

Dominant Dog Needs Attitude Adjustment

Help! My dog growls at me.

Bardi McLennan

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Q. We recently bought an unneutered, 18-month-old Doberman. The original owners were moving and couldn't keep him. We have since found out that he has a bad attitude. For example, when I tried to put medication on his foot (a bite wound from the kennel), he growled at me. When I try to get him to roll over so I can brush him, he growls at me. When we give him a command, he growls. If we pull on his collar, he not only growls but jumps up and barks.

Today when I told the dog to get off my bed, he growled. I went to pull him off, and he jumped up barking. I waited until he calmed down and got him to follow me. When I take him to the park to run off lead, he doesn't come when called, and if I grab him he growls. The rest of the time he is sweet and I really want to keep him. Please help!

A. What you describe is the attitude of a dominant puppy. Growling is the dog's way of warning you to stop whatever you're doing so he can get his own way. When that doesn't work, he resorts to jumping up and barking. The fact that he doesn't attempt to bite indicates a dominant but not aggressive dog.

Have the dog neutered and work with a qualified trainer using positive reinforcement to teach it acceptable behavior. At the same time, you will be taught how to continue the training while avoiding harsh corrections. No running off lead until the "Come" command is mastered. By the way, people beds are out of bounds to dominant dogs. It elevates the dog to your alpha position in the pack. Until he's an adult, the dog's bed belongs in another room.