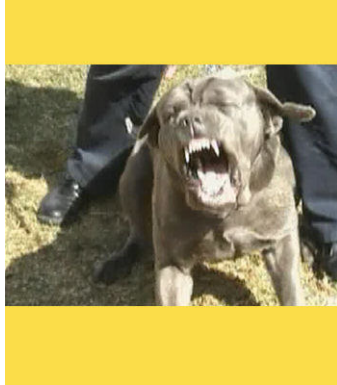


AGGRESSIVE DOG "Causes & Solutions"



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Foreword

It's never been as common as now—the fact that dogs are attacking people, causing horrific injuries that sometimes lead to death. Is the sobriquet “dogs are man's best friends” fair and true? Why do some dogs turn aggressive while others remain calm?

There are three undeniable facts that pertain to dogs: First, that nearly all dogs have an inherent protective instinct; Second, that though each dog is born with a definite temperament, it can be changed and molded by training and environment; Third, dog and master develop a strong bond very soon into their relationship which goes on to give the dog a sixth sense – one that includes knowing his master's likes and dislikes.

This is why calm and mild tempered people have dogs of a similar nature while nervous and bad tempered people have dogs that mirror their personalities. In fact, a dog can also pick up a pet owner's prejudices against race or class. Like us, dogs too can err. Sometimes, they misinterpret an action or fail to recognize a person and attack him out of the blue.

Another reason for a dog's aggressive nature is his ancestry that goes back to the wolves of the wild. Some breeds like the pit bull are said to be more aggressive than others. In fact, it is known to be the cause of 72% of all deaths by dogs in the United States. And, it attacks without provocation.

The pit bull is the dog of choice of gangsters and street thugs who use this breed as weapons and because they make for good watchdogs. They are intentionally ill treated so as to bring out their aggressiveness. This obviously means that with gentle treatment aggression can be sorted out. However, the basic nature of a dog will always remain and may surface under certain conditions.

If a dog ever attacks you, don't panic because a dog will chase anything that moves. Instead, speak casually to him as if you know him, backing away slowly. Don't use any sudden or jerky movements. If you have a book, handbag or anything else in your hands, keep it between you and the dog.

If a dog bites you, go to a doctor immediately. Let the police know and give them a description of the dog. If the police is able to identify the dog, they will tell you if you need to take rabies shots.

Chapter 1

Defining aggression among dogs

Aggression in dogs is defined as a threatening or harmful behavior directed toward another living creature—whether human or animal. The dog may snarl, growl, snap, nip, bite and lunge. Such behavior among dogs is not abnormal. All they are doing is to exhibit the typical behavior of a normal species that is perhaps incompatible with human life and safety. Such behavior among dogs is on the rise and can lead to gruesome situations, including death, as described below.

Only recently, a young woman returned home with a lady friend and was unlocking her door when two snarling and ferocious dogs lunged at her. Though the owner of the dogs screamed at them to stop, they went straight for the woman and attacked her.

When the police arrived at the scene, they found her in ragged clothes and bloodstains all over the walls and floor. The victim was sent to hospital for neck injuries which she later succumbed to, and the dogs went to an animal shelter.

❖ **Were they bred to be ferocious?** The question: what makes dogs turn ferocious has led many behaviorists to go into the matter at great length. They say that while some breeds are very fierce or

aggressive, others aren't. Due to domestication or taming by humans, they have lost their predatory edge and since then have also been selectively bred or mated to certain breeds of dogs to redouble certain specific behavioral traits helpful to humans.

❖ **Killer instinct:** Though certain dog breeds such as rottweilers and pit bulls are deadly attackers, it is still impossible to know a killer by his breed alone. A more reliable way is to know if the dog has been neutered or not. When a dog is devoid of its sexual urges, he ceases to have any hormonal urges to roam and fight.

❖ **The return of the predatory instinct:** As you know, dogs have descended from wolves that have a very distinct predatory instinct. Like most wild canine predators, wolves also killed in packs. In addition, predators kill other animals for food or in self-defense of their territory. Dogs have evolved from wild canines, and most wild canine predators kill in packs. From the many hundred cases of fatal dog attacks, one thing comes to light: that the savage instincts of a pack have returned to some domestic dogs that suddenly attack animals or people without warning.

