



# The WoofGang Wag Rag



Vol. 9, No. 1

JANUARY 2009

Free

## *Inhibiting Common Behavior Problems*

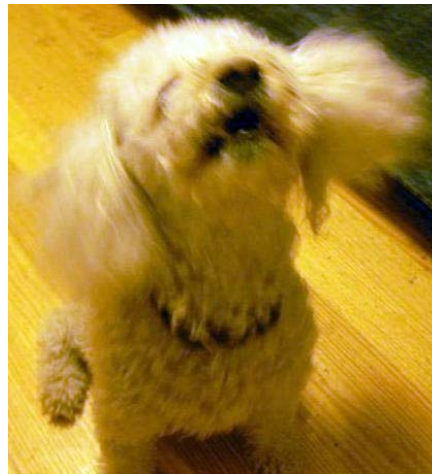
There is no greater reminder of the differences between dog and human than in the behaviors that so annoy us and yet are so innate to them. Barking, jumping on us and on our things, tearing apart the garbage – how exasperating! Here are some techniques to alleviate these nuisances:

### **Jumping Up**

Dogs are very aware of personal space. Jumping up, while usually an attempt to greet face-to-face, is a rude behavior and an invasion of *your* space. Though a small puppy jumping up to seek your attention might seem harmless enough, the behavior won't seem so trifling when the puppy has grown into a 140-pound Great Dane. And few others will appreciate being accosted by your rambunctious adolescent.

When your pup jumps up on you, cross your arms across your chest and turn away from her. In this way, you are withholding the very thing she seeks: your attention. When she drops back to the floor, you can turn around and reward her polite behavior with pets and love. Remember: Don't use your hands to push her off of you; this is in itself a form of attention from you and will inadvertently reward the behavior.

Should you decide that having your pup jump on you is something you enjoy, you might decide to put the behavior on cue, so that patting your hands to your thighs or chest is an invitation to jump up. Without invitation, though, the behavior should not be allowed.



*Ginger expressing herself*

### **Demand Barking**

It is in our nature to respond and comfort the cries of our babies, whether they be of the human or canine persuasion. Of course, cries of true distress should not be ignored, but demand behaviors are a different matter. Yips of protest when your dog is first left alone in the crate, or an attention-seeking pup shoving  
*(continued on page 2)*

## *About the Trainer*

Dog trainer **Laura Garber**, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## *\$25 Intro Training Offer*

Get a 30-minute introductory basic training session for \$25 or apply it towards a 4-session package and get the 30-minute session FREE! (Offer details based on location.) Call **WoofGang** at 646.345.5116 to make an appointment.

## *Talkin' Trash on the Street*

Dogs who lunge and bark at passing dogs on the street are usually doing so due to fear or anxiety. Giving your dog a correction for her behavior tends to make it worse. A more effective approach is to change her feelings about other dogs from one of fear to one of happy anticipation! Call **WoofGang** at 646.345.5116 for help with your trash-talkin' pooch.

## *Territorial Behavior*

Allowing your dog to peer out the window at passers-by can develop into a more dangerous behavior called territorial aggression. Your dog will start to think that it's his barking that's keeping the passing people and dogs away and, over time, this can potentially put your guests at risk.

## *Separation Anxiety*

Even when you're at home, it's important that your dog spends some time away from you. Otherwise she can develop separation anxiety when she's left alone. The crate is a great place for her to get some quality alone-time. **WoofGang** can guide you in helping your dog get more comfortable when she's without you.

## ***Inhibiting Common Behavior Problems (cont.)***

her head under your hand any time she wants petting, should not get the desired result, or you will be beleaguered by these behaviors for life. Instead, ask your dog for a polite *sit* (the doggie equivalent of “please”) before petting her. Approach her crate only when she’s calm and quiet. If your puppy barks at you for attention or for food, turn your back to her, or put her food away and leave the kitchen. In so doing, you’re teaching her that these behaviors impede progress rather than hasten it.

