

## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION...



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As a trainer, all too often I get called in to fix behaviour problems that pet owners

could have easily kept their puppy from learning in the first place. Easily? Yes.

Preventing your puppy from learning unwanted behaviours is so much easier than fixing them once they have become a problem. The more opportunities your puppy has to practise a behaviour, the better they get at it. If you prevent these opportunities, then your puppy won't have the chance to learn those behaviours.

A few examples...

### **Example 1:** ***Jumping on People at the Door***

Puppies usually learn to jump on people at the door when they are first brought home. Many people allow their puppy to run to the door and greet people BEFORE they have learned how to greet politely. Most puppies will jump up to get attention, and since they are so small and cute, that is what they usually get.

Even if you push them off and say “no,” you are still giving them attention. To set your puppy up for success, do not allow them access to the front door. Or if you do, keep them on a leash and only allow people to pet them if the dog has all four paws on the floor. I usually will keep my puppy behind a baby gate in the kitchen and work on polite greetings (all four paws on the floor or a sit) before allowing anyone to say hi to them.

Using what your puppy wants (attention is normally the motivation



behind jumping), you can easily get those polite behaviours. Preventing your puppy from jumping on people is the first step.

### **Example 2:** ***Counter Surfing and Rummaging Through the Garbage***

All it takes is for your puppy to be successful ONCE for this to become a problem. Here's a human analogy: imagine you walked by a garbage bin and found a \$100 bill! You would be hard pressed to walk by that very same bin without checking it again, probably for the rest of your life.

Simply keeping the counters clean and free of food and locking up garbage behind a cupboard is the solution. Keeping your puppy crated while you're cooking will also help.

Prevent your dog from chewing inappropriate objects by putting them away. Shoes are a great example. Keep them in a box or closet until your puppy has developed an appropriate chew-toy habit. Anything left on the floor is fair game to a puppy.

### **Example 3:** ***Pulling on the Leash***

Prevent your puppy from learning to pull by never moving forward while

there is tension on the leash. Allowing your puppy to get where they want to go will only reinforce the pulling.

Only move forward when there is slack on the leash. Reinforce your puppy for a loose leash by giving them treats when they stay beside you. You can also use the things in the environment that your puppy wants to see or smell as a reward by only allowing the puppy to get to those things when on a loose leash.

Set them up for success by identifying the environments and situations where your puppy is doing the behaviours you don't like and come up with positive solutions to prevent them from ever having the opportunity to perform those behaviours. Remember, the more they get to practise the unwanted behaviours, the better they will get at them. That is what you want to change. You do not even want to give them the opportunity to practise behaviours you won't like.

And when can you start training your puppy? As soon as you bring them home. They are always learning! By changing YOUR behaviour and setting your puppy up for success, you will change THEIR behaviour.

Happy training!