❖ **Our responsibilities:** There's only so much that genetics can be responsible for, when attributing blame to aggression and the killer instinct in dogs. There are also our own responsibilities towards our pet dogs. Your pet's behavior is the net result of how you bring him up, his health and training—aspects you are

responsible for. In certain cases, a pet owner, unwittingly encourages his dog to become dangerous by including rough play in his daily schedule, abusing him and praising him when the dog growls at strangers.

Chapter 2

Recognizing the different kinds of aggression in your dog

Aggression is such a natural and innate type of behavior among dogs that willy-nilly, at some time or other, they will experience it. Today's domestic dog no longer expresses aggression with slight facial expressions or a stiff tail. In fact, today these signs are interpreted to mean that the animal is ready for attack or to defend himself. Unfortunately, these days, dogs come into this world carrying genetic and hormonal baggage-based behavior problems, learned problems, problems acquired in training and those born out of improper primary socialization.

Animal behavior therapists now know 16 different types of aggressive behavior in dogs.

Aggression or intra-specific fighting involves using the teeth but in a controlled way so as not to kill but to force the victim submit into submission. This happens between dogs, usually of the same gender and within the same class i.e., two adult males.

Aggression can be when one dog wants to defend his space, be possessive over his food, bedding sites or affection in his master's eyes. So, it is very natural for all dogs to be aggressive at some point of their lives. Inter-specific aggression is said to occur because we have included dogs into our social order and imposed

ours on them. This blurs the lines between man and dog and so it is not surprising that dogs react in much the same way to humans as they would to a fellow dog and for the same reasons.

Since pet owners often don't know how to communicate to their dogs and what to say, they often end up getting hurt more often by dogs than other dogs would. Besides, no matter how well you know your pet, it is not often that you can read him so well that you can predict what he's going to do next.

❖ **Recognizing aggression in your dog:** Dogs may react to other dogs for two reasons: one, they are scared of the strange dog; and second, because they foresee that the strange dog might just pose a social or status threat to him. Further, if you have an aggressive dog, he will display this behavior trait only to dogs of a particular size, color or breed, while being friendly with other dogs in the family but not to neighborhood dogs. Not all dogs, however, openly display aggression.

❖ **Signs of aggression:**

- Whining, barking or growling
- Staring directly at the other animal
- Raised hackles
- Tugging against the leash to reach the other animal
- Ears pointing forwards
- A stiff tail held up high

❖ **What influences aggression:** Aggression may be influenced by several factors such as genetic predisposition, early experience, maturation, sex, age, size, hormonal status, physiological state and external stimuli. On the basis of a classification system based on patterns of behavior and the causes of such behavior, and the dog's motivation, behaviorists are able to understand the problem better. The classification is as follows:

❖ **Kinds of aggression:**

• **Dominance-related aggression:** This is a commonly found form of canine aggression rooted in a power struggle. Aggression is directed to either one member of the family or several or to any other household pets. The reason dogs display aggression in such situations is that they consider humans members of their species and as member of their pack.

This is the most dreaded form of canine aggression—from the point of view of both human and dog safety. Since people are most often affected by it, it is the most commonly encountered aggression problem. Through this form of aggression, the dog initiates a struggle for power, or anything else that symbolizes status. This happens because dogs are like people in seeking the top slot whether within the family or among other dogs.

Since pet owners find it difficult to understand this problem and grapple with it, they use physical punishment to teach the dog just who's the boss. Today,

however, this is changing in favor of humane and scientific treatment methods.

Basically, dominance aggression is genetically determined, with a lot of learning thrown in. The quantum of aggression varies from dog to dog, though the innately highly aggressive ones are those who are most likely to demonstrate dominance aggression and to lose control in seeing that his combatant is ready to quit.

