

**The Most Common  
Questions Answered**

**Top 20  
Consultations  
Secrets to  
Dog Training**  
**Daniel Stevens**





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## **Author's Note.**

As you can imagine, we receive a LOT of emails every day, asking us for help with various dog training and behavior problems. These questions can be about anything from housetraining queries to advice on treating dog aggression.

Not so long ago, while brainstorming on other possible ways that we could help our dog loving friends and clients, we decided to put together a collection of the 20 most commonly asked questions we receive through our consultation service. So, here it is! We have used real consults sent to us by our clients. In putting together this collection, we hope that dog owners such as yourself will find answers to problems you might be facing with your dog. This book will also help you prevent other unwanted behaviors.

You will notice some familiar themes starting to appear in the advice given. Reference to the use of the Alpha Techniques, Obedience Training, and Exercise is often made, and this is because these three things are very important in the owning and raising of a happy, well adjusted pet.

Taking care of a dog is a big responsibility, and being as prepared as possible will help make things easier and more fun for you and your dog.

Enjoy!

Daniel Stevens.

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## AGGRESSION WHEN OUT WALKING

Dear Daniel,

I am writing to you in regards to our dog Toby. He is a 2.5 year old, neutered Border Collie. We have only had Toby for 2 months he is an adorable dog, well behaved, good with the children and our 2 cats. When we acquired Toby he lived with his breeder and 4 other dogs whom he got on fine with but could not find his place in the pack. When he was a pup he on 2 occasions was attacked at shows by other dogs and since then would rather attack a dog than make friends. In the last 2 months he has had 5 fights, all of which he dominated but did not always start. We are worried! He is so lovely we just want to help him.

Thank you, we hope you can help

Karla

- - -

Hi Karla,

Thanks for your email regarding your Border Collie Toby. Your dog's aggressive behavior when out walking must be quite distressing for you.

Often, in cases of dogs acting aggressively towards other dogs, the situation can be helped by getting your dog to respond to your commands straight away. Fortunately there are a number of methods that can be used to make a significant difference in your dog's behavior.

### **Training**

We here at Secrets to Dog Training are strong believers in teaching a dog in at least basic obedience. This training can also be used to help your dog learn to tolerate the presence of other canines. I recommend that you start training your dog on a regular basis and under a variety of conditions.

Please use the progression below as a basis for your training. Begin with undertaking the training sessions in a familiar environment so

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that your dog is relaxed, and gradually introduce different environments and distractions.

You will also be the best judge of when you should move on to the next step, but I would recommend that you move on when your dog completes a 5 to 10 minute sit-stay and a 5-10 minute down-stay. If you move along too quickly you will have to go back a step, so it is important to be patient with your dog and takes things slowly:

1. inside, on-leash, with no other dogs or people present,
2. outside, on-leash, with no other dogs or people present,
3. outside, off-leash, with no other dogs or people present,
4. outside, on-leash, gradually introducing dogs and people to the vicinity,
5. outside, off-leash, gradually introducing dogs and people to the vicinity.

### **Avoidance**

I recommend that until you have finished the abovementioned training that you avoid allowing Toby to interact with any other dogs that he is not familiar with, so as to avoid any potentially bad situations that will hinder your training of him.



### **Socialization**

Once you have completed the training, and you are satisfied with Toby's level of obedience, you should try socializing him with other dogs. You should preferably seek out dogs with calm, confident temperaments.

If you think that your dog may react badly by biting or fighting then consider using a muzzle.

Again, this will have to be a gradual process where the new dog is introduced at a neutral venue and from a distance. By that I mean you should get your dog to sit and have the other dog in your dog's sight but a long way away. You want to keep your dogs focus and attention on you as your friend gradually brings the other dog closer. If your dog makes to move from the sit then have your friend move back to reduce the distraction.

### **Alpha Dog**

I would strongly encourage you, and any other family members, to read the bonus book "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog". This book will give you a good understanding of the hierarchical nature and behavior of your dog, and will demonstrate to you how important it is for you to teach your dog that YOU are in charge, and not him. At the moment, Toby believes that he is defending you as pack leader from any potential threats. He needs to learn that you are the Alpha and therefore it is not his job to protect you.

When out walking, a Gentle Leader or similar kind of leash is great because it will give you more control over your dog's movements. Be very careful when you are out walking, however, that you do not inadvertently reinforce your dog's behavior.

If you see another dog approaching and you instantly react by tightening your hold on your dog's leash, or speaking sharply to your dog, you are sending a clear message to your dog that you are very wary of the approaching pooch. He will not realize that you are actually afraid of HIS reaction! His tension will suddenly increase and he will most likely become aggressive towards the strange dog.

Instead, when out walking remember to hold a slack leash at all times. If you see a strange dog approaching, speak to your dog in a happy, confident voice, step in between him and the other dog to break any eye contact, and then ask him to sit and follow some commands.

If he ignores the other dog, praise and reward him. If he becomes aggressive, squirt him with cold water and growl a guttural growl (AAHH). If he stops growling, praise him straight away. Practice this as much as you can for best results.

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I think it is a good idea to keep your dog muzzled and always on leash when out walking. I am not sure that he will ever be 100% safe unleashed, but the above recommendations will certainly help.

Good luck Karla.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training



## BARKING

Dear Daniel,

I hope that you can help me. I have a gorgeous Bichon Frise called Adelaide, who is perfect except for one thing – she barks...A LOT! When she does, I try to quietly soothe her, and I have even tried yelling, but nothing I do seems to help the situation.

Most of her barking takes place out in our yard, which backs onto a grassy walking path that many people in the neighborhood make use of. Anytime she hears someone she rushes over to the gate and starts barking her head off.

I am away from home for about 6 hours a day, and I know that she also barks when I am not there.

It's annoying and frustrating, and I am terrified that one of my neighbors will complain.

What can I do?

Thanking you in anticipation.

Julie

- - -

Hi Julie,

Thanks for your email regarding your Bichon Adelaide. Barking is a totally normal doggy behavior just as meowing is to cats and snorting is to pigs. However, nuisance and out of control barking is not appropriate and needs to be minimized. It's not practical to hope to stop barking altogether, but it should be possible to reduce it to an acceptable level.

There are a number of causes for nuisance barking including boredom, loneliness, frustration and a lack of outlets for pent up energy. This type of behavior is particularly prevalent in dogs who are left for long periods on their own. They are not reprimanded for the bad behavior and will therefore keep doing it because it's fun and because they aren't aware that it's wrong.

Sometimes barking can be accidentally reinforced when it is an attention seeking behavior, and we respond by giving the dog what it wants. The dog then learns that barking is quite effective!

Fortunately there are a number of things that I can suggest to help you in this situation.



Firstly, it sounds as though Adelaide may be a little territorial – people walk by your yard and she starts barking like crazy. So, it is important that this little pooch knows that she is not the Alpha Dog, but that **you** are the Pack Leader! To reinforce your dominance, please read and begin using the Alpha Techniques as set out in the bonus book “Secrets to Becoming the Alpha Dog”. If she knows that you are in charge, she may feel less inclined to want to protect your yard and home.

Next, please ensure that Adelaide is being given lots of exercise so that she does not become bored and frustrated while you are away from home. A really good idea is to start taking Adelaide for a brisk walk before leaving the house, so that she is more likely to rest while you are not there.

Please make sure that she gets plenty of exercise in general. Undertaking daily obedience lessons will also help keep Adelaide physically and mentally stimulated. Even if you are just going over the commands she already knows, she will benefit from the lessons.

It is a good idea to try to supply your dog with lots of things to keep her occupied while you are at work. Please supply Adelaide with lots of toys to play with. Also, some people have had success with building a digging pit for their dog, and burying toys in the sand or dirt to encourage them to dig there.

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Do you have a friend or neighbor that you can leave your dog with during the day? Does Adelaide have some doggy friends that she could play with until you got back home?

Another option is to leave Adelaide inside for the day with the curtains closed and the radio on. If she is not able to see or hear any passersby, then she is probably less likely to bark at them. This method, of course, requires Adelaide to be able to hold her bladder for at least 6 hours.

For the occasions when Adelaide barks and you are at home, you should teach her the following command:

### **The Quiet Command**

Do something that you know will make her bark.

Then say "Quiet", and hold a treat in front of her nose.

When she stops barking to sniff the treat, feed it to her, and praise her.

Do this a number of times, and gradually make your dog wait longer and longer for the treat.

Soon she will begin to understand the command, and you will not have to give her treats - though give her a treat once in a while to keep her motivated.

Use this command to teach your dog to stop barking. On the occasions when she breaks the Quiet Command and start's barking again, you should reprimand her by shaking a can of pebbles, or squirting her with water and growling a guttural growl. Hopefully the reprimand will cause her to stop barking, giving you the opportunity to issue the Quiet Command again.

I hope this helps Julie. Good luck and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens  
The Secrets to Dog Training

### **BREAKING FREE OF THE LEASH**

Dear Secrets to Dog Training Team,

I am having problems walking my 3 year old Labrador retriever, Niki. She is an intelligent, energetic, trained duck hunting dog with great instincts. She sleeps in the house and loves to play with our two children.

I typically walk her 5-7 days a week in a group of women & other dogs. She is well behaved (most of the time) and walks at heel. She is socialized and plays well with other dogs, once she had established that she's the top dog. She will occasionally bark at other dogs that would pass us by, so I started having her "sit" and "be a good dog" until the other dog passed.

The problem I have had is that she has broken away from the leash to chase other animals (cats, and one deer) in the neighborhood. She has done this three to four different times in three years; one time resulting in fracturing my finger. I have stopped walking her after her breaking away and walked her home and put her outside in her kennel. It had been about 6 months since the last time she broke away from me, until last week. I had her "sit" while another dog passed and she decided she was going to break away to bark at this other dog who is an older, docile neighborhood dog. She is very strong and if she wants, can get away from me.

I am afraid her instincts take over her intelligence! I do not want to stop walking her, but am afraid if she continues, she may re-fracture my finger. On walks I use a prong collar and large dog leash.

I bought your book and have used the techniques in the book for dogs that wish to be "Alpha Dogs" since this last time. I have made sure we feed her last, she doesn't sleep on beds (anymore) and I walk out doors before she does, etc. My friends have noticed a difference in the way she behaves when they come to the door. She is a lot better at not jumping up on them to say hello.

When she went through her initial duck training, the trainer there said she was a great dog, but always had to hold something little back and wouldn't do every command every time. What advice, if any, do you have for me before I start walking her again? I haven't walked her in

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over a week and she seems depressed and whines at the door to get out. HELP!

Thanks, Willa

- - -

Hi there Willa,

Thank you for the email regarding your 3 year old Labrador that manages to break away from you when walking. Quite a few of our customers have trouble restraining large dogs such as your own, and when a large dog really wants something, they often do anything to get it. The training process for your particular dog will involve several steps and it will take time to get the necessary results such that your Lab no longer breaks free.

Firstly, good on you for reading and undertaking the techniques explained in our bonus book "Secrets to Becoming the Alpha Dog". You need to undertake these techniques continually now, as I'm sure you are. From what your friends have been saying, there is already a significant change in her behavior. This is excellent, and her behavior will only continue to get better as you continue to follow these techniques. Ultimately, you should have much better control over your dog. As well as using these techniques, I would also encourage you to go back to basics with your dog for a while and spend the next couple of months reinforcing some basic obedience training. Get her to Sit, Stay, Heel and Come in particular. By rewarding her whenever she follows your commands with vocal praise and perhaps a small food reward, she will quickly relearn that following your orders is not only the correct behavior, but that doing so is fun. Follow the instructions for this as per Secrets to Dog Training - although it sounds as though you have already done quite a bit of training with her, so know how to go about it.

For the next little while, avoidance is probably the best key to stop any further incidences happening until you have better control over your dog. By this I mean perhaps walking your dog early morning or early evening – just whenever less people and dogs are about walking on the streets. I know this is probably not realistic if you are walking her with a group of other women and dogs since they probably go at set times. But rather than have your dog break away again, it may be worth just walking alone for the next couple of months while your training continues. If you have someone in your household that is

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bigger and stronger than you, definitely get them involved. This way if an incident does occur, they will have the power to stop your dog from breaking free. However, with the training I am about to outline below, your dog will be trained not to pull on the leash. The basis of this training is around the Heel command, and it will be further reinforced by training your dog that chasing things is not acceptable.

