



BARK BUSTERS TOP 10 TIPS EVERY DOG OWNER SHOULD KNOW

As part of Bark Busters commitment to responsible dog ownership, Bark Busters Dog Behavioral Therapists have compiled a Top 10 list that will help dog owners better understand their canine pets.

Pointers Strive to Promote Better Understanding of Man's Best Friend, Encouraging More Responsible, Enjoyable Pet Ownership

- 1) A dog is a dog.** The greatest misconception many dog owners have is to assume their dogs communicate the way humans do. Dogs live by the same pack rules and exhibit many of the same behavioral patterns as their wild ancestors. To effectively train your dog, you must first understand its instinctual pack behavior.
- 2) All dogs think in terms of the pack.** Dogs instinctively know that living with others, under the leadership of a dominant pack member, enhances their chances for survival. As a dog owner, one of your responsibilities is to model a leader's strong and consistent characteristics so that you will be accepted as the pack leader and your dog will learn to respect and obey you. Your leadership will make your dog feel safe and eliminate many behavior problems.
- 3) Dogs don't understand English.** In addition to barking, growling and other guttural sounds, dogs rely heavily on body language. And yet, your body language can easily be misinterpreted. By understanding how dogs communicate, you will avoid the mistake of telling your dog one thing while your body language and voice pitch tell it something completely different. (Learn more about body language and voice tones at www.BarkBusters.com.)
- 4) Dogs are neither spiteful nor deliberately naughty.** There are three reasons why a dog misbehaves or disobeys: 1) it does not understand what you want, 2) it does not consider you its leader, or 3) it is suffering from some kind of stress or fear. Understanding this will help you address your dog's problems and behaviors.
- 5) Aggression is instinctual in every breed.** Whether Chihuahua or German shepherd, a dog's breed has nothing to do with aggression. Instead, aggression is instinctual and caused most often by fear of the unknown—that is, whatever the dog cannot understand or does not recognize as normal. When a dog becomes frightened, it will do one of two things: fight or take flight. By reinforcing leadership over your dog, you can avoid unacceptable or uncontrollable aggression.
- 6) You can teach an old dog new tricks.** Dogs are continuous learners and have good memories. The three things that primarily influence a dog's behavior are association, instinct, and experience. By conditioning your dog and effectively showing it what you consider good and bad behavior, you can help any dog change its behavior.
- 7) Bad behaviors may be natural, but they do not have to be normal.** Most people consider digging, chewing and jumping as unacceptable dog behavior—but to dogs, these actions are natural. A dog owner needs to associate a dog's bad behavior with a negative experience, such as a harsh voice tone, and good behavior with a positive experience, such as high-pitched praise.
- 8) It's illogical to get angry with your dog.** Dogs only do what comes naturally or what they've learned through association, so getting angry—or using physical force—with a dog is both inappropriate and counterproductive. Moreover, never use your hands for disciplining, because dogs find this provocative and threatening. For this reason, you should use your hands as little as possible when training—and when you do, make sure your dog always associates your hands with gentleness and pleasure.
- 9) Correct your dog on the spot.** Because dogs learn from association, they will comprehend your message only if it is delivered in a timely manner. A correction must be issued at the precise moment the dog is either contemplating or actually doing something wrong. Because it can be difficult to catch your dog in the act, you can find ways to create situations that will cause your dog to misbehave so you can then correct it immediately.
- 10) Dogs experience the world differently than humans.** With 25 times more olfactory receptors than humans, dogs can sense odors at concentrations nearly millions of times lower than humans can. In addition, dogs sight has been described to be like that of a color-blind human. Dogs use other cues (such as smell, texture, brightness, and position) rather than rely on color. With acutely developed hearing, dogs can hear sounds four times farther away than humans—but dogs also hear selectively. They can sleep beside a blaring television, but wake up as soon as they hear something unrelated to that.

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