



Behavior Modification Handout

Nothing in Life is Free

The training philosophy of “Nothing in Life is Free” was coined by Dr. Ian Dunbar a renowned behaviorist and trainer. The process is actually more of a life style change than training and will help your pet be more comfortable with his role in the family and display appropriate behaviors. The basic premise for this training is that your dog should work for his resources. Resources are anything the dog wants or needs i.e.: food, attention, petting, going outside, play time etc. This type of training is an excellent non confrontational way to control your dog’s pushy behavior.

Starting Off on the Right Paw / Managing Your Environment

Setting ground rules early on will help to prevent problems later on. Your dog should have solid responses to basic cues such as “sit” and “down” before you start this training. You will be asking for basic behaviors before rewarding your pet with resources. Start with the everyday resources your dog receives and then gradually build on that foundation. Add other cues for additional resources once your dog becomes acclimated to the process. Other cues can be tricks such as “give paw”, “roll over” or “speak”. Keep it interesting and fun. The three most common things your dog wants or needs would be: food (feeding time), going out and attention or petting.

- Before you put your dog’s food bowl down give a “sit” and “down” cue. Once your dog sits and lays down put his food bowl down and release him to eat.
- Your dog wants to go out or you ask your dog “You want to go out?” When he goes to the door give the cue to “sit”. Once he sits you release him to go out.
- If your dog nudges your hand to be petted he is being pushy. Ignore his nudging and a few seconds later give him the “sit” cue. Once he sits you pet him and give him attention.
- A release cue is a word you will use to let your dog know it is ok to move or his task is over. A good release cue could be “all done” or “ok”. It is important to use a release when asking your dog to wait for something to happen and then letting him know he got it right and now he is free to go about his doggie business.

Tips and Hints

- Make sure your dog has learned the cue before you start this training.

- Start off with easy cues you know your dog will get right.
- Gradually add more cues for other things your dog wants (going for walks, playing with a favorite toy, getting on the couch).
- If your dog does not complete a cue tell him “too bad” or “oh well” in a neutral tone of voice and ignore him. This negative marker will let him know he has not gotten it right. Try the cue again after a few seconds.