I am not sure if your dog is constantly pulling on the leash, or whether she just wants to pull away to chase something all of a sudden. So, I will quickly cover a couple of methods you may want to try and try and curb this problem. Firstly leash pulling – your Lab probably isn't pulling on the leash because of the prong collar you are using, but I won't assume this. The leash pulling problem can be relatively easily fixed by teaching your dog the 3 stages of the Heel command as outlined in Secrets to Dog Training. I have copied in the text from Stage 1 of the process below, even this stage should give you good results regardless of whether you have a puppy or fully grown dog!

### Stage 1

1. The first stage of teaching your dog to heel is to prevent her from pulling on the leash at all.
2. You will need to have the collar and leash on your dog.
3. Stand next to and to the right of your dog so that you are both facing in the same direction and the dog is sitting on your left.
4. Start walking forward slowly in a straight line, leading with your left leg. As soon as your dog takes off and starts pulling on the leash, stand still and pull the leash back towards you. Do not drag the dog back towards you. All you need to do is halt its progress.
5. Wait until the dog stops, praise it and then continue walking. No command needs to be given at this stage as you are just trying to teach your dog good manners so that it can more easily understand the Heel command when the time comes to teach it fully.
6. If you apply this method for ten minutes at a time and for three or four times per day then within four or five days you should be ready to move on to the next phase.

It is quite likely that you will get good results within a few minutes, at least enough that your dog will stop pulling you all over the place. It may take longer for some older dogs who have been given a free rein, so to speak, throughout their lives to change their leash-pulling behavior.

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You may also have to modify the way that you are training your dog slightly. When your dog starts to pull, you need to:

1. Stop and give your dogs lead a few tugs, and growl the guttural growl, ("AAHH!" rather than "NO") then bring the dog back beside you.
2. Start walking away again and hold a treat by your side (so that your dog knows it is there).
3. Your dog should be following along side you, if it tries to jump for the treat ignore it (do not let your dog bite at your hand though).
4. When your dog tires of that, and simply walks along beside you say "HEEL!" then reward your dog for walking beside you.
5. Repeat this over and over, then you should start to see the results. If you praise your dog as it comes towards you then your dog is being rewarded only for backing up (the very last action it performed). You need to reward your dog for walking freely beside you as you move off from the stand still.



As you begin a walk, it is vital to keep the attention of the dog focused on you at all times. Remember, the dog should look to you for guidance, not take the lead herself. When walking, it is important to stop often. Every time you stop, your dog should stop. Getting into the habit of asking your dog

to sit down every time you stop is a good way to keep your dog's attention focused on you. Make sure your dog is looking at you, then move off again. If the dog begins to surge ahead, immediately stop and ask the dog to sit. Repeat this process until the dog is reliability staying at your side. Each time the dog does what you ask her to, be sure to reward her with a treat, a toy or just your praise.

Whenever you see a potential 'chasing hazard' nearing your dog – be sure to continue what you have been doing by getting her to sit. However, if a dog and owner are coming towards you on the same side of the road, it is probably best to cut to the other side of the road for the next little while. If this is not possible, simply get your dog to sit as you have been, and if she growls and you getting any clues that she is about to break free, quickly give her a guttural growl "AAAAAAA!"

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and perhaps distract her attention by squirting her with water (from a water pistol or something similar) or by shaking a can of pebbles. This may sound ridiculous, but you basically just need to get her attention away from the 'stimulus' in order for her to focus on YOU and your commands. As I say, continuing with the alpha dog training combined with basic Sit, Stay, Come and Heel commands at home will definitely help with this. In addition to reprimanding your dog whenever she growls or looks as though she is about to chase anything, you should also reward her when she doesn't growl or act menacingly towards something that she would usually chase. Bring a food treat she really loves and give this to her along with plenty of praise when she does well.

As this will be the basis for getting your dog to stop chasing things and hence, breaking away from your leash grip, it is important that you first spend a couple of months continuing with the alpha dog training and basic obedience training. During this time, take her for walks at non-busy times and be sure to reprimand your dog as soon as you feel she is being distracted. The aim is to have her attention on you at all times – this will take some time to get to, but with a few months of training you should get there. Be sure to reward your dog constantly also for correct behaviors. If she manages to break free of you or you can't hold her back – just let go of the leash quickly rather than trying to keep a hold of her, or you will re-fracture that finger! The trick then is to do as you have been, call her back quickly (she will respond better to the come command with practice at home over the next few months) and as soon as she gets to your feet, reprimand her and tell her to lie down. Then, as you have been, cut the walk short and perhaps even skip walks for the next 2 – 3 days. By cutting the walks short when she behaves very badly like this you are reinforcing to her that she is acting inappropriately. However, you hopefully won't have to deal with her pulling again if you continue with basic training and undertake avoidance of potential chasing hazards for the next little while.

A final hint, is that you could consider buying a Citronella collar that you use just during walks. This device simply goes around your dogs neck, and every time she barks it will let out a small amount of the substance Citronella – which is harmless and non toxic to humans and dogs. I am assuming your dog barks at the things she chases firstly, so this should help surprise her when this does happen. I don't however recommend a shock collar, as in my opinion they are a bit too much and slightly over the top. Ask your local pet store for more information on this.



I hope the information I have given you above helps you out with your current situation. It will take time to get your dog behaving to an appropriate level, but stick with it and you will have success. Just be very careful on those walks and consider buying a leash with a large plastic handle at the owners end so that you can get a firm grip on it, but also so that it is easy to let go of. Good luck and please let us know how you get on.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## CAR CHASING

Hi Daniel,

Just a quick question. We've got a lovely 15 month old mutt (she's got Border Collie, Lurcher and a bit of Labrador in her). We've used your training guide and had great success except for one problem. She's a car chaser and has been since day one. I never let her off the lead when we are out and about as it would be just too dangerous for her. When we are walking on the lead every time a car or truck passes by she tries to lunge for it.

In all other respects she is a very obedient, very loving and intelligent dog. Is there anything we can do to get rid of her unbending desire to throw herself under the wheels of cars/trucks, etc.

Regards,

Katy

- - -

Hi there Katy,

Thank you for your email regarding your 15 month old cross-breed! It sounds as though she has a rather dangerous hobby in car chasing. This, funnily enough, is not an uncommon problem our clients face and it does take time to convince a dog that it is not worth the risk.

First of all, I recommend you read the "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog". I tell everyone to read this, not because I assume everyone has dominance problems with their dogs, but because being the alpha dog is the base of all obedience training and your dog is more likely to listen to you once it knows you are the pack leader.

Please try the following techniques to reinforce your status as alpha dog:

### **The Alpha Techniques**

If you come across your dog while she is sleeping or lying on the floor then you can reinforce your position as alpha dog by making her move so that you can pass by.

Generally I do not recommend people give their dogs bones as this encourages aggression, because in the wild the alpha dog would be the only one to have the privilege of chewing the bones.

Make sure that you always go through doorways first. A good method to reinforce your position as alpha dog is to walk your dog around the house on the leash, making your dog wait while you walk through doorways first.

At mealtimes make sure that your dog or dogs eat after all of the humans have.

Do not feed your dog tidbits or let it pester you at the table. Save the morsels and tidbits for training sessions instead.

Do not greet your dog straightaway when you arrive home. Make it wait until you are ready and then call it to you.

When your dog wants to go outside for a walk, make it sit and wait until you are ready to go.

When you give a command make sure that you are in a position to enforce the action that you require from your dog, especially in the initial stages of Alpha Dog training. Also, use the Alarm-No-Command technique as described in the Alpha Dog bonus book to reprimand your dog if it does not obey your command.

It is vitally important that your dog has good all-round obedience skills. Regular training sessions are key to improving your dog's obedience responses and keeping it used to answering your commands. Concentrate on the sit and stay, down and stay, heel and wait commands.

Do not inadvertently reinforce poor behavior from your dog. You must be consistent in your attitude to your dog. For example, if your dog is allowed to jump on you when you are playing with it but is not allowed to jump up at any other time then how is it meant to know the difference?

I also recommend you consider getting her spayed, if she hasn't already been that is. De-sexing dogs in most cases dramatically reduces behavioral problems. In females it also drastically reduces the

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chances of them developing deadly mammary cancers and so it is worthwhile in both respects.



As for fixing the actual behavior, you will have to make sure that you avoid situations where your dog may chase a vehicle. It is obviously not safe to let your dog chase the cars or trucks, and in order to correct this behavior the dog has to learn that it is not successful in chasing away the trucks or cars. With the chasing of cars and vehicles, the dog thinks that it is defending you by chasing the vehicles away! So in the mind of your dog, even though it never catches one, it is victorious!

You can practice training your dog to not chase bicycles, but motor vehicles can become risky. You could try doing it with a lead on her however. Hopefully your dog will get the message that it is not meant to chase anything!

1. Have a friend ride a bike past you and your dog
2. If your dog reacts aggressively or pulls on the leash, correct her by giving a quick tug on the lead and growling at her with a guttural growl.
3. Then ask your dog to sit. It is important to be CONFIDENT.
4. Repeat this a few times.
5. When you get to the stage where your dog begins to ignore the cyclist, you should praise her for her calm behavior.

The previous exercise could be done with a motor vehicle driving at a very low speed and with your dog on a leash, however you would need to be VERY careful if you were to attempt this to avoid running the dog over! Get a friend to drive a car past you and your dog very slowly, and continue to use the method as described above.

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By undertaking training such as this daily for around a month – on top of alpha dog training – you should notice a distinct difference in your dog's behavior! Be sure to reinforce appropriate behaviors and reprimand any chasing your dog does while it is under your control. Lastly, you should also ensure that your dog is getting lots of exercise and mental stimulation.

Best of luck with this chasing problem and please let us know how this particular method goes for you.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

### CHEWING AND SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dear Daniel

I have ordered your book online for a specific problem we have with our Golden Retrievers. To give you a brief history, we got our both of our dogs from 'Golden Retriever Rescue' and have always had dogs but never Golden Retrievers and never in the house.

First we got Shyla about 1 1/2 years ago. She was rescued from a puppy mill and had had at least one litter there. She was 1 1/2 yrs old (approx.). She had definitely been beaten into submission, she was very timid but very loveable -and needy. We thought something was wrong with her because she would come in the house find her spot and lie there and not move unless asked to-for hours! This is great in a way as she is never under foot, but when we put her out while we were at work, she would chew up kid's toys or any shoes left out. She never did this in the house.

After about a year we thought well maybe she is just bored and lonely while we are out, let's get her a friend. So we got Harry at 1 yr old from the Rescue, from a family that didn't have time for him .and we see why now - he has a ton of energy. They absolutely love each other, they play and cuddle up to sleep and clean each other. But the chewing is much, much worse when we put them out to go to work/school. They have chewed up just about everything - they chewed the cover off of the trampoline, planters of flowers, small trees, hoses, their water bowls, even their own blanket/bed they have torn into shreds.

My husband says we are going to have to put them in the kennel which is really big but the yard is huge and there is so much more room to run. But we are beginning to wonder if we can even set up the pool without them tearing it up. I know you are supposed to catch them in the act before you can discipline them, the problem with that is they never do it while we are around, we just come home to find the back yard destroyed and two innocent looking dogs!

Please tell me how to get them to stop chewing up everything, please!

Thanks

Lana.

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Hi there Lana,

Thank you for your email regarding your two chewing dogs! You had a great idea in getting another dog for your Golden Retriever to live life with in the hope that this would curb the chewing problem. In many cases it does, however obviously not in your one sadly. There are a few things to consider here first and foremost. You say that both dogs undertake the chewing, however if you aren't home to see them in action, it would be hard to know wouldn't it?? I would for this reason recommend that you pretend to go out, and sneak back somehow to see what it happening. If you want to get really technical and exciting you could set up a video camera aimed to the back yard and play this back when you get back from being away, to see the true dynamics of the situation. You could be right in that they both undertake the chewing behavior, or it may just be Shyla doing the chewing or even more surprising, maybe just even Harry! Catching them in the act either by spying or via video tape will help you decipher what is really going on when you aren't at home.

Both dogs sound like that are absolutely lovely and that they are otherwise a pleasure to keep. Because of Shyla's background and the information you supplied regarding her submissive nature and the fact she will often just sit in one spot for hours does highlight that her chewing may well have stemmed from a separation anxiety problem that has developed over the years. This is the most common reason dogs of an adult age chew things (particularly when their owners are away!). To curb this behavior for good, it is definitely a good idea to find out which dogs are actually chewing and which if either are initiating it.



