

Training Bossy or Stubborn Dogs

Manage your bossy dog with consistent leadership.

Kyra Kirkwood

"It's how the dog learns to be more domineering, more bossy," says dog trainer Graham Bloem, who works with numerous dog rescue groups and shelters.

What to Do About It

"The dog needs to look at you as the leader," Paige says. "When you're the leader, you won't have a bossy dog. Period."

Alpha dogs don't beg for respect; they issue the command and others follow. Owners need to adopt a consistent, easy-to-follow practice to establish themselves as alpha. "When the dog barks and paws for attention, you say 'no' once, with a stern voice," Paige says. "Make eye contact to show displeasure, and then if the dog doesn't stop, don't nag. Calmly issue a negative response, such as a timeout."

Not responding to a dog's negative behaviors is another option.

"Begin to ignore them, and give your dog an alternative way to get what she wants," Hetts says.

For every request a dog makes, issue one of your own first, and praise her extensively when she complies. If Lola wants dinner, she sits first and eats only when you give the OK. "This is a highly effective, respect-establishing habit," Bloem says.

"The minute you make your dog sit, you have 100 percent more control and leadership over your dog," Paige says. "For every request your dog gives you, she needs to sit ... first. She's always got to do something for you."

If your dog is a jumper, don't get upset or push her away. Bloem suggests totally ignoring the dog upon your arrival home, giving her lots of attention only after you're settled.

"It's on your terms," he says.

For leash pulling, stop walking. This tells the dog that straining only retards her progress. On the couch all the time? Say "off," then invite her back if and when you want.

But above all else, be patient.

"Expect it to get worse before it gets better," Hetts says. "You have to be able to outlast ... even if you have to get up and walk away from her."