Or in their highly aggressive state, they could be so incensed that they cut out all preliminary posturing and come right down to knocking down their victim and dragging him out. By now, the dog has internalized the fact that winning is best and if it means increasing his intensity of aggression, he will do it. This attitude makes him unsafe for human beings and fellow animals.

Because your dog has had insufficient or poor primary socialization, he will not be able to see the signals of appeasement. Further, the problem is compounded when you take a pup of a non-fighting breed too early away from the litter, at a time when he is obviously too young developmentally. This is why trainers and animal behaviorists usually recommend not picking up a pup before he completes at least 10 weeks in the same litter. If you remove him at seven weeks as is usually done, it serves to increase dominance aggression only because

the pup can't understand fellow dogs, result in an adult canine sociopath.

▪ **How it is manifested:** If your dog displays atypical, out-of-context aggressive behaviors directed toward people consistently, then he's showing his aggressive streak. Such behaviors include growling, snapping and biting. Bites, however, are not preceded by a bark or growl.

Dogs display their dominance aggression in many circumstances with the dog primarily trying to control people-related situations. Some of them are:

- Disturbing him while he sleeps
- Pulling at his leash to correct him
- Reaching over his head to put on the leash
- Grooming him
- Staring at him in the eye
- Hugging him
- Holding him by the muzzle or face
- Conducting restraint exercises
- Punishing him

A dog may be aggressive to strangers or may direct his ire at one or more members of the family, so not all members may be affected by his aggression. They may turn aggressive when faced by a huge household commotion, or when children play with them at their eye level, or they may victimize a compliant person only because he or she is not firm with the dog, and the latter knows he can push this person around.

This form of aggression develops at social maturity, or at 18-36 months of age. This is chiefly seen among males, and rarely among females (at eight weeks to eight months). This is controlled by the presence of androgens, including testosterone, or the lack of estrogen during sexual and social development.

Dominant aggressive dogs subtly show this behavior to their owners so that the latter may alter their activities to suit them. For instance, such a dog will lie blatantly in front of a door or near furniture, preventing the pet owner from avoiding the area that he occupies. He may also lean against his owner or rest his paw on his owner at every available opportunity.

As a pet owner, it is essential that you differentiate between a dog's pushiness and his attention-seeking attitude. So, if he leans against his owner to display his affection or win his master's attention and latter pushes him away, the dog will not get aggressive. But if the dog does this with the motive of displaying his authority or control over his master, his body will stiffen and he will "talk back" by grumbling or growling. His growling can also get fiercer and he may also bite and become more threatening.

▪ **Treating canine dominance aggression:** Treating your dog of dominance aggression is necessary to improve his behavior within the family. There should be no risk of injury to people and the dog, while in this

process. And most of all, the treatment should be humane.

Treatment should include:

- Avoiding all those actions that can provoke him to act aggressively
 - Using passive behavior modification techniques to make dogs be respectful to their owners and to desist from rewarding the dog for any unacceptable behavior. Instead, he should be spontaneously praised or rewarded for good behavior.
 - Resorting to less aggressive ways of reacting to provocative situations such as desensitization and counter-conditioning.
 - Giving the dog anti-anxiety medication.
- **Territorial aggression:** If a dog wants to defend his area (home, room or yard), owner of a fellow pack member, he will display territorial aggression toward approaching animals or people outside of the pack. This is an inherent trait among all dogs, with genetics determining just how defensive a dog will be.

This form of aggression is also helpful in controlling his fearfulness, a necessary part of his defensive behavior. While normal dogs have a proper balance of attack and fearful backing off, a slightly fearful dog can become more aggressive than a normal dog by sheer experience or by learning. Let us take a situation where a normal or a slightly fearful dog sees a person approaching him. Immediately, the dog barks and the person stops in his

tracks. From this experience, the dog learns that his barking can help control the situation in his favor.

The next time a person approaches, the dog now barks sooner and more aggressively than before and the person backs off yet again. By the person backing away, he reinforces the idea in the dog's mind that his aggressiveness or barking does work, so now each successive time this situation is enacted, the dog's barking or aggressive behavior will increase.