Our usual advice to chewing problems our customers face is to reprimand the behavior when it happens, however if you aren't around when the behavior occurs, this technique is rendered useless! For this reason we need to find other ways to nip this problem in the bud.

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I believe that aiding any separation anxiety either dog may have, will definitely help to some extent. I will explain more about this soon. For the actual chewing, it is a great idea to try and alleviate any boredom by supplying both dogs with plenty of their own chew toys to keep them busy with during the day. Further to this you should have regular times where your dogs get walked everyday. I recommend two walks per day of approx 15 – 20 minutes each (depending on the time you can actually spare to take them). If you take them once in the morning, this should help keep them quiet. Then, when you get home and you find that they have only chewed their toys and not caused any other destruction then they get another walk as a reward. If you stick to this schedule for several weeks, they will soon associate behaving well during the day with getting a walk.

If they have chewed things in your backyard they were not supposed to, it is important to ignore both dogs when you get home, do not tell them off for the chewing (as they won't understand why they're being told off unless they get caught in the act) and quickly and quietly tidy any mess. There are plenty of chew toys available from pet stores and it is a matter of finding something that your dogs are interested in that is also durable. Actual food chew toys such as pigs ears and bones are good, however I would steer clear of these if you believe either dog can become aggressive or possessive. A product called a Kong (which you may or may not be familiar with) is good in that you can place food in the middle of it, which dogs then have fun trying to lick and eat out. Do some shopping around and ask your pet store for more good 'boredom buster' ideas.

Other ideas to prevent chewing when you're not at home include restricting the areas they can move outside. The kennel idea is one option, or you could fence an area off with a small temporary fence. Another idea is to have the two dogs on a 'run' that leads through your backyard without allowing them access to anything you don't want chewed and then to their kennels. These can be annoying to both set up and then to have in your backyard so may not be an option for you.

If one object in particular seems to be getting chewed time and time again, you have the option of using an aversive substance on that object such that the next time either dog chews it, it tastes revolting! This involves smearing something like tobasco sauce or cayenne pepper over the object. This is a good idea if your dogs keep aiming for one object, however if they just like chewing in general they will leave that alone and go for the next closest chewable thing.



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As for fixing any separation anxiety, if this is part of the problem, there are a few things you should be doing with your dogs whenever you leave home or arrive back.

### **Arrivals and departures**

Try to keep your arrivals and departures very low key. I recommend ignoring your dogs for 10 minutes after arriving home. Once they have calmed down, you can then show them some attention. This helps reinforce the quiet behavior – calm behavior equals attention from owner!

### **Do not respond**

If your dogs are acting poorly you should completely ignore them until they have quietened down. If you do respond to their silly behavior you are inadvertently rewarding your dogs because you are paying them attention. Some dogs like attention no matter whether that attention is positive or not.

### **Attention**

Only give your dog attention when it is lying down or relaxed and not actively seeking attention (by barking for example). Do this by calling your dog over and making it sit before petting, etc.

### **Contrast**

Your dogs are probably having difficulty accepting that sometimes they going to get all the attention and other times none (like when you are at work). You can help this problem by ignoring your dogs for a few hours a day on the weekends. You should feed your dogs when appropriate, but then continue to ignore them. The idea is that your dogs will begin to realize that time to themselves without you or your attention is a normal part of every day, and nothing to fret over.

### **Exercise**

If possible, you should take your dogs for a brisk 30 minute walk before you leave for work. This will help to tire your dogs out and will mean that they are more likely to rest throughout the day than get anxious and chew on something to make themselves feel better.

### **Clothing**

Try giving your dogs something of yours with your scent on it to comfort them while you are away.

### **Sit-stay and down-stay**

Practice these exercises in particular as outlined in the Secrets to Dog Training book. These exercises require your dog to respond to you for

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longer and longer periods of time, so should be good for its discipline. Once you have your dog staying for 10 minutes or so, then try moving out of its sight for a brief period of time.

### **The vet**

You may want to consult your vet about drug therapy. I would recommend that you ask about Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP) treatment. I have heard that this is extremely effective. This pheromone calms dog's nerves. DAP comes as a vaporizer that you plug into a wall socket, the vaporizer then releases small amounts of DAP into the room. You can buy DAP from a well-stocked pet store or several on-line pet stores.

### **Alpha dog**

I also strongly recommend that you review the Secrets to Becoming the Alpha Dog bonus book to ensure that both of your dogs know that you are in charge, and therefore they should be responsive to both your commands and corrections.

By undertaking these techniques as well as giving your dogs the option of chewing on their own toys rather than the kids toys, or objects outside and helping to curb any boredom via regular walks, you should notice a distinct difference in their behaviors as time goes by. Be sure to reward the dogs when they haven't chewed anything other than their own toys via vocal encouragement, a small food treat and perhaps an afternoon walk. Other than these methods, you could also try getting a dog walker in during the day to take both dogs out and help alleviate any boredom. They may also be able to catch a dog in the act to reprimand it then and there.

Best of luck undertaking the above training. Please let us know how you get on.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## COPROPHAGIA (POOP EATING)

Dear Daniel,

I have a terrible problem. My 4 month old puppy has recently developed an awful habit. She has started eating her own poop! I don't know why she is doing this, and I am at a loss as to what I should be doing about it.

Please help!

Bunny

- - -

Dear Bunny,

Thank you for your email regarding your puppy. You may be surprised to know that this is not an uncommon problem. Coprophagia (or poop eating) is obviously not unpleasant for your dog, in fact it sounds as though she quite likes it. However, people tend to find this natural behavior quite repulsive!

While there is no conclusive evidence one way or another as to why a dog would eat its own, or other dogs or species poop, there are a number of theories. Some of these include that Coprophagia is actually an attention seeking behavior, or that the dog in question is lacking in some nutrients that can be found in the poop. Or it could be a reaction to boredom, frustration or anxiety. Another theory is that in the wild, females would eat the feces of their young to make them less detectable by predators, and so the behavior is actually instinctual. Or perhaps some dogs just like the taste!

### **Solutions:**

The easiest way to prevent your dog from eating feces is by removing it immediately before your dog gets a chance to eat it, but this will be difficult while the dog is at home alone during the day, and allowed access to the yard.

Try lacing the stools with pepper, or perhaps you could try Tabasco sauce, or lemon juice. However, some dogs will eat the poop regardless of the taste.

There is a product on the market called Forbid that is added to a dog's diet to make feces distasteful. Some people get good results from using this, but it is not always effective.

Some have added pineapple or spinach to their dog's diet, while others use a meat tenderizer. This makes the poop less palatable.

You could try combining the poop eating with a reprimand so that your dog knows that you are not happy with this behavior. You leave a poop in the yard, and when she approaches it, give her a firm reprimand, by squirting her with cold water, or shaking a can of pebbles. It is not recommended to issue a verbal reprimand as this may just be giving her the attention she is seeking. If you do this for a month, with any luck, she would have learned that eating feces is not appropriate.



On the occasions that you do not catch your dog eating poop, reprimands are not recommended. For reprimands to be effective you need to issue them at the same time that the unwanted behavior is occurring. Doing them after the fact will have no effect on the poop eating behavior.

While, if your dog is eating the poop of other dogs or species, there is a chance that parasites will be passed onto your dog, the risk of this is MINIMAL. If your dog is healthy and is only ingesting her own stool, then there are no risks to your dog's health.

Best of luck with fixing this behavior and please let us know how you progress.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## DIGGING

Hi Daniel

We have an 18 month old Airedale X (we think - she is from SPCA). We've also been told she could be a Catalan Sheepdog. Overall, Shari is smart, easy to train, obedient, friendly and great with other dogs. Our only problem with her and it is getting worse - is digging. I know this is a common problem with dogs.

She has boundless energy so I walk her once per day (half hour) in the morning and my husband jogs with her once in the evenings (half hour), she also has a 15 minute play session with our neighbor's dog once a day (we hope this might release some energy). I will play fetch with her during the day for about half an hour and work on her dropping her toy rather than wanting to play tug of war.

I am a home maker so she is rarely left at home for long periods of time. She is digging more and more. I have tried leaving interesting things for her to play with like putting half a cup of her dog food in an empty, clean cardboard milk container so she can empty that - and sometimes rip it apart, which doesn't bother me. I have tried putting her poop in her digging holes - she makes new ones. I have tried putting pepper all around the garden and on the holes where she has dug but I don't know how to stop her behavior.

There is no pattern to where she is digging. The first spot was near our house and this seemed to be a comfort spot during the warmer months which we allowed her to dig as it seemed a healthy instinct, but now it is erratic and all over the place, even through the lawn!

I am really angry, I don't know how to show her it is bad, and I am at the point of putting her in a crate or fencing off a portion of the yard which I really hate to do to such an otherwise happy, exuberant darling.

We really need expert advice desperately.

Regards

Nadia

- - -

Hi Nadia,

Thanks for your email. It sounds as though you have a gorgeous pet there! However, I can imagine that her digging behavior is quite frustrating for you!

Dogs will dig for a number of reasons.

- Because they find it fun and entertaining
- Because they are bored/frustrated
- Because they can smell that a rodent has been wandering around that area of the yard
- To escape
- To keep cool/warm

Unfortunately for you, Airedale Terriers LOVE to dig! They become bored very quickly. I recommend, in that case, that you try to keep her occupied throughout the day as much as possible. You are already giving her a lot of exercise, and for most dogs this would be enough, but perhaps your dog requires more.

Have daily obedience lessons with Shari. If she has already been taught in obedience, then these daily refresher courses will only need to go for about 10 minutes. The great thing about going through the various commands with her on a daily basis is it helps keep her both mentally and physically fit! A dog who exercises her mind as well as her body uses up more energy than one who only exercises her body! And obviously, the more tired she is, the less energy she will have to dig with!

Supply her with lots of interesting toys, and try rotating them for added interest.

In hot weather, you could supply her with a wading pool for her to cool off in so that she is not digging a hole to lie in. In cold weather, please ensure that she has somewhere warm to go to also.

Because she obviously likes to dig, you could section off a part of your yard, and teach Shari that it is only acceptable to dig there. Bury toys in the dirt to encourage her. If you see her digging in the wrong section of the yard, reprimand her, then lead her to the correct spot and praise her. She will eventually learn where she can dig, and where she can't.

Try putting some chili powder in a watering can with water, and wet the patches you would like her to avoid - this will act as a deterrent, as dogs do not like the smell of Chili.



Please also read the section in Secrets to Dog Training on digging for some more useful tips.

Good luck Nadia, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## ESCAPING

Hello Daniel and all your team!

I have a golden doodle, who is now 9 months old. He is not a problem when he is in the house, but when he gets out! We live in a house and there is a backyard with fence, so that is where he usually goes out (basically all the time), and he listens to me when I call him in the house. The problem happens 3 times already when he gets out of the backyard, he pushed the gate a couple of times and he ran away! Thank god we caught him pretty close to the house, but it really concerns me, especially that we live in NY and we have extremely heavy traffic all over!!! When he gets out, he is acting like crazy - he ran to people, he jump on them, and it's just impossible to catch him, especially that he just ignores us calling him! He's been neutered few month ago, but it just didn't change that behavior. And he listens to me in the house no question asked! I am so desperate that I told to my husband that most likely we will need to buy an invisible electric fence, but on the other side I think that there is a way to stop it without any electric shock! I really don't know on how to stop him from running away and how to teach him to walk with me without any leash, and how to stop that crazy behavior when he sees strangers, (he just cannot pass without jumping on them!) I thought that maybe if I will take him out on the street he will get used to people running around, but will it stop him from running away?

Please help!

Thank You, Ariel

- - -

Hi Ariel,

Thanks for your email regarding your Golden Doodle. Escaping behavior is a common problem, but one that is very distressing because of the possible dangers your dog faces such as being hit by a car, or being taken by a passerby.

There are three main reasons that dogs escape:

1. They are bored or lonely at home. I would assume that loneliness is not the issue here, however, perhaps a more strenuous exercise



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regime might help. Because of his age, he probably has lots of energy to burn, and if he does not get the right amount of exercise he may become bored and frustrated. Hopefully, if you tire him out with play, he will be less likely to escape. There are many ways you can exercise a dog, such as going for a run or walk, playing a game of fetch, taking him for a swim, or having an obedience lesson.

