



Establishing Communication in the Canine-Human Family

Training is a crucial element in establishing communication and mutual respect, while also strengthening the bond, in the interspecies family of humans and dogs. Our greater awareness of what our dogs are telling us, as well as what they are reading in our behavior – in other words, people reading their dogs and dogs reading their people more accurately – will make this journey a far easier and more profound one.

Dogs, as descendants of wolves, are highly social pack animals who communicate through body language, and, having evolved living so closely with humans, dogs have become very successful at reading human facial and body language. This means that training that starts with physical signals or cues and then attaches verbal commands later will facilitate learning.

Because dogs have become such intimate family members, we humans often confer greater commonality than is helpful. Presumptions about dogs' emotional lives have been a divisive component to human-canine understanding. While dogs are highly intuitive and smart, they do not understand complex concepts such as guilt or retribution. Thus, granting

such complex emotional comprehension to dogs only hinders our ability to truly understand them. One common misinterpretation arises when a dog's breaks housetraining practices. So often their submissive behavior is interpreted as guilt when it is more likely that the dog has been reprimanded in the past and is preemptively offering submissive, conciliatory signals, called *appeasement gestures*.



Wallace

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Introductory Training Offer

Get an extra 30 minutes of training when you purchase a 4-session training package.

(Offer details based on location.)

Call **WOOF GANG** at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

Stress Signals

Not all stress is bad – stress can actually encourage performance at a higher level. But, while a single stress signal might not necessarily alarm you, you should very definitely take notice of compound signaling. If, as a child approaches, your dog licks her lips, yawns, and gives whale eye, that is very definitely an interaction that you should prevent!

WOOF GANG can guide you in helping your dog get more comfortable with the things that cause her stress.

About the Trainer

Dog trainer **LAURA GARBER**, CPDT-KA, 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.

“Howdy Do!”

The genital sniff is like a doggie handshake, but it's not something that humans welcome. Nor is the jumping of an exuberant greeter. Teaching your dog a polite greeting ritual, such as sitting for people's approach, will communicate your expectations and equip your dog with acceptable alternatives.

Call **WOOF GANG** at **646.345.5116** for help shaping your dog into the polite pooch you so desire!

Establishing Communication (cont.)

Establishing Family Hierarchy

Much attention has been paid of late to the notion of the human component in the inter-species family establishing themselves as *alpha* to the family's canine component. There is no dispute that the human as leader is an essential hierarchical relationship. But the more pertinent and essential question is what *type* of leader should he or she be, a dominating one, as some popular voices in the industry would suggest, or a benevolent one?

Human leadership can be effectively, and safely, established through training protocols, involving polite behaviors (*sit, down, come, wait*, etc) in order to gain access to desirable things like food or water, a game of tug, a walk outside, or even some loving. Simply put, training is not for the sake of establishing *obedience* in our canine family members but rather establishing a relationship with them that is based on *mutual respect*.

Finding a Common Language

By teaching our dogs how to exhibit polite behaviors when interacting with people, we are communicating our expectations of how they should behave. Additionally, by understanding how dogs communicate with each other, we can more effectively construct a relationship that is mutually respectful and beneficial.

Introductions

A typical human greeting is face-to-face, with locked eye contact, as we lean engagingly forward and grasp hands. But what is an engaging stance to another human can be construed as highly challenging, particularly to a shy dog. Polite dogs approach in an arc, the more submissive averting her gaze, for a polite sniff of introduction. A human equivalent of this might be to allow a shy dog to make the

approach, averting your eyes and offering a hand to sniff, and then, if the dog has accepted your polite invitation for an interaction, petting under the chin rather than over the head.

Conversely, the genital sniff is like a doggie handshake, but it's not something that humans welcome. Nor is the jumping of an exuberant greeter. Teaching your dog a polite greeting ritual, such as sitting while people approach, will communicate your expectations and equip your dog with acceptable alternatives.

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One of the most striking differences between *canis lupus* and *canis familiaris* is the latter's ability to read our facial expressions. As dogs have evolved at the side of humans, they have been attentive students, learning to distinguish the ripple of expressions that pass over our faces with the same fluency that they read their own brethren. With this in mind, make sure not to give your dog mixed signals. If your dog is doing an undesirable behavior, like jumping up or pawing at you, no matter how cute he might seem to you at that moment, don't smile while saying "no". It's like the old saying: "Your words may say *no* but the rest of you is saying *yes*, *Yes*, *YES!*" Send a consistent message on all frequencies: words, tone of voice, body language, *and* facial expression.

For this article in its entirety, log on to www.myWoofGang.com.



Ask Woofie...

WOOFIE, I adopted Tyrone a few weeks ago. He is a wonderful dog but the problem comes with my cat, Sam. The first two days Sam and Ty fought (Ty chased Sam, Sam clawed his face). Even when separated, my cat would scratch at Ty and he would cry. Since Sam spends most of her time outdoors, she has been living outside. Tyrone stares at her out every window, cries at her and pulls to get to her when outside on his leash. Last week, Ty stuck his face through my back window (needing numerous stitches). I'm not certain what to do to break the obsession. Amy

Hiya, Amy! One thing I'd suggest is that you need to prevent Ty from looking out the windows so that he cannot stalk the cat. Clearly the glass doesn't even stop him, so it'll be necessary to keep him safe. It sounds like he has a bit of a prey drive and this is dangerous for the cat. Using the crate will be essential to keeping the cat safe. When Tyrone's not in the crate he should be on leash at all times and you should reward him for calm, quiet behavior around Sam. Unfortunately those first interactions between them were not good, so it has started the relationship off on the wrong paw. Check out this article: http://mywoofgang.com/handouts/YPC/YPC_0508.pdf

Hope that helps! **WOOFIE**



A very friendly, people-oriented dog, Hunter craves human affection. He is also a great housemate with other family pets, cats and dogs alike. Says his foster mom, "Hunter exudes a calm, almost Zen-like aura when in the house. Call the Liberty Humane Society for more info about Hunter.