By now, the dog has learnt that he can control the situation with his barking, and grow his individual space by just being aggressive. Now, he can also determine what he wants defended and the intensity of the various objects that mark out his exclusive area. For instance, a dog might want to call the family car or his kennel his own defended space, or he might defend his owner when on leash, but not when out running free in the woods.

▪ **Treating territorial aggression:** This can be prevented or minimized with early socialization and good control over your dog. Teach your dog to sit and accept a reward every time a new person comes home. You can reduce his fear and anxiety of strangers by seeing that a large number of people come over to see him, while he is still a pup and sociable. Soon, he will alert you by barking every time a stranger comes home.

Now, you can train him to settle down and relax. Gain enough control over him to sit, stay and when calm, and then, give him a reward at the door. Generally a leash and head collar will ensure control the quickest. You can use a desensitization and counter-conditioning program to retrain him with a low level of stimuli (e.g., people arriving home in a car, someone walking past the front door, or a stranger ringing your doorbell).

Soon, he will realize that each time these activities takes place, he will get a reward if he barks to announce their arrival. Once he masters this lesson, take him to a higher plane where you use more intense stimuli. If he barks and you want to disrupt it, use an anti-bark collar, shake can or air horn, so that he can stop barking and perform behavior that can win him a reward.

• **Fear-induced aggression:** When you expose your dog to strangers or if he comes face to face with people or animals he has had an unpleasant experience with—whether people or animals—fear aggression builds up in him. There are some dogs who may retreat when frightened, while others who stand on their own territory and those that are prevented from retreating because they are cornered or restrained, are very likely to fight.

The dog may be more fearful if: a) the stranger or animal retreats b) The stranger or animal shows more fear than the dog c) if the dog is harmed or frightened after being punished in any way d) if you punish your

dog too often e) any unpleasant experience associated with the owners f) kennel shy and g) improper secondary socialization.

Fear aggression could be the result of a combination of some other forms of aggression—e.g. dominance, maternal, possessive, etc. Your dog will be aggressive and his body language will reflect his fear.

▪ **Treating fear-induced aggression:** Behavior therapy combined with drug therapy can be used to treat fear aggression.

• **Maternal aggression:** This is aimed at anyone approaching the female with puppies or in false pregnancy. When bitches go through pseudo-pregnancy they could turn aggressive and protect their nesting areas when the pups would have been born. After the pups have been weaned and the dog is spayed, the problem disappears. Meanwhile, you can use a leash or head collar, and teach him to leave the litter. Give him commands and rewards as he learns.

▪ **Treating maternal aggression:** If you desensitize and counter condition him, get good control over him and give him highly motivating rewards, you can train your dog to accept anyone approach him.

• **Redirected aggression:** When a dog expresses his aggression to a particular object or person, he may suddenly redirect his ire or aggression from that source

to another, even though that latter person or object did not evoke the aggression. For example, if your dog barks at the door, he may suddenly redirect his aggression onto his owner who is pulling him on the leash toward him.

Often, dominant dogs redirect onto subordinates. This usually happens when the dog is aroused and a person or house pet intervenes or approaches.

▪ **Treating redirected aggression:** To remove the dog from this aggressive state, squirt water on him with a water rifle, or use an air horn to distract his attention or even a long leash to pull him away from the scene. If this doesn't work, lock him in a dark, quiet room, until he settles down and emerges only for food or play.

Redirected aggression is the result of certain other forms of aggression, so it is important to identify and treat the root cause of aggression. To prevent the problem, avoid exposing him to the cause of aggression by keeping a leash and head collar or leash and muzzle on your dog whenever that form of exposure is likely.

• **Play aggression:** Young dogs show their aggressive streak toward people or other pets in the family. They play rough games along with grabbing, nipping or biting people or their clothing. Even if you do consider this normal behavior, it can be injurious and, if mishandled, can lead to more serious forms of aggression as your dog grows.

• **Possessive aggression:** One dog may direct his aggression on another dog if it has something highly desirable such as a favorite chew toy, food or treat. Food alone doesn't bring out this behavior in an aggressive dog—it could be a tissue stolen from a garbage can, a toy, scraps of food or a piece of rawhide.