Also, try to make your backyard a fun and interesting place for him to spend time. Make sure he has plenty of toys to keep him occupied while you are out. Some dog's enjoy the act of escaping, and find it fun, and a challenge. If that is the case here, you will need to be extra vigilant - keep a strict eye on him when he is in the yard. If you are going out, it might be a good idea to leave him inside.

2. Sexual motivation. The motivation for intact dogs to seek out a mate can be very high, and it can be very difficult to prevent him from escaping. However, if you have had him neutered, then this is not the reason he is escaping.

3. Another possibility is that dogs escape to seek and join a stronger pack. If a dog does not have a strong leader, and does not regard his owner as the Alpha Dog, then he might feel insecure and therefore feel the need to find a more suitable leader to follow.

To ensure that your dog feels secure, you should read and use the Alpha techniques as set out in the bonus book "Secrets to Becoming the Alpha Dog".



If your dog does escape, do not chase him, as this will only engage you in a game of 'catch', which your dog will probably find quite fun, but obviously won't help you catch him. Some people have had success by just turning around and walking away from the dog. The dog realizes that you are not going to chase them, and then come back to you of their own accord.

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To improve his responsiveness to your commands while off leash, ensure as a first step that you are using the Alpha techniques to teach him that you are in charge! Next, have daily obedience lessons with him in your yard where there are no distractions. Use praise and rewards to keep him motivated.

There are a number of Come Command Rules that I recommend people use:

1. Never call your dog to you for a reprimand.
2. Always call your dog in a happy voice.
3. Always praise your dog for coming to you, even if they have taken their time.
4. Praise your dog for coming to you without having been called.
5. Never call your dog to you for something you know they don't like e.g. a bath or visits to the vet.
6. Try using a squeaky toy to encourage your dog to come to you.

You will need to make your fence more secure so that your dog does not have the opportunity to escape. I really don't think that an invisible fence is a good idea because it may prevent him from escaping, but it won't actually fix the reasons he is escaping, and may actually cause more behavioral problems.

Good luck Ariel, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## EXCITEMENT URINATION

Hello Daniel,

We recently adopted a Bichon Frise, and she is almost a year old.

A little background on Muriel - she spent the first 4 months of her life in a pet store, caged of course. Her first owner worked long hours and kept her caged also.

We have had her for a couple of months and she is a GREAT dog except for one problem, excitement urination! We have tried to physically pick her up and take her outside to do her business but she is peeing all the way to the door in our arms.

We also have a male Poodle which we rescued from the same shelter. Our dogs are NOT caged in those small traditional kennel cages. Hubby custom built a removable gate the area they are in during the night and when I go away on some days is about 4' X4'. We have a nice pet bed that they share. Both dogs get along great and play well together.

We are banging our heads on the wall trying to figure out why the Bichon has this excitement urination problem. Can you offer some suggestions as what we might do to get Muriel over this? We do not scold her when she pees. Any suggestion you have would be greatly appreciated. She has had all her shots and has been spayed.

Thank you, Sharna

- - -

Hi there Sharna,

Thanks for the email regarding your young Bichon, Muriel. As you well know by now, excitement urination can be an annoying and frustrating behavior that can quite often take time, persistence and patience to correct. It is important in these cases to remember that your dog is not to be reprimanded for urinating since it is always an accident. Firstly, let me also take the time to say that in this case we are assuming she has a problem with urinating when over-excited. There are several congenital and disease related problems dogs can have that causes clinical signs similar to that seen in a case of "excitement

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urination" – including "ectopic ureters", incomplete control over the urethral sphincter and diabetes mellitus amongst other problems. If you are not 100% positive this problem is purely related to her being excited, you need to take her to your local Veterinarian for a full clinical examination to rule out possible health related causes for the problem. Many of the health problems related to incontinence are quite treatable; however you obviously need to know what to treat before you can treat it, so this is a good reason for your dog to be checked over by a Veterinarian. Even if you simply ask next time she is to be vaccinated.

In the assumption that your dog does in fact have a problem with over-excitement urination, there are several steps you can take to try and counter the problem. It is of course always important to remember not to reward your dog's over-excited reaction by offering comfort. Never praise or reward your dog while it is submitting and/or urinating, only do so when your dog is relaxed. Also remember not to shout at or threaten your dog if it starts submitting and/or urinating. Basically ignore any negative behavioral response since telling your dog off may make matters worse.

The following technique is probably the best one to use for Muriel.

- Sit Muriel next to you in a large open area that is free from distractions, such as a park.
- Get a friend (preferably someone that has caused your dog to get excited and urinate before) to approach slowly from a distance, give Muriel a tidbit when it becomes aware of the person but does not have the behavioral signs of excitement.
- Your friend should not attempt to approach too close or speak to your dog or yourself. Also it is important that you do not make any contact with your friend yourself.

I believe this type of slow introduction done many times a week over a few weeks will give you the best chance of success.

There is another situation you can try called the 'mealtime scenario'. In some ways this is similar to the previous technique and can probably be used in conjunction with it.

- Set the situation up so that you are feeding your dog when a guest arrives.

- The guest should be someone that Muriel knows and that person should not attempt to approach or speak to your dog or yourself. You should ignore the person completely to help your dog realize that having another person around is no big deal.
- The idea behind this is that this scenario gives your dog the choice between eating and excitement urination. Hopefully your dog will find eating more attractive.



- If your dog ignores its food, gets excited and urinates then don't feed it until later in the day and try again. For Muriel's situation it is also important that any accidents should be cleaned up with a specific pet odor neutralizer. If your dog tends to urinate in the same place then you could try using the odor neutralizer, waiting for it to dry, and then feeding your dog a treat on the spot. That way it will hopefully get the association between food and the area rather than it being a place that it can relieve itself.

This particular problem definitely takes some time and training to overcome and you will not get instant results. Stick with it however and please make sure you get your dog checked out with a qualified Veterinarian if you suspect something more than a behavioral problem. If it ONLY occurs when the dog is excited it is less likely to be health related, however even in these situations, certain problems such as dogs that have incomplete neurological control of their bladder muscles will more likely to urinate and can present exactly the same as those with a diagnosed behavioral 'excitement urination' problem. Try the techniques I have outlined above otherwise and see how you get on. It is a good thing you also have a poodle that (from your email) is relatively well behaved.

In most cases the dog with the behavioral problem learns correct behaviors from the other dog in the household. Continue with the above training, be sure not to punish Muriel for any indiscretions she may have while you are training her or in between times. It is a behavioral problem related to her excitement, so any urination she does is of course unintentional and not worthy of punishment. However, be sure to ignore and not respond to her over-excited states

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when she gets in to them, and try and avoid or lessen her excitement somehow when it does occur.

Best of luck with Muriel. I believe with time and patience you will make a significant breakthrough with her – provided the problem is in fact behavioral. Because I cannot see her urinate or check her over I cannot tell you whether this is behavioral or not. However the advice I have given will definitely help if it is!

Thanks for your email and please let us know how you get on in the months ahead.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## FEAR AGGRESSION

Hi Dan,

My dog has what I'd call more fear aggression. She is a beagle & border collie mix who is 3yrs. old. She is very bright & has been through training but is very aggressive with people & small children she doesn't know. We can't let anyone try to pet her if she doesn't know them, on the leash or off, cause she'll growl & snap at their hand. She is very loving to dogs or people she knows well but not to any one else.

Any advice would be appreciated.

Thanks

Polly

- - -

Hi there Polly,

Thank you for your email regarding your 3 year old Beagle/Border Collie with fear aggression. Your dog's behavioral problem is relatively common, and can occur for a number of reasons, that quite often we never fully understand. Despite this, the basics are that it is definitely a treatable problem.

Your dog has an aggression problem known as "Fear or Fear Based Aggression" – in which, in your particular case, your dog is afraid of any strange dogs or people she meets during walks, or any other situation. I would say there is a good chance that this particular dog was at the bottom of the pack with its litter mates. As a general rule forceful correction techniques have a very negative effect with fear based aggression or with a dog with a very nervous temperament and so should be avoided in your dog's case.

Firstly, I would recommend getting your dog fully checked out by a vet for any physical problems. This is especially so if the behavior has come on suddenly and not been triggered by any one event. I would not really suspect this of being the case for your dog, since it seems fine with people and dogs that she knows. However if you are not

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100% convinced that this problem is purely behavioral you should definitely make a visit to your Veterinarian to get her checked over.

Definitely consider using a muzzle if you are concerned that your dog may become overly aggressive towards other people or dogs, as it will also take away any risk of the situation getting out of hand. Allow your dog to get used to the feel of the muzzle before you embark on any encounters with unfamiliar dogs or people. I often find that they initially hate the feel of the muzzle, but if you give them a distraction, such as going for a run or allowing them to play with a familiar friend, they will get used to it quickly.

For the case of your particular dog you will need to take her to plenty of public places and socialize her with other dogs as much as possible. Remember it is not unusual for dogs to be territorial and show aggression towards other dogs. Don't be afraid to growl at your dog, eventually it will learn no real harm will occur. Arrange for people to come around (children too) to help with human socialization. Remember dogs are never too old to train; it just takes longer with an older dog. If you have friends with dogs getting them to bring these round may also help get your dog used to the idea of other dogs in its environment.

Last resorts (that I do not believe you need in your case) include 'Doggie Prozac', but you would need to get a vet's advice on this. Another alternative is to use Rescue Remedy, which you should be able to find in a pet store. It is a very safe, very gentle and natural sedative, which can have a good anti-anxiety effect. You simply apply a few sprays in the mouth or on the nose.

With fear aggression you have to be careful that you do not **over-assert** yourself and your family as the "alpha dog", as it may only exaggerate your dog's lack of confidence. Your dog should know that it is bottom of the pack, but if you can make your dog feel a little more like a member of the family than what you already do, it will help build confidence.

It is important that you communicate to your dog that it is at the bottom of the pack, but at the same time your dog requires a confidence booster. I suggest you not have your dog on the furniture, on your lap, or on your bed. Your dog needs to know that it is not in charge. However, if your dog does seem to be acting submissively, I suggest you just ignore it. For example if you growl at your dog and it acts afraid or submissive (e.g. rolling on its back, licking you, looking



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away, or growling) then just ignore it until it has calmed down. Do not look your dog in the eye, but between its feet (this is part of predator-prey psychology), get down closer to your dogs level and talk gently until it seems confident.

You can also try the deprivation method in which if your dog reacts badly to other dogs or people at the park try turning around and going home again, deprive your dog of what it wants. It would be best to practice this if you can with a friend and their dog, not too far from home. This is another way of communicating who is in the control of the situation.

I also suggest you think about getting your dog spayed if she hasn't already been. The reason I say this is because aggression due to fluctuating hormonal levels is quite common. However, in saying that hormonal changes are only one factor with aggression and your dog's behavior may have nothing to do with hormone levels.



It sounds as though your dog is relatively well trained, however I still recommend that you start training your dog on a regular basis and under a variety of conditions. The progression below is a useful one that many people have used to get better results from their dogs. The first step is to have your training session in an environment where your dog is comfortable and not threatened. You can decide where you start on the progression if you feel that you would get a good response out of the earlier progressions and do not need to do it again.

You will also be the best judge of when you should move on to the next progression, but I would recommend that you move on when your dog completes a 5 to 10 minute sit-stay and a 5-10 minute down-stay. This may require you to go back to the beginning to quite basic commands but you are better to take things slowly and complete this program over a number of weeks:

1. inside, on-leash, with no other dogs or people present,
2. outside, on-leash, with no other dogs or people present,
3. outside, off-leash, with no other dogs or people present,

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4. outside, on-leash, gradually introducing dogs and people to the vicinity,
5. outside, off-leash, gradually introducing dogs and people to the vicinity.

This sort of process will hopefully also help your dog get used to the idea of having other dogs around it and to teach her not to act aggressively towards them.

I hope the above advice has been of some help to you. With time, patience, consistency and persistence you should notice a significant difference in your dog's demeanor in the following few months.

Best of luck and please let us know how you get on with your training.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## FEAR OF THE LEASH

Hi Team,

I ordered your book and have started using it, it's great. But my problem with my 4month old lab/retriever is the moment I put the leash on him, he sits down, ears drop and looks away and will not move for anything or anyone.

I have read the fear of the leash chapter and will start to introduce the leash slowly, but I really need help. He is a good dog otherwise.

