



**Paw Prints**

## **Good dog! resource sheet: Teach your dog how to be polite**

It's important to recognize when your dog is being pushy and demanding, and to know how to deal with it. Dogs who are allowed to demand attention when and wherever they want can become aggressive toward family members and/or strangers. Teaching polite behavior means teaching your dog frustration control. Just like children, dogs must learn that they can't have everything they want, when they want it.

### **Identifying pushy and (attention) demanding behavior**

- Jumping up (also a greeting behavior, so don't correct harshly)
- Barking (especially when the dog is barking directly at you) (not all barking is "pushy"; consider the context and decide if your dog is stressed or bored, or has some other reason to bark)
- Forceful nudging or pawing at you
- Barging through doorways or narrow spaces past you or in front of you
- Guarding food or possessions (*If your dog has ever growled or bitten over food, toys or any other item, that is a serious problem. Please talk to your instructor for help on how to deal with it.*)

### **Techniques for responding to pushy behaviors**

#### **Look aways**

A "look away" is an exaggerated way of ignoring your dog. Fold your arms over your chest, you're your chin upward, and turn your back on your dog. Don't speak to him or make eye contact. If the dog circles you to try to look at your face, keep turning your back. This works well for barking and forceful nudging.

#### **Body blocks**

A body block is simply using your body to "block" the dog from getting what s/he wants. Instead of the dog taking up your personal space by jumping on you or knocking you over to get through a door, you turn the tables and take up his/her personal space. Note: body blocks usually do not involve you touching the dog with your body – they take up 'mental space' more than physical space.

#### **Inhibiting cues**

Inhibiting cues are things like "Sit", "Wait", "Leave It", "Drop it" and "Stay" – things you ask your dog to do to stop or slow down his/her motion. Asking a dog to do something for you, before she gets what she wants, teaches polite behavior.

***With any of these methods, it is critical that you reward good behavior as soon as it occurs.***

Example: your dog jumps on you and you look away and ignore him. He stops jumping up and stands looking at you or perhaps even sits. You should reward him with a pat or a treat for having "four on the floor". It's not enough to just tell your dog what you DON'T want – you must also tell him what you DO want.