### **Recreational Barking**

Recreational barking is often misdiagnosed as separation anxiety because it frequently happens when the family is absent. Separation anxiety-related barking usually happens immediately upon being left alone and is accompanied by other indicative symptoms, such as destructive (or self-destructive) behavior, breaking of housetraining in a housetrained dog, or anorexic behavior. When barking is the sole symptom, first investigate the possibility that it’s recreational.

The act of barking is self-reinforcing so it is a behavior that is likely to intensify without modification. Increase exercise, particularly before leaving for long periods of time, so that your dog is tired and ready for a rest in your absence. Hire a dog walker to break up the time that he is left alone. Incorporate fun mental challenges like stuffed puzzle toys for your pup to work on in solitude. Leave some classical music playing: It can be relaxing and it can also dampen outside noises that might provoke your dog to bark.

As a last resort, the use of a citronella bark collar can inhibit the behavior by establishing an unpleasant consequence.

### **Counter-Surfing & Garbage Raiding**

The problem with these two annoying behaviors is that they are self-reinforcing – the more times your dog is successful at counter-surfing or garbage raiding, the more difficult it will be to break the habit. First and foremost, when you are absent, make sure your dog has no opportunity to practice the behavior by ensuring that his access to counters and garbage cans is thwarted.

Your best bet is to catch the behavior immediately upon its first occurrence. My dog Trista has only counter-surfed once. On that occasion, I made the mistake of leaving a piece of delicious raspberry cheesecake (made by the Nuns of New Skete, no less!) on a low living room table when I left the room. When I returned, all that remained was a clean plate and a creamy cheese mustache around her mouth, which itself was fast disappearing! And it was too late to correct her – there had been several seconds between the misdeed and my return. So I fetched another piece of cheesecake, put the plate exactly as I had the first, and left the room, lurking just behind the door jamb. At the very moment that she made her attempt, I yelled “No!” That was her first and last uninvited helping.

Trista’s a soft dog, and so this was a good technique for her. It won’t work for every dog; many dogs would be more motivated by the cheesecake than deterred by a rebuke. For these dogs, booby traps like sticky tape (sticky side up) or a can of pennies might work. Be careful with fearful dogs, though. A frightening event might have a greater impact than just thwarting counter-surfing – it could cause fear of the kitchen, for instance. Use prudent, sensitive judgment.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## ***Ask Woofie...***

*Woofie, I have a question. I have a 6 year old mini pin. All of a sudden he takes down the garbage in the kitchen. He didn't do this before this is a new thing. The garbage gets all over. I have two other dogs, a rotti and another mini pin and they all end up eating the garbage. How can I get him to stop. I am never home when this happens. He does it when I am out of the house.*

*Sincerely, Robin*

**Hiya, Robin!** Yes, sometimes it happens that a behavior that you've never seen before suddenly occurs and takes root. Maybe there was something particularly yummy in the garbage that day that your dog found undeniable! And having succeeded in storming the garbage and getting reinforced by its contents even that one time, a new behavior is born.

The best solution is to devise a way to thwart your dog’s attempts to practice the behavior so that over time he will likely forget about trying. You can do this by securing your garbage, either by putting it in a cabinet where the dogs can’t get to it, by getting a garbage can that closes tightly, or by closing off the kitchen entirely.

Some prefer a solution that involves a punishment being delivered when the pet attempts the behavior in your absence. Among these are a can of pennies booby-trapping the garbage that would make a loud noise when capsized, a rug runner turned upside down so that the spiky nubs are facing up and uncomfortable to walk on, a scat mat which delivers a mild electrical charge when touched, or a Ssscat canister, a motion-sensitive canister that delivers a small blast of air. The difficulty with punishment, especially in your absence, is that an accurate delivery is crucial for the lesson to be learned. And particularly with shy animals, punishment might teach them an unintended lesson, like that the entire kitchen is a scary place. So punishment is always my last resort.