How do I get him to walk with me on the leash, and not be afraid of it and is this normal behavior,

Thanks for your help

Hannah

- - -

Hi there Hannah,

Thanks for the email regarding your 4 month old lab/retriever and his fear of the leash. This is a relatively common problem for puppy owners and needs to be handled with care to ensure that it doesn't continue into adulthood.

Obviously your puppy is used to the collar you have given it, which is a fantastic start! The next step should really be to ensure and re-enforce the come, sit and stay commands to that you can call him to you and make him sit quietly while you attach the leash. Please see the relevant sections in Secrets to Dog Training for more information here.

### **Puppies and Leashes**

1. I would begin by exposing your pup to the leash in a non-threatening (for it) situation. Leave the leash out in your pups play area so that it gets used to the sight and smell of the leash, only do this when you are present. Depending on how badly your pup is reacting you may have to leave the leash on the outskirts of its area for a start and build up over a couple of weeks to the point that you can approach your pup with the leash in your hand. Be very gradual

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in how you do this. Do not attempt to put the leash on your pup unless it is 100% relaxed about the deal.

2. You will have to be on the lookout for when your pup is showing non-fearful behavior towards the leash. Reward your pup with praise and perhaps treats (although personally I am not a big fan of using treats as bribes).

3. Try teaching your pup a few commands without the leash, particularly sit and stay, which you should be able to do just as effectively without a leash. Once your pup has a grasp of these commands and can stay for 4 or 5 minutes then introduce the leash to it. Praise your pup for performing the commands while you have the leash in your hands. Again, do not attempt to put it on your pup unless it is 100% relaxed about it. The idea behind this exercise is that your pup will form a positive association with the leash due to being rewarded for fulfilling the commands while the leash is in its presence.



Next the puppy needs to get used to the leash itself without you holding the other end. Treats are ideal for this training. The puppy won't always need treats to walk on a leash. Leash walking has its own rewards, but your young puppy doesn't know this yet. The treats will help get things moving in the right direction. Feeding time is a good time to work on this conditioning, when you have the dish in your hand and an eager puppy at your feet. Back away from the puppy. Use your body language and the puppy's name to attract the puppy to follow. Move around a bit with your puppy, making it a fun game, before putting down the dish and thus delivering a great reward.

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At other times when your puppy is likely to be interested in games and treats, use a bit of food from the puppy's next meal to condition the puppy to look at you and move with you. Keep moving away from the puppy, encouraging the puppy to follow you. Young puppies naturally do this anyway, so the training is easy and fun.

At all times, be prepared to reward your puppy with little treats, games and other things the puppy likes, for moving with you, coming to you, and looking at you. Make this a habit, and develop your body language and voice to what works best with THIS puppy. Each puppy is different. Pups have different things they like best, and different things they respond to in different ways. You can build your puppy's desires to interact with you by how you use your praise, treats, petting, and the games you and your puppy play together. All of this factors into your leash training as well as all other training, both in puppy-hood and later on in your dog's life.

I hope this has been of some help to you and your puppy. Please let us know how you get on with the training. Hopefully you undertake the training in such a way that is fun enough for your puppy not to get submissive and scared!

Best of luck and kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## FOOD BOWL AGGRESSION

Dear Dan,

I have a 7 year old Chocolate Lab called Sawyer who guards his food. When giving him food or a bone he then immediately takes them as his own and will not give them up without a fight. If we go near him while he is eating, he will growl and snap bite and try to inhale the food.

Within the last couple months, we (my wife and I, we have no kids) have been feeding him while we are there with him and it seems to be getting better, he seems to be tolerant of us being around and I can feed him some of his meal out of my hand. Should we just continue this course? What else should we be doing?

My big concern is if there are children around that try to give him a treat or try to feed him - he will get very aggressive if he thinks they are trying to take food/treats away. How can we work on this?

We are trying to have children and we don't want them to be in danger but we love our dog and he has otherwise been a great part of the family. By the way, it is only with food, not with toys.

Thank you!

Ernie

- - -

Hello Ernie

Thank you for your email regarding Sawyer the Chocolate Labrador.

I'm sorry to hear that you are experiencing difficulties with your dog.

Your concerns about Sawyer's aggressive behavior is well founded, and to be honest with you, I am a little worried about your particular situation, especially if you are planning to have children in the house.

The behavior which Sawyer is exhibiting needs to be addressed and corrected as soon as possible and this may require some time, patience, persistence and dedication on your part.

Labradors in general are an excellent breed to have and are wonderful around children, better in fact than many other breeds out there. Problems with Labradors initially stem from poor breeding, or a lack of effective leadership or steady and constant training.

Sawyer's actions are classic examples of 2 types of aggression:

Food Bowl Aggression and Resource Aggression.

There is also another issue that needs to be addressed before we focus on dealing with Sawyer's aggressions, and this is your status as the "Alpha Dog" in the household.

The reason I say this is because in your E-mail you state that when you give Sawyer a bone he immediately takes it as his own and will not give it up without a fight.

We have to remember that dogs, like wolves, are "hardwired" so to speak, with pack animal instincts, and regardless of how domesticated Sawyer may appear, he is in every way operating according to the instinctive nature that governs all dogs and wolves.

This is one reason that I generally do not recommend people give their dogs bones, as this actually encourages aggression.

In the wild the Alpha dog would be the only one to have the privilege of chewing the bones. The reason Sawyer growls, snaps and bites at you when you approach him while he has a bone is because he believes that he has the right to the bone and is trying to discipline you for challenging his dominant role.

So to begin with, I would encourage you and any other members of your family, to read the bonus book "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog". This book will give you a good understanding of the hierarchical nature and behavior of your dog. Follow the tips in this book as much as possible and you should get good results with Sawyer within a couple of weeks.

I will provide you with some great "Alpha" tips towards the end of this E-mail, though I strongly recommend that you read and fully understand "Secrets to becoming the Alpha Dog".

For now, let's address Sawyer's aggressive behavior.

### Food Bowl Aggression



Food bowl aggression is a form of territorial and possessive aggression. In the wild, the Alpha Dog will be able to take any object from a lower ranked dog. Sawyer's possessive nature signals to me that he does not see you as his leader and provider; in fact, you are a threat to his possessions, which is why he guards them.

This type of behavior can be rectified with the following technique.

You have to convince your dog that having you and your wife around the food bowl is a positive thing.

You need to be present while your dog eats. In fact, for the next week or two, put his bowl away, and start feeding your dog directly from your hands. Have your wife do this also. You will need to do this for both his morning and evening meals.

Next, for another 1-2 weeks, put your dog's empty bowl on the floor. Add food from your hands at two minute intervals.

Then, start to semi-fill the bowl and continue to top it up with food from your hand. Once again, this should continue for 1-2 weeks.

The final step, which should be continued for the remainder Sawyer's life, is to fill his bowl, and ask him to sit before eating. Praise him for obedience, and once in a while when he is still eating, call your Sawyer over to you for a treat.

### Resource Aggression

Sawyer's resource aggression is probably directly related to his food bowl aggression, as his food bowl is considered a "resource" by him.



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I am still providing you with this information on resource aggression merely as an informational supplement, just in case Sawyer continues to show forms of aggression after his Bowl Aggression has been addressed and corrected.

The hope is, in the unforeseen case that Sawyer continues to act out, you will have a greater understanding with which to observe and identify the behavior, and we will have a better chance at addressing any possible future problems that may arise.

Basically "Resource Aggression" occurs when a dog is attempting to protect and guard something which it considers highly desirable. Such behavior is displayed when a dog is approached, while it is in possession of a noted, actual or perceived resource. Something is defined as a resource if the dog is acting to protect it, and a resource could include food, water, treats, toys, or other physical objects they deem as important. In some instances even people can be considered as a "resource", for example, a dog that is being petted may guard this resource (the petting) from another dog or person. Owners can be viewed by some dogs as being an important "resource" and therefore show aggressive behaviors towards a person or animal that it feels is threatening the resource. This behavior may be directed toward specific members of the family, visitors, or other pets.

If the resource is not present, the dog will not show aggressive behavior.

Although protecting a resource in the wild is necessary if an animal is to survive, it is considered unacceptable in any domestic breed, especially when the aggression is being directed towards humans in general.

### **Alpha Tips**

It is very important that you effectively teach Sawyer that he is loved, but actually on the bottom rung of your family pecking order. I answer many dog behavior and training questions every day, and in almost every instance I encourage people to use the following techniques because I sincerely believe that in making the order of the hierarchy clear for your dog, you are preventing a number of problems including disobedience and aggression.



### THE ALPHA TECHNIQUES

If you come across your dog while he is sleeping or lying on the floor then you can reinforce your position as alpha dog by making him move so that you can pass by.

Generally I do not recommend people give their dogs bones as this encourages aggression, because in the wild the alpha dog would be the only one to have the privilege of chewing the bones.

Make sure that you always go through doorways first. A good method to reinforce your position as alpha dog is to walk your dog around the house on the leash, making your dog wait while you walk through doorways first.

At mealtimes make sure that your dog or dogs eat after all of the humans have.

Do not feed your dog tidbits or let it pester you at the table. Save the morsels and tidbits for training sessions instead.

Do not greet your dog straightaway when you arrive home. Make it wait until you are ready and then call it to you.

When your dog wants to go outside for a walk, make it sit and wait until you are ready to go.

When you give a command make sure that you are in a position to enforce the action that you require from your dog, especially in the initial stages of Alpha Dog training. Also, use the Alarm-No-Command technique as described in the Alpha Dog bonus book to reprimand your dog if it does not obey your command.

It is vitally important that your dog has good all-round obedience skills. Regular training sessions are key to improving your dog's obedience responses and keeping it used to answering your commands. Concentrate on the sit and stay, down and stay, heel and wait commands.

Do not inadvertently reinforce poor behavior from your dog. You must be consistent in your attitude to your dog. For example, if your dog is allowed to jump on you when you are playing with it but is not allowed to jump up at any other time then how is it meant to know the difference?

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Remember to follow any training with *Daily* obedience training. We recommend 20 minutes of training each day to keep your dog in top form.

I hope this is helpful. Just keep working at it, and I am sure you will see good results.

Good luck and all the best with your training!

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## FOOD STEALING

Dear Dan

I have really enjoyed your information. I do have a problem that you might be able to help. Our neighbor's dog is a great dog except for one quality, she raids garbage. She was an adoption from our local humane society. My neighbor is my nephew and his family so the problem is causing them a lot of angst as we are all family.

She is a red tick hound ... yup, led by a great nose right to the garbage. My nephew did find out about her history. She grew up in a low income neighborhood and was a breeding bitch. In this low income neighborhood, she probably learned to roam in search of garbage. She is now about 4 years old and the habit is well established. She is smart enough to open a door, walk into a house and raid it out of your kitchen garbage can, right in front of you. Then she will hit the bags outside!

Is there a humane way to break this habit? Cayenne Pepper, or a vomiting agent you can mix in the garbage to "condition" her not to eat it?

If you have time to give me some advice, I would greatly appreciate it, as would our whole family.

Thank you

Courtney

- - -

Hi Courtney,

Thanks for your email regarding your nephew's dog. This must be a very frustrating issue for you! The difficulty is that dogs have been programmed by evolution to take every opportunity to eat food they come across. Your nephew's dog is driven by instinct to raid the garbage, and not a desire to be naughty, so it is important to realize that this is actually a very normal behavior as far as the dog is concerned - she has no idea that she is doing something wrong. This means, though, that you might have difficulty in getting your nephew's dog to stop this behavior altogether.

The most obvious way of preventing this behavior is by restricting the dog's access to all garbage bins, indoor and out. Have bins with secure, animal-proof lids, and do not leave any food or garbage bags lying where she can reach them.

Keep your kitchen garbage in the same cupboard as your cleaning products so that it is shut behind a door. If the dog is capable of opening cupboard doors, install a dog proof latch.

If you want to booby-trap some garbage, to try to teach her to stay away from the bins, I recommend that you place some cardboard so that it sits hanging over the edge of the bins. Place some cans of pebbles (or something similar that you know will make a lot of noise) on the cardboard, so that when your dog jumps up to open the lid, the cans will topple and fall to the ground, making a lot of noise. The cans will startle the dog and hopefully making her think twice before raiding the garbage again.