▪ **Treating possessive aggression:** First, try to stop any injury to the two dogs. For this, you might have to tie up the aggressive dog so that it doesn't pick up any items that it might like to protect and fight over. If your dog is possessive about his food, start giving him less palatable food and feed him in a room away from the family. If he protects his toys or treats, take them away, and give them to him only when he is in his crate or separate room.

Keep your dog on a long leash and head collar so that you can supervise his wanderings, if any, and stop him from dipping into the garbage can and picking up what he likes. Set booby traps all over the place so that your dog doesn't go near selected objects. Your dog will also have to give up accepting certain objects on command. Maintain good control over the dog and train him well so that he receives a treat or reward that is more appealing than what he covets.

• **Predatory aggression:** Your dog reacts to anything or anyone that moves and chases and hunts his prey.

His prey could range from other species to a car or bike. He will then stalk his prey, chase attack and ingest it.

▪ **Treating predatory aggression:** You can stop him from chasing his prey by making him wear a head collar. He should be desensitized and counter-conditioned in the presence of his passing stimuli. He should be left loose to run about in a confined space like a large pen or yard, where his owners control his movements. When out on a walk with him, use a leash and head collar or a leash and muzzle.

• **Pain-induced aggression:** A person or animal that brings the animal pain causes this form of aggression. It could happen when a person touches a painful area or when the dog is given an injection. Even if your dog does not show he is in pain, he could suffer from certain medical conditions such as endocrine imbalances, organ disease, etc. that may make him irritable and aggressive. This may induce him to feel scared and anxious. Once your dog learns that aggression can remove the stimulus, this form of aggression may recur only in similar situations in the future, even if the pain is absent.

▪ **Treating pain-induced aggression:** Treatment first requires that the medical or painful condition is resolved. Next, you will need to identify the types of handling and situations that have led to aggression in the past. If you desensitize and counter-condition him, your dog can slowly accept and enjoy these

experiences. The problem can be resolved once he is sure that there is no level of discomfort anymore associated with the handling, but that there could be rewards. Begin retraining with a muzzle or leash and head collar.

- **Inter-male aggression:** This kind of aggression exists between adult males and is all about territorial or dominance disputes. Inter-female aggression occurs between adult females living in the same household.

- **Learned aggression:** Dogs intentionally trained to act aggressive on command is what learned aggression is all about, though learning is part of other kinds of aggression too. The moment a dog learns that aggression has successfully removed the stimulus, the dog's behavior is reinforced. Inadvertently, a pet owner may encourage aggression in his pet by patting or giving verbal reassurances when trying to calm the pet. If you threaten or punish him, he may become more aggressive each time the situation recurs.

- **Treating learned aggression:** If you desensitize and counter-condition your dog, he will not only learn that the stimulus is safe, but that it is associated with a reward.

- **Food aggression:** You must understand that food aggression is a form of dominance behavior. The dog feels that how owner needs to be taught not to go near his food. This proves that the pet is not scared of his

master. In a pack of dogs, you have perhaps noticed that the Alpha dog always eats first, and then others down the pecking order eat. But, if any of the dogs lower down the line try to get close to the alpha's food, the alpha emits a low growl. If this is ignored, the alpha will emit a bout of aggression, which may be a bite on the muzzle, the neck, the ear or the flank. This action means he is asserting his position in the pack, and his right to eat first.

▪ **Treating food aggression:** A good trainer or owner will foresee such conflicts and keep ready certain tools such as a leash, collar, back tie, double handler, etc to be able to win this confrontation in the style of the alpha dog.

To teach the dog a lesson not to be aggressive over food, leave a properly sized collar and a six-foot leash on the dog while he eats. If he growls, correct him. This is just what the alpha dog would do remember? Now, whether you correct him gently or harshly is up to you.

