendly. Some people do not understand this and may feel threatened or uncomfortable.
- Be sure your dog will come on command when walking in an off-leash area.
- Always supervise children with dogs. Kneel down beside your dog when introducing him or her to a child, and have a firm grip so that you can take action if needed. Show children the proper way of approaching a dog and

petting it. If you know your dog to be uneasy with children, don't put him in a situation where he must interact with children.

- Be sensitive to adults, too. There are many adults who are afraid of dogs - and not just big dogs, any dog. Respect them and keep your dog away.

Now that I'm "grown-up" (or so I claim), I also have two dogs as well as a gentle little cat. I still remember what it was like to be so unreasonably afraid of dogs. But now my experience with Muffy is a fond memory, rather than a terrifying one. In a weird way, I'm actually glad it happened. If it hadn't, I would never have been privileged enough to be able to share my life with these amazing creatures.