You could also use an aversive substance to make the taste of garbage bags unpleasant for your dog. The best way is to restrict your dogs access to the bags (if that is possible) and only let it have access after you have used one of the following substances sprayed or applied to the object to deter your dog from playing with it.

- Bitter Apple Spray
- Cayenne pepper,
- Aloe vera gel,

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- A hot Tabasco sauce or similar.

If you catch your dog in the act, you should reprimand her by rushing over growling and making a loud noise such as clapping your hands or banging bench tops. Only reprimand her if you have actually caught her in the act. Even if you miss her by two minutes, she will not actually associate your scolding with the raiding of the garbage, so it will be a waste of time, and will only confuse the dog.

You should also ensure that you are making your dog wait in a sit-stay for at least 10 seconds before allowing her to eat. Do not feed her any scraps from your plate or when you are cooking in the kitchen.

Please also make sure that this dog is kept occupied and mentally and physically stimulated. This will prevent her from getting bored and going scavenging for food.

Good luck, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## HOUSETRAINING A PUPPY

Hi Dan,

I got a new Golden Retriever puppy a few weeks ago, and I am having trouble teaching her to go to the bathroom outside. She is only 12 weeks old, so I know that I am probably expecting too much by wanting no more accidents. However, I am finding the whole process a little frustrating, and really time consuming. Do you have any hints for helping the process along?

Thank you

Simon

- - -

Hi there Simon,

Thanks for the email regarding your 12 week old Golden. The problems you are encountering are very common with young puppies of this age and they are relatively easy problems to correct with time. Firstly we need to look at a general house training strategy. I would ask you to review our bonus book 'Secrets to House Training' for further ideas.

In order to help maximize the training of your puppy, it is important to understand when a puppy is most likely to urinate (pee) or defecate (poop). Typically, this can be divided into four categories:

1. A puppy usually eliminates (urinates or defecates) soon after it wakes up, since during sleep urine production continues to fill the bladder. It is important to remember that puppies sleep several times a day and so have several waking periods.
2. After eating a meal a puppy is likely to defecate within ten to twenty minutes. This is due to a physiological function called the gastro-colic response which is, in more simple terms, a bodily response produced after eating that causes a dog's bowels to move leading to defecation. Since young puppies are generally fed at around three to four times daily, they will also need to be taken outside, or to paper (depending on your training method) after being fed.

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3. If a puppy has been highly active at one time, it is likely to eliminate soon after.
4. In general puppies usually also eliminate before sleeping each night.

As you can see, there are many times throughout a single day that a puppy may eliminate. It is important to remember that, as well as these general categories, a puppy may eliminate at any time and thus you need to be aware that accidents will happen. They are bound to occur no matter how prepared or organized you are since:

*The muscles in a puppy bladder are still developing resulting in less control.*

*The smaller size of the bladder results in more frequent urination of small volumes.*

From what you described in your email regarding the puppy accidentally urinating a small amount once she returns inside the house, you may need to leave the puppy outside slightly longer after you wait with her. She is very young at the moment though and most people only begin training their puppy at 10 weeks old, so it sounds as though you have a head start here. Take it easy on your puppy for this reason – she is young and will not learn everything immediately. This combined with the fact with the physiological differences between a puppy and an adult dog as described above mean you have to take it easy with the training and not get too upset if small accidents occur.

You can help regulate the elimination process with well controlled schedules and a frequent regime of resting, eating and playing. At times when this schedule is changed by other family members having other separate activities with the puppy, her schedule and need to eliminate will change as well. A common mistake made by many owners when they get their new puppy and bring them home for the first time is to allow free run of the house. Allowing the puppy a free run will interrupt and set the training process back several weeks. This setback happens because the puppy will most likely 'accidentally' eliminate in several areas of the house. As a result of the odor and her familiarity of the area, she may remember these areas as being those at which she can go back to in order to eliminate again. Unless these areas are scrubbed and deodorized the problem will worsen.

Supervision of the puppy must be carried out at all times at this early stage. Not only does this ensure your puppy cannot cause trouble, but it also greatly aids the training process. In circumstances where it is



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not possible to devote all this time to supervision, crate training could be used as it sounds as though you have been doing. Because a puppy will generally eliminate in an area they have previously urinated or defecated, it is important to remove and neutralize any area that has been affected. This is a very important aspect of house training both puppies and adult dogs.

By making set times during the day when someone in the family is able to feed and then supervise your puppy you will be able to help her in getting to the area you have chosen to train her to eliminate in. In general a puppy should be fed three to four times per day. The day should therefore be arranged such the puppy can be fed on three to four separate occasions with supervision. It also needs to be arranged so that when the puppy awakes from sleep, someone is available to take her outside to the toilet.

Whether it's the middle of the night, early morning or after a day-nap, an awakening puppy needs to be taken outside to urinate and/or defecate. As stated earlier, puppies are generally fed three to four smaller meals per day. Elimination after a period of activity or exercise is also common, so you should wait with her outside and encourage her to urinate/defecate before letting her back into the house.

By following the guidelines above, you should have more control over your puppy's house training problem. Puppies generally do not give you much warning that they need to go out, because they haven't yet learnt that they HAVE to go out! For this reason following the guidelines above will give you the best idea of when your puppy will most likely be feeling like urinating or defecating. If you catch her about to toilet inside, quickly run and pick her up to carry her outside. Sometimes she will end up urinating or defecating in your arms, but this is just something you will have to put up with for the next little while until she is properly trained. If you are too late to pick her up, but she is still in the act or it is definitely only seconds after the event, you can reprimand her with a guttural growl "AAAAH" and a clap of the hands so that she knows what she has done is wrong. Doing so after the event, be it more than 10 seconds will be pointless and only confuse your dog as well as potentially giving her a submissive complex later in life.

Also make sure that when you take your puppy outside to toilet you do the following:

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1. After mealtimes, waking up and exercise your puppy should be gently picked up and taken outside or preferably lead via a collar and lead outside to your chosen toileting area.
2. While waiting patiently for your puppy to eliminate, use an encouraging, high pitched tone of voice to say the word or phrase you wish to use. Repeat this while you wait. eg. "Toilet!"
3. Continue repeating the word you have chosen until the puppy has finished urinating and defecating before giving plenty of praise and attention. "GOOD GIRL!!, WELL DONE, YOU'RE SO CLEVER!!" – using an excited and happy high pitched voice. This praise needs to occur directly after the puppy has finished in order to be effective. You may then both return inside. Do not play with the puppy until it has eliminated. It may be a good idea to briefly play with her after she toilets outside since it may help that last little bit out that has previously been coming out inside!



It sounds as though your puppy already has a good idea of where to defecate. I would not worry trying to get your puppy to respond to the door bell to go to the toilet. She is very young and will definitely pick up what to do very soon. It does take a couple of months for a puppy this young to get the full idea of what it's all about. Once you have completed your toilet training and you're happy that your puppy knows what is right and what isn't, you can consider installing a doggy door and training her to use this so she can go outside to the toilet whenever she feels the need to.

Best of luck with your puppy. I hope the above advice has been of some help to you with her problems.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## IGNORING COME COMMAND

Hi there

I bought your book, read it thoroughly and even managed to train my mixed lab Heathcliffe so that he would be more controllable. However, I have not, as much as I have tried, managed to get him to listen to me on our walks. He looks forward to them and I too enjoy them, however, when I let him off the leash, he totally forgets that I am there. I do take treats with me and even sometimes, he will come (after 3-4 calls), sit and get a treat.

Last week, he totally ignored me (again) and refused to come when I called. The opposite, he played with me, so I decided to just ignore him and went home. He had a ball, somewhere, for over two hours and finally showed up. I was really upset, but I don't know if he even knew what was wrong. What can I do to make it better?

Thank you,

Hannah

- - -

Hi Hannah,

Thanks for your email regarding your mixed Lab Heathcliffe. He sounds like a great dog, for the most part, but his disobedience off leash must be quite frustrating for you.

Fortunately there are a number of things that I can recommend to improve his responsiveness.

### **The Come Command Rules:**

There are a number of Come Command Rules that I recommend people use:

1. Never call your dog to you for a reprimand.
2. Always call your dog in a happy voice.
3. Always praise your dog for coming to you, even if they have taken their time.
4. Praise your dog for coming to you without having been called.

5. Never call your dog to you for something you know they don't like e.g. baths or visits to the vet.

It is important that your dog knows that you are his Pack Leader. If he knows you are in charge he is likely to have more respect for you therefore will be more responsive to your commands and corrections.

### **THE ALPHA TECHNIQUES**

If you come across your dog while he is sleeping or lying on the floor then you can reinforce your position as alpha dog by making him move so that you can pass by.

Generally I do not recommend people give their dogs bones because in the wild the alpha dog would be the only one to have the privilege of chewing the bones.

Make sure that you always go through doorways first. A good method to reinforce your position as alpha dog is to walk your dog around the house on the leash, making your dog wait while you walk through doorways first.

At mealtimes make sure that your dog or dogs eat after all of the humans have.

Do not feed your dog tidbits or let it pester you at the table. Save the morsels and tidbits for training sessions instead.

Do not greet your dog straightaway when you arrive home. Make it wait until you are ready and then call it to you.

When your dog wants to go outside for a walk, make it sit and wait until you are ready to go.

When you give a command make sure that you are in a position to enforce the action that you require from your dog, especially in the initial stages of Alpha Dog training. Also, use the Alarm-No-Command technique as described in the Alpha Dog bonus book to reprimand your dog if it does not obey your command.

It is vitally important that your dog has good all-round obedience skills. Regular training sessions are key to improving your dog's obedience responses and keeping it used to answering your

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commands. Concentrate on the sit and stay, down and stay, heel and wait commands.

Do not inadvertently reinforce poor behavior from your dog. You must be consistent in your attitude to your dog. For example, if your dog is allowed to jump on you when you are playing with it but is not allowed to jump up at any other time then how is it meant to know the difference?



### **Daily Obedience**

I recommend that you have daily obedience lessons with your dog. There are three main reasons for this.

1. It helps improve his responsiveness to your commands
2. It helps use up some energy
3. It helps reinforce your Alpha position

Practice the come command in particular, and use lots of praise and encouragement for good behavior.

### **Squeaky Toy**

If your dog is like most labs, he will be very excited by the sound of a squeaky toy! Therefore, on the occasions when you let him off lead, carry the toy and when you want to get his attention, squeeze the toy a few times, and call him to you. When he approaches, you should

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then praise him and attach his leash, and let him carry the toy as his reward.

I hope this helps Hannah. If, after a few months of using the above techniques, you do not see a marked difference in his behavior, you may want to consider not allowing him off the lead, or using a retractable leash so that he can still run about, but when you are ready to leave you can reel him in!

Good luck!

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

### INCESSANT LICKING

Hi Daniel!

My dog Connor (4 and 1/2 year old Greyhound/English Pointer mix) is licking his paws/forelegs raw. He did this when I was taking another dog to obedience class early in the year and leaving him and another dog at home. He stopped the initial instance of licking when I decided to enroll him in the class. So I thought it was separation anxiety/obsessive compulsive behavior. Unfortunately he started this behavior again when I began taking my other dog with me to volunteer at a local animal shelter. (I always take a dog with me so I don't feel empty on the drive home or tempted to get another dog.)

Anyway, I've started spending more quality time with Connor, taking him for rides in the car without the other dogs, and spending more one-on-one time with him. I even took this week off from work, and was hoping more time at home would solve the issue. He is worse than ever. He is on a high grade food (Wellness) and has been for some time so I do not think it is a food allergy.

I can't think of anything else in his physical environment that has changed. My schedule has not changed. I live alone and have since I adopted him, so there's no change in people dynamics.

I have tried 5 different applications, from PetSmart's hot spot treatment, hot spot shampoo, Wound Warrior, a methol/bitterant from Australia, Aloe Vera, a spray relaxant from the health food store...you name it.

I tried wrapping his foot and applying white vinegar as a bitterant, but as I suspected, he ate that off quickly (he doesn't get deterred by Bitter Apple or any other bitterant). I'm afraid I'll have to resort to an Elizabethan collar (vet's suggestion earlier this year) or muzzle, which I think would upset him even more.

If you have any other ideas, I would greatly appreciate it. It is sooo upsetting to watch your dog mutilate himself!

Thanks so much!