Chapter 3

More causes of aggression

At any age, you may develop aggression born out of medical disorders. These problems may arise suddenly and may be completely different from ordinary experiences of other dogs. While some medical conditions can cause aggression, but sometimes a combination of behavioral factors and medical problems cause the pet to exceed the level at which he displays aggression. The medical conditions that could strike your pet include rabies, hypothyroidism, psychomotor epilepsy, hyperkinesias, neoplasia and a variety of genetic and metabolic disorders, besides dental disease, arthritis and fever, fatigue or sensory loss.

- **Cage rage:** This is usually seen in puppy mill dogs that begin to see their cages or kennels as their territory because that's where they have been shut in and neglected for indefinite periods. Naturally, they defend it very stoutly from others trying to touch it or enter it or even nose around it from outside. A dog that suffers from cage rage is usually a trapped and cornered dog that, in a confrontation, does not have the option of "flight" but can only "fight."

In dogs from shelters you can see the faint beginnings of cage rage. Actually, it may or may not be aggression as other dogs exhibit but just a dose of hyperactivity or

boisterousness that might turn a prospective buyer off, since the latter may think that this is the dog's true personality. But really, this is very often a temporary phase that the dog resolves as he gains a little freedom and does not stare at the world through the bars of his cage.

- **Separation anxiety:** This is a common complaint of all dog owners, in which the dog destroys objects in the house and howls and barks so loudly that the neighbors complain. This happens when you leave your dog alone and unattended all day while you go out to work. Your dog, being a pack animal, cannot bear to be left alone and will begin his long period of loneliness by just sighing and waiting for you to return. Others may just cry and bark in a bid to get you back earlier than you had intended to return. When the time period is so long that the dog can't bear it, he will even resort to destroying furniture and furnishings in the house, apart from plants, books, pillows or just anything that is yours. He will even defecate on the floor.

Such severely dependent dogs are also called “velcro dogs” and feel this way since they have a history of either being passed from home to home or were abandoned early in life. This very thought—of being abandoned yet again—is a very frightening one for him and he reacts by howling and displaying his anger and frustration at the thought of it. Unfortunately, certain owners who don't understand the magnitude of the problem only reinforce this behavior by turning a blind

eye to it and saying, “Oh, it will be fine” and trying to reassure the dog. But his worry will only increase if you try calming him down when he knows there’s a lot to worry about.

To get him over his fear of abandonment, desensitize your dog to your comings and goings. Initially, leave the house for brief periods, perhaps just a few minutes, and then return. Accustom him to this for a while and watch that your dog is happy to see you go out and come back soon. Then, increase the periods that you stay out. This will give him the feeling that no matter what, you will come home soon and bearing your stay away from the house and him will seem easier for him.

Though obedience training and socializing are the best solutions for most dogs, it is necessary for you to see that your little pup steers clear of older dogs. After all, not all dogs like pups, and so are sometimes attacked at an early age. Unfortunately, such pups grow up to be very aggressive adults. Early in their lives, such pups learn that if they growl at strange dogs, they will be left alone. An aggressive dog lives by the adage, “Attack is the best defense.”

If you feel it’s safer to muzzle your dog, make sure you put it on him before training him. Put it on just before you give him a meal for about an hour or so for a week, or just before you take him out in the backyard for a game. In this way, the dog will think that before he begins to do something he likes, he will be muzzled.

This will predispose him to think muzzling him is a good thing.

• **Lunging and growling at other dogs and strangers:**

Perhaps you are unfortunate to have a dog that snarls, barks and lunges at the sight of passersby. To some extent, this is a natural reaction with dogs as you can't possibly expect your dog to like every stranger or strange dog or anyone or thing unfamiliar.

But that doesn't mean that you raise an unsocialized dog that would be a nuisance outside your house. It is therefore essential that you learn to attract your dog's attention when in public and in the thick of distractions on the road. Treat this as the first step in educating your dog to be socialized and for establishing yourself as the alpha leader that your dog can trust. This is very important as once he is trained to be obedient and subservient to you, he will automatically look to you for guidance instead of taking his own decisions and action.

