

Over-Zealous Lickers Can Be Controlled

An expert answers your questions about canine behavior.

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Q. My dog is an obsessive licker. How do I stop this annoying habit?

A. I am assuming that the dog is obsessively licking you, not himself. Licking is like kissing; it's great when you want it and a subtle form of assertive/aggressive behavior when you don't. Anytime you want to change a behavior start by thinking: What is it I would like my dog to do instead? This is a good place to start with any problem.

Licking is often a submissive, stress-related gesture, therefore correction/ punishment is counterproductive. Obedience training is key to correcting such a problem. To prevent face and hand licking, teach your dog to go to his bed or lie down at your feet; this also provides an opportunity for praise. If your dog does not respond to basic commands, continue to practice so that he obeys. Train yourself to notice and reward him every time he stops licking. The simple change in your attention can turn this obnoxious habit around in no time and with little effort.