Summer

Hi Summer,

Thanks for your email regarding your dog Connor. It sounds as though he manages to get himself in to a bit of a mess by licking himself so much. This problem is a relatively common one and can be a very hard habit to break. It is generally regarded as an OCD problem or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and your dog may have picked this problem up for a number of reasons.

As you probably already know allergy is the main cause of this sort of problem. I'd ask you to re-visit your vet, because in the majority of cases it IS in fact a health related problem rather than a behavioral one. As you point out food can in fact be a main cause of allergy and can cause this sort of behavior.

Good on your for purchasing a high grade food. There are products out there such as the Hills brands that make "Ultra Allergen Free" diets also which you may want to consult your Veterinarian about. Of more importance here is that while food is one cause of allergy, there are another 3 main causes and food is by no means top of the list. Flea allergies can cause this sort of behavior. Flea saliva injected under the skin of the dog reacts with the dogs immune system causing an inflammatory response. There is also "Atopy" which is an allergy to environmental molecules such as dust or pollen. Finally another common cause is from contact with other dogs.

Any one of these four things may be having an effect on this problem and it is for this reason that I would ask you to visit your local Veterinarian again for further advice. There are tests they can do on skin samples to see firstly IF it is an allergy related problem and secondly WHICH allergen is causing the problem.

If it is in fact health related, your Veterinarian may prescribe such things as long-term antibiotic therapy or cortisone to help decrease the tingling sensation and reddening and inflammation of the areas.

The behavioral aspect, even if the problem is allergenic, is a large part of the problem we need to tackle here, however this can be very hard. The incessant licking your dog is doing will most likely be forming small sores you will see on his forelimbs. These are termed "Acral lick granulomas" or "Acral lick dermatitis". When these become infected it is very important to see you Veterinarian immediately.



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An Elizabethan collar will definitely help give old wounds that haven't completely healed, a chance to do so. However, once these wounds heal and you take the collar off, the dog quite often goes right back to licking its forelimbs again. Bitter-tasting sprays aren't even a mild deterrent when it comes to this problem either, as it sounds like you have already experienced!!



For Connor, I believe the best course of action is to firstly visit your Veterinarian and ask if they can run any diagnostic tests to see if there is in fact a definitive diagnosis. They may also be able to recommend natural drugs or prescribe Veterinary drugs to help the health related aspect of this problem.

Secondly, and from our behavioral point of view, it is important to increase his daily quota of exercise. By keep him busy here and making sure he has plenty of objects (i.e. toys, balls etc) to keep as distracted as possible from licking those legs, you may in time notice a decrease in the problem.

It is also important to resolve any form of separation anxiety the dog may have. It sounds as though you realize some of these points when you say you should be spending more quality time with Connor. The fact that he seems to be getting worse despite your care here,

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indicates to me personally that something allergic is going on here, but only your Vet can confirm or deny this.

Good luck with Connor. Be sure to consult your Veterinarian about this problem though please, since from what you have described to me, it sounds as though this problem is at least in part a health related issue.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

## INTERDOG AGGRESSION

Hello Daniel

I have 2 German Shepherds. Lulu is 6 and Priscilla is 2. They are not related. I have had them both since they were pups. Priscilla has always been somewhat jealous of Lulu. If we would pet Lulu then Priscilla would come up to us and start barking. Or if she was on my bed and Lulu would try to jump up she would bark at Lulu or growl and Lulu would just ignore her and I would scold Priscilla for her behavior. But they got along beautifully.

Four weeks ago we had Priscilla bred and it was shortly after that that she attacked Lulu and they fought badly. They fought 3 times that week. For the past month we have had to keep them separate. If they are in the same room, Priscilla tears after Lulu. I have to crate one just to let the other one outside so they don't hurt each other.

I have always tried to let Priscilla know that Lulu is the alpha here but she is not accepting that all of a sudden. One vet said it is probably pregnancy related and would change after her pups are gone. Another vet said she doubts if it will change. I am at a loss of what to do. Other than this Priscilla is still a very loving dog and obedient except for when she sees Lulu. But when one is outside then the other one wants to be with the other but they can't.

Please give me any advice you can.

Regards

Madeline

- - -

Hi there Madeline

Thank you for your email regarding your two German Shepherds, Priscilla and Lulu. This sounds like a very frustrating and dangerous problem for you. Interdog aggression is always difficult to control so I think that the best place to start is to revise over your alpha dog techniques. This is just to ensure that your dogs see you and your family as the boss at all times. This will help them respond to your commands and gain better control in aggressive situations.

If you treat your dogs as equals they may well see it as an opportunity to challenge your position. For example, be aware that allowing your dog onto the couch, bed, etc will give it the leeway that it needs to be able to challenge your position as the alpha dog in the relationship.

### **THE ALPHA TECHNIQUES**

If you come across either dog while she is sleeping or lying on the floor then you can reinforce your position as alpha dog by making her move so that you can pass by.

Generally I do not recommend people give their dogs bones as this encourages aggression, because in the wild the alpha dog would be the only one to have the privilege of chewing the bones.

Make sure that you always go through doorways first. A good method to reinforce your position as alpha dog is to walk your dog around the house on the leash, making your dog wait while you walk through doorways first.

At mealtimes make sure that your dog or dogs eat after all of the humans have.

Do not feed your dog tidbits or let it pester you at the table. Save the morsels and tidbits for training sessions instead.

Do not greet your dog straightaway when you arrive home. Make it wait until you are ready and then call it to you.

When your dog wants to go outside for a walk, make it sit and wait until you are ready to go.

When you give a command make sure that you are in a position to enforce the action that you require from your dog, especially in the initial stages of Alpha Dog training. Also, use the Alarm-No-Command technique as described in the Alpha Dog bonus book to reprimand your dog if it does not obey your command.

It is vitally important that your dog has good all-round obedience skills. Regular training sessions are key to improving your dog's obedience responses and keeping it used to answering your commands. Concentrate on the sit and stay, down and stay, heel and wait commands.

Do not inadvertently reinforce poor behavior from your dog. You must be consistent in your attitude to your dog. For example, if your dog is allowed to jump on you when you are playing with it but is not allowed to jump up at any other time then how is it meant to know the difference?

Please ensure that, as well as reinforcing your own position as Alpha, that you reprimand your dog for any unwanted behavior. There are many methods that can be employed to reprimand a dog and it is up to you to determine the most effective method for your situation. Some of the most common that we recommend are shaking a can of pebbles, squirting with water (if outside the quantity of water used can be more substantial), throwing a heavy blanket over the dog, and growling a guttural growl such that a dog would issue.

To start the training to correct this aggressive behavior between the two I think you need to start keeping them separate for a while. Doing this may help prevent further problems between these two dogs. You also even need to minimize supervised interactions between your two dogs.

It is recommended in this situation not to enforce one dog's dominance, but rather make it clear that they will both be generously rewarded for displaying socially acceptable behavior. Before trying to undertake any training it is important both dogs understand basic sit and stay commands and that you have adequate control such that they are unlikely to harm one another. Spend a month or so with the dogs separate and enforce the alpha dog rules and reteach basic obedience commands.

After a month the following controlled exercises may help:

1. Firstly muzzle Priscilla, and then put both dogs in a sit near you. Pet one, and then feed that one. Then, feed the other one for tolerating your interactions with the first one. At first, this is best done with a second handler, but after the dogs become better at self-restraint, you can do this alone.

2. Sit on the sofa and call the dogs over. Ask one dog to sit or lie down. Make a fuss over Dog 2. Reward the sitting/downed Dog 1 for tolerance and remaining in place. Then reverse this: put Dog 2 in a sit or down position and make a big fuss over Dog 1. Reward Dog 2 for

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tolerance and staying. Again, you can do this by yourself if you have confidence that a brawl won't break out. Otherwise use a second handler to keep an eye on the sitting/downed dog. This exercise is best practiced on leash.

3. Remember that if you take one dog for a walk, leave the other one behind and kennel the walked dog on return. When things are calm for 5 – 15 minutes, get both dogs out and put them in sit and down together for a treat (never facing each other). Then allow them to interact, if you think that it is safe to do so at this point in training. Follow this advice when you work the dogs as well. Kennel one dog, and work the other dog. Then trade, kenneling one and getting the other out to work. After a 5 – 15 minute rest period, get the dogs out and carefully work them together. You may need two handlers for this also.



There are several techniques available for stopping dog fights once they have begun. Water has been known to work in some cases, however if the dogs are fixated upon harming one another, it probably will not work at all as you have experienced. Throwing a large heavy blanket over the two dogs

may help surprise the dogs and prevent them from fighting long enough for one of the adults in the household to use the "Wheelbarrow" maneuver I will mention in a second. Clanging pots and pans loudly as you can may be enough to startle the dogs, however growling and reprimanding is unlikely to get the dogs attention.

It is also important to begin learning the tell tale signs of a potential dog fight so you can stop the fight before it even begins. This will include one or both dogs growling, showing their teeth, raising their back and lowering their head. You will probably know the signs having seen your dogs fight previously.

The safest way to break up a fight is to grab the most aggressive dog by the hind legs and pick its rear up like you are holding a "wheel barrow". Then you back up pulling the dog with you. Since the dog is now supporting itself on two feet only, it is not likely to want to

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continue fighting, and it is very difficult for it to turn to try and bite you.

Then get it out of the room, behind a door, or where ever handy as fast as you can so it is separated from the other dog. If two people are present, each can grab a different dog and wheel him backwards. Please remember that there is NO 100% safe way to break up a dog fight. If you do not feel confident and are not willing to risk a bite try a different method.

The two dogs should then be kept separate for a number of minutes depending on the severity of the attack. 5 minutes is fine for a slight squabble. Longer will of course be needed for a fight to the death. Reintroduce the dogs together immediately after the time out. You have to know your dogs. It is better to leash the dogs, although there is actually a better chance of them making up if they are off leash.

When you reintroduce them, continuously feed treats to both simultaneously, one every few seconds. Do not encourage them to get too close, but allow them to if they want to on their own. Then separate them for a while after just a minute. Repeat this a number of times during the day, each time keeping them together a little longer. End on a happy note, let the dogs think you are not at all worried, but secretly keep an eye on them.

Whenever the two dogs are with each other during the day and are getting on ok, give them treats and reward them for not fighting one another. This will encourage them to be happy together also.

I am not going to candy coat this. Inter-dog aggression within a household can be very dangerous and tricky to correct. Of utmost importance is your and your family's safety. Do not get involved in trying to break up a fight if you believe you may get bitten and follow the advice given above for safe methods.

Be sure to keep the dogs apart if you believe they will simply start fighting, and I would definitely recommend muzzling one of them for a start when introducing the two dogs together (depending on what dog you believe is the most aggressive.) This will help prevent any serious harm being inflicted on either of them. Having two handlers may make training easier to begin with also.

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I hope that these suggestions help you. With consistency, patience and practice this will be able to be fixed but it will take some months and it will take a lot of time from you to get things sorted.

Best of luck with your training and please let us know of any success.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training



## NIPPING PUPPY

Hi Daniel,

Thank you for the opportunity to send in this consultation. I got a puppy a month or so ago. He is a lovely Labrador mix that I got from a friend of the family. This is actually the first dog I have ever owned, so I guess I am a little nervous about whether I am doing things right. Recently he has begun to mouth and bite my hands. He is not being aggressive, but thinks it's a fun game. Obviously I want to stop him from doing it because the game won't be so fun for me when he is full grown! I try to get him to stop by gently pushing him back and saying "No Bite" but he is relentless! What should I be doing, and should I be worried that he will become a "biter"?

Thank you

Gwen

- - -

Dear Gwen,

Thank you for your email regarding your Lab mix. Firstly, please let me reassure you that this is perfectly normal puppy behavior and it does not necessarily mean that your dog will become a "biter". However, it is a behavior that will need to be stopped. Your dog needs to be effectively taught that biting is not an appropriate behavior. Obviously the method you have been using up until now is not the right one for your dog as it doesn't seem to be getting the message across to him. Fortunately there are a number of things that I can recommend to help you in this situation.

It is totally natural for pups to use their mouths to explore and play, so it is common for them to mouth or nip their owner's hands. Normally puppies are taught bite inhibition by their mother and siblings. Therefore it is advisable to purchase or adopt a puppy who was still with his canine family until 8 weeks old.

The first thing you should be doing is teaching your dog its place in the pack. All humans should be ranked higher than your dog, and in order to reinforce this hierarchy order you should be using the Alpha

## Secrets to Dog Training

techniques as set out in the bonus book "Secrets to Becoming the Alpha Dog".