On your part, you will want to assure him that you are in control and will take charge of every situation in public. For this, you will have to stay calm and avoid conveying irritation and anxiety through the pressure you lay on his leash—the popular medium of anxiety that triggers off aggression in dogs.

• **Is your dog aggressive to innocent passersby?** Do innocent passersby get the brunt of your dog's aggressive streak with his snarls, snaps, bites, growls

and verbal threats while they pass him by in the street or in parks? Such behavior could arise from a series of past bad experiences your dog has gone through. Even if this is true, it is very embarrassing for you and begs you to think of the day when he will injure someone in the street—whether human or animal. How can you prevent such an unfortunate and dangerous situation from occurring? How can you manage the dog safely while curbing his social aggression? Here are some tips:

- **Check the cause of his aggression:** Never falsely imagine that your dog will merely make idle threats without actually carrying them through. On the contrary, when a dog threatens, he means for you to take his warning signals as signs of something terrible to happen very soon—a bite, for sure. So, before he can snap, snarl or bark, have your vet check him for illness or injury since this is usually the cause of aggressive behavior in dogs. If his aggression is a recent behavior, then it is still not a habit with him. This makes controlling the physical cause and stemming the problem a very high possibility.

Besides, you must recall here the dog breed's wolvine ancestry. They have a survival instinct to hide pain since in the wild; any show of pain would have them killed. So, if he couldn't show his pain, he showed his aggression as a reaction to pain and ward off anyone approaching him.

▪ **Muzzle him in public:** Besides, if you fit your dog with either a head halter or a muzzle, other people know that they must keep their dogs away from his face. They will also take this as a cue to ask your permission to touch or pet your dog or let their kids near him. If your dog is aggressive with all passersby, he needs to be treated so, to help him come out of his aggression.

• **Aggression toward passing dogs:** In order that he gets out of the habit of showing aggression toward passing dogs, teach him the focused attention exercise. Begin by teaching him this exercise in other settings, believing that he can then use it anywhere. This will teach him to focus his attention on you and off everything else. By doing this, you will be in complete control of your pet, especially if you've put a head halter round him until he becomes completely reliable.

Start the exercise in a personal and safe space. Allow your dog to give you some of his attention until he is ready to focus all the way. You must symbolize safety to him; only then will this exercise work for him. If he knows he has to be on his guard always, he will continue to be aggressive.

To make this work, have treats in your pocket, in your hands, etc. They can be tiny tempting edibles or even toys. But keep them hidden from him. To catch his attention, say, "Goldie!" and move away as abruptly as you can. In time, your dog will maintain eye contact

with you. This is your cue to know the exercise has worked. Once this happens, move away from him.

When your dog moves with you, praise him. Don't dangle the treat in front of him before you give it or he won't be interested in your training. Place the treat in line between his eyes and yours—after all, you want eye contact with him, right? Soon, he will be seeking to make eye contact with you, even if you don't call out his name.

Repeat this exercise a few times in a row in this order: Say his name, move, praise him in a word, pull out a treat and give it. If you do it a few times and then release the dog, it helps sustain his attention for long.

- **Does he tug on a leash?** Usually, leash pulling begins the moment your dog sees the leash in your hands and knows he's going out for a walk. Train your dog to walk calmly beside you rather than walk out of control. In fact, he should be calm while you put his collar and leash on. Keep him in sit-stay position till the leash is on. Delay the walk till he obeys you; if you give in, he will know that it's ok not to obey you.

- **How to train him outdoors:** Each time he tugs away from you on the leash and you continue to walk, you are inadvertently rewarding him for all his pulling and lunging. Instead, stop the walk the moment he begins to tug on the leash, stand still and wait for him to calm down before continuing. At first this may seem like a

lot of hard work, but if you persevere you will see results. If you don't, he will continue to pull.

▪ **How to stop him pulling on a leash:** Dogs tend to behave aggressively because their masters communicate their anxiety tacitly. If this is true of you, change your dog's aggressive behavior by:

- Using a halter-style collar.
- Holding your dog in a way that prevents him from being tugged off balance. Bend your elbows and keep your arms close to your body. Also, bