

GAMES TO PLAY AND AVOID

Playing games with your dog can and should be fun, but often they can get out of control leading to problems such as aggression and possessiveness. Here are some useful guidelines to help avoid unpleasant situations:

1. If you wish to play fetch, never chase the dog whilst it has something in its mouth, this is because the dog needs to learn it must always bring things back to you, rather than the other way around.
2. Call a 'time out' or say, "you've blown it" if the dog becomes overexcited and starts biting you, or grabbing at your clothing. The game should be ended at this point.
3. If you wish to play tug-of-war games, that's fine, providing you can get the toy back at the end of the game. Again if the dog becomes over excited call a 'time out'.
4. Rough-and-tumble games can become very dangerous, especially if you have young children, or young children to visit. There have been incidents where children have been playing rough in the street or a local park and a passing dog has tried to join in the fun. This can be fatal for your dog, especially if it is claimed by the child or its parents that the dog was dangerously out of control or VICIOUS.

If you would really like to play rough-and-tumbles, there are two golden rules that you need to teach your dog:

- i. Exactly when the game commences: give the dog a key word such as "boxing" and then let battle commence.
 - ii. When you wish to end this game, say something like "quit" or "time out", so that the dog has a clear signal of when to finish. This way the dog will only learn that such games are on and off when the appropriate signals are given.
5. Finally, if you leave your dog's toys scattered all across the floor, in its bed, or in a box where it can just go and help itself, you will find the dog becoming bored by them all very quickly. Put the toys into a box out of the reach of the dog until you choose to bring them out. There are so many wonderful games, which you can teach your dog, based upon hunting and retrieving. These are safe for all the family, and highly motivating for the dog.

Further courses are run beyond basic training, which utilize many of these games to improve your dog's attention towards you and its overall obedience.

Dogs and Young Children

Having a new dog in a household is an extremely exciting time for children. Especially when the dog is a tiny puppy. All attention is on the puppy. Some dogs and children go together like hands-in-glove. Unfortunately this is not always the case and for many dogs, the constant barrage of attention has the effect of saturating them to the point where they shut down to all other interactions.

All play and no work

Again, as with all other aspects of the relationship a balance needs to be struck between the needs of the family and the needs of the dog. Dogs who are constantly involved in playing with children find paying attention for training purposes very difficult. What fun exists in training when you can spend all your time playing?

Of course I am not suggesting that you stop your children from playing with the dog, but to call "time outs" when things are getting over the top, and to place firmer restrictions on play when the dog is getting to the point of ignoring you. In the section "games to play and games to avoid" I suggested a game based on hunting and retrieving that can be great fun for both dogs and children. This also assists with keeping the dog motivated for training purposes by giving it a reason to sit and stay, come when called etc. Focusing on the toy can also assist with teaching the dog to walk to heel on and off the lead.

Shouting and screaming

It is a sad fact that some dogs are just not able to live in households where children are resident. The reasons appear to be as follows:

Some dogs are very sound sensitive. A dog's hearing range is far more acute than humans, and it could be that when children scream in play, this actually causes pain to some dogs. It could also be like living with the sound of a pneumatic drill on a daily basis.

Also where there are screaming children, there are often shouting parents. Some dogs cannot understand that it is the children who are being shouted at, and become very distressed because they believe that you are angry with them. These problems can reveal themselves in the form of severe hyperactivity, prancing around grabbing at your arms whilst barking, and in some instances there has been unprovoked aggression. Even more reason to prevent the dog from receiving too much over stimulation from children. It often helps if you give the dog an area where it can rest whilst the children are playing, or by placing the dog in another room whilst you are having words in the kids ears!

It is really up to you to monitor your dog's behaviour around children. If you find the dog is getting out of control, switching off from you when outside the home, or is becoming agitated by the children, consider the advice above and decide which is the best course of action to take. If you are uncertain then please pick up the phone and ask?

Finally, NEVER leave young children and dogs unattended. Children do silly things like poking pencils into dogs' ears, or accidentally fall onto dogs. Such instances can lead to bites.