You should be determining when your dog is fed, and is given toys and attention, so it is important not to leave his food or toys where he can access them at his leisure. Instead your pup should be earning his food, toys and attention. You can get him to do this by requiring him to follow some commands before he is given the things he wants. This way he is being rewarded for being a good boy as opposed to viewing these things as his entitlements.

At mealtimes you should be putting your puppy into a Sit-Stay for at least 10 seconds before allowing him to eat. After 10 minutes you should remove his bowl and put it away, whether he has finished or not, so that that he realizes that you make the schedule. He will quickly learn not to dawdle when he eats.

If your pup grabs roughly at treats in your hand, and nips your fingers, do not relinquish the food. Instead you should ignore your dog until he calms down, then ask him to sit, and then as you hand him the treat say "Be Gentle". Only give him the treat if he takes it calmly from your hand. The same technique can also be applied to giving your dog his toys.

On the occasions that your pup bites you when you are playing, you should imitate the behavior of your pup's littermates by yelping loudly and putting an end to any play or attention. Ignore your pup for 5 or so minutes, or until he has calmed down. If you repeat this technique every time he nips you, he should quickly realize that biting/nipping you brings and end to any fun. If you are having trouble ignoring your dog because of his relentlessness, then you may like to use the time out method, which requires you to put him in a room that is rarely used and leave him there for 5-10 minutes. You should find that he comes back out of that room in a much calmer mood.

It is a good idea to supply your dog with lots of toys and encourage him to play with them, though as mentioned above, the toys should not be left for him to play with anytime he likes. You should be determining when it's playtime and when its not.

It is really important that no-one reinforces the biting/nipping by engaging your dog in any rough play, which includes playing tug-of-war. These kinds of games teach your dog that it's fun and acceptable to be rough. If you encourage rough behavior sometimes, then

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reprimand him at other times, it will become very confusing for your dog and you will have trouble getting the right message across.

I do not recommend that you use physical punishment to reprimand your dog, such as a smack on the nose, as I believe that this will only encourage the rough behavior.

Lastly, please ensure that your pup gets a good amount of exercise. I assume that he is not very old, so a strenuous walk is not age appropriate, but you could try taking him swimming, or playing in the yard. Daily obedience lessons are also a great way to use up some excess energy, and will also help with his responsiveness to your commands.



Good luck Gwen. I am sure that you will be fine and that if you use the methods listed above, your pup will stop the nipping behavior.

Please let me know how you progress.

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

### TERRITORIAL AGGRESSION

Dear Daniel,

I have a 2.5 year old Catahoula Leopard Dog mix named Melvin. I adopted him from the pound when he was 7 months old. He has been neutered since before I adopted him. He is a very smart dog and I have spent a lot of time training him. I often get compliments from people that he is such a good and well trained dog. He knows sit, stay, wait, heel, come (if he is not distracted), shake, crawl, roll over, play dead, and turn in a circle. He is very friendly and lovable to everyone once he has been introduced to them.

He had never been aggressive but over the last 6 months he is becoming very aggressive towards his territory (our yard). We live in a house on stilts on the water and he considers the street and the beach his territory. If someone or another dog comes into our driveway or even walks down the street he goes into what I call "psycho dog mode." The hair on his shoulders stands up and his bark is very aggressive, it is very different from his usual bark. A young boy came into the yard yesterday and Melvin sounded like he wanted to eat the boy. Two months ago he got past me in the doorway and bit/mouthed the UPS man on the arm. He did not break the skin and let go right away but it was enough for me to realize that I had a problem.

I have come to realize that he doesn't like the UPS truck (or any very loud truck or bus) and that is probably why he went after the man. He loves other dogs when we go to the dog park and when I walk him on a leash he doesn't behave this way. He only acts this way when he is running free in the yard. We do have a fence but I am afraid of what would happen if he got out. I have read the alpha dog manual and I do believe Melvin thinks of me as the alpha dog. I have tried to correct him by lifting him up by the scruff and saying no as you suggested in the manual. When I do this he does usually stop but the next time someone comes by he does it again. What should I do?

Melody

- - -

Hi Melody,

Thanks for your email regarding your dog Melvin. It is always distressing when your otherwise well behaved dog reacts badly in certain situations. Though, let me say that it seems as though you have done a great job in training Melvin. Practicing obedience, and asserting yourself as the Alpha is very important when trying to prevent any unwanted behavior.

It sounds to me like your dog's behavior is definitely Territorial Aggression. Generally, "territory" includes your house, yard, driveway, vehicle, and also adjoining areas, such as sidewalks that your dog regularly walks.

There are two main reasons for territorial behavior - dominance or fear. For dominance based aggression, the solution is to make sure that you are being strict with the Alpha techniques so that the dog knows for sure that he is not the Alpha. If his subordinate position is made very clear then he will know that it is not his responsibility to guard the backyard.



Fear based territorial aggression can be a little more tricky than dominance based aggressions, as it takes more than just asserting yourself as the Alpha Dog to fix it. Corrective training is required in this situation.

### **Counterconditioning**

If you can easily predict when Melvin is likely to display aggressive behavior, try to distract him by playing games, or asking him to follow some commands he already knows. This will hopefully interrupt his usual behavior (barking), and if practiced every time should eventually countercondition the unwanted aggression.

### **Desensitization**

You also want to slowly expose Melvin to what it is that is causing this fear aggression, increasing the exposure as you progress. (I would recommend that you use a muzzle and a head halter when going through the various stages I will outline below). If at any time you

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find that Melvin becomes aggressive during this corrective training, go back a step or two, as you may have progressed too quickly.

Start by employing the help of someone Melvin is least likely to show aggression towards, and conduct the training in a location where Melvin is most comfortable.

Have Melvin sit or lie down.

Have the stranger approach, but at a distance. If Melvin does not react, give him a treat.

Next, get the stranger to step into the yard (still at a distance), then step back out. Do this several times.

Then, ask your helper to approach within a few feet of Melvin (at the beginning stages of training, your helper should not make eye contact with Melvin and should approach slowly in a circuitous path, so as to appear less threatening). Once they are 3 feet away, and if Melvin is calm, ask your guest to gently throw Melvin a food treat.

Try a similar exercise when inside. Have Melvin sit in a separate room, and ask your stranger to knock on your door. Go to the door, and invite them in, in a happy voice.. Bring Melvin into the room (wearing his muzzle and leash) and if he remains calm, ask your guest to throw Melvin some treats. Once you have done this a number of times, and Melvin seems more comfortable about having strangers in your house, allow him to interact with your guests.

Use an assortment of strangers, beginning with the least threatening, and slowly progressing. After time Melvin should associate their visits with a positive experience.

If at any stage the stranger approaches too quickly, causing an aggressive reaction from Melvin, your helper should stand still while you gain his attention. Once he is focused on you again, reward him.

You should reprimand your dog for unacceptable behavior, no matter what that behavior is. If you do not reprimand your dogs poor behavior then it will feel that it has the right to behave that way and it will take much longer to correct the behavior.

What I recommend you do, is the next time your dog acts poorly and exhibits dominant tendencies (growling), saturate your dog with the garden hose or a bucket of water, or if it is inside, throw a heavy

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blanket over your dog and be sure to reprimand it. DO NOT yell, as this has no effect on the dominant dog. Growl instead, use a guttural growl like " AAHHH!" instead of "No!", as this makes a sharper sound than "No" (If done correctly it may hurt your throat a little).

As a general rule, make sure that Melvin gets plenty of exercise, and practice obedience training every day. Use dog food with as few chemical additives as possible, as these additives can affect your dog's chemical and hormonal balances. Perhaps try natural lamb and rice meals.

I hope the above information helps you Melody. Good luck, and please let me know how you progress.

Kind regards

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

### WHINING

Hi there,

We have two dogs long haired Chihuahua/poodle mixes - 9 months old. One male and one female from the same litter. The male dog barks and whines at night when we go to sleep. The dogs sleep in the kitchen behind a gate. We sleep upstairs. They have been fed earlier in the evening, let out before bed and do not need to go out. It has been very cold where we live, so the dogs have not been outside as much lately. At night, I have previously gotten up to let him out, but am recently trying the ignoring technique. The female dog does not bark or cry at night. I am wiped out from lack of sleep. What can I do?

Joni

- - -

Hi there Joni,

Thank you for your email regarding your restless 9 month old male Chihuahua/poodle cross. It is not uncommon for puppies to develop behaviors such as this, and with time, persistence and patience I believe you should definitely be able to stop your dog from preventing you from having a full nights sleep. I definitely agree that yes, ultimately your ignoring technique is the most appropriate in this case, although where to you draw the line between ignoring and allowing yourself quiet so you can sleep! It definitely becomes hard. Thus, I firstly want to recommend a few things that may help settle your puppy without the need for you to get up.

There are basically only several reasons as to why he is whining, but as you say you take him to the toilet directly before you go to bed. It is quite possible he is simply doing it for attention, since it has worked for him once before, back in the days when you would respond to his call. If this is the case, it may just be a case of waiting it out. I personally believe a large part of the problem could well be due to a lack of exercise. Dogs, particularly males, need to expend enough energy everyday and if they are not tired in the evenings and you leave them alone to try and go to slept despite the fact they simply aren't tired enough, they are bound to whine. The fact that you mentioned that "the dogs have not been outside as much lately" I believe could be a large factor of your male puppy's problem. I know it



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is pretty impossible to take your dogs if it is so incredibly cold it is not possible to take them for a walk. If this is the case and it simply is too cold, I suggest you have a good 20 – 30 minute play session sometime during the day and then again about an hour or so before you put them to bed. This should help the problem dramatically. If possible a walk would be more appropriate, however this may not be possible at this particular time in your area of the world.



If you think the whining has something to do with needing to go to the toilet again and you don't have a doggy door the animals may access at any time day or night, you should consider putting one in.

Ultimately if these methods do not seem to work over the next couple of weeks, you may simply have to continue with the ignoring technique combined with a good pair of earplugs! So long as both puppies have been provided with comfortable and warm sleeping areas with access to water and preferably to an area they can toilet alone if needs be, the ignoring technique is the most appropriate.

Because your puppy is so young, I believe it is definitely something it will grow out of, but the techniques I have outlined may help speed up the process. It is definitely not something that will come right over night, however if you are managing to exercise your animals more often as mentioned and are providing them with comfortable sleeping areas you should notice a difference within a month or two.

If you suspect there could be a health problem with your male puppy, I definitely suggest you get your puppy checked out with a Veterinarian – however from your email it simply sounds like you have a puppy that isn't tired at bed times!

Best of luck with your puppy and please let us know how you get on.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Stevens  
Secrets to Dog Training

### Daniel's Recommendations!

Now that you've got your own copy of my book and are a true member of the **Secrets to Dog Training** community, I'd like to give you the inside line on a few of my own favorite dog training resources.

I've already given you the basics on **preventing dog aggression**, and no-nonsense methods for resolving everything from dangerous dog aggression to downright frustrating dog habits, such as **barking** and **destructive chewing**.

But you can only fit so much in one book, and one thing you definitely can't fit in a book is **LIVE demonstrations** of dog training techniques **IN THE FIELD**.

That's why I'd like to introduce you to an incredible **DVD package** assembled by the highly regarded team at **Kingdom of Pets**, the same people who publish the internationally recognized and renowned **Secrets to Dog Training** dog training guide.

It's called **Dog Obedience Training: The DVD Series**, a no frills, no fluff approach to all of the most familiar and most troublesome dog behavior problems.

Now, being originally from Down Under myself, I'll admit that I've got a certain bias here. This DVD features two professional dog trainers, Susan Morton and Brian Heward, who are both based in New Zealand. So of course, I regard them as a genuine dog people like myself. I've seen them in action, and I really admire the way they work.

I think the dogs themselves would say the same if they could. No matter how stubborn and out of hand they are at first, the dogs that Susan and Brian train even seem to **enjoy behaving** in their company!

In **over 4 hours of video demonstrations, interviews, and special field training sessions**, this 5 DVD pack takes on the issues of dog aggression, biting, problem barking, and problem chewing. All of the instruction details up to date methods for making your "pack" a happy and healthy one - with you at the top of the command chain of course!

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- Possessive aggression
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Yours truly,

**Daniel Stevens**

**Author, Secrets to Dog Training – Dog Obedience Training**

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