

Do's and Don'ts of Bonding With Your Dog

“Greatest American Dog” judge Allan Reznik offers tips to build a strong relationship.

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The weekly competitions on the CBS reality show “Greatest American Dog” are meant to be fun. Bonding with your dog can be just as rewarding, Allan Reznik explains.

“Building a happy, harmonious relationship with your dog is critically important,” said Reznik, a judge on the show and editor-at-large of DOG FANCY. “It starts the minute your new family member enters your home and life.”

Here are some tips to maximize the relationship-building process.

DO:

Continue the early training and socialization begun by your puppy’s breeder. If your dog has been regularly groomed, had his nails clipped and been taught by the breeder to spend brief periods of time in a crate, keep up that routine. It takes just a few days of “no rules” for many dogs to forget the good habits they learned early in life.

Be consistent in your training. If you don’t like dogs on your furniture, don’t let your puppy on the sofa. If you don’t want your good shoes chewed up, don’t let him play with your grubby tennis shoes.

Enroll in a puppy kindergarten or basic obedience class. It’s a great opportunity for socialization. It also gives dogs and owners confidence and experience shutting out distractions and working together.

DON'T:

Try to train when you’re feeling tired or frustrated. You will accomplish nothing positive.

Let other family members give the dog mixed messages. Using different words for the same command or sneaking food to the dog from the table confuses the dog and undermines training.

Be lazy and postpone training. You accepted the responsibilities of dog ownership as well as the fun. There is already a lot of anti-dog sentiment out in the world today. Each of us needs to show by example that a well-behaved dog is a joy to have around and an asset to every neighborhood.

“Greatest American Dog” now airs at 8 PDT Wednesday nights. The show, where 12 dog-and-owner teams compete for a \$250,000 prize, placed first in viewers and key demographics last week, according to Nielsen ratings.

Reznik will be on DogChannel’s message boards at 10 a.m. PDT on Thursday to talk about the latest episode and field questions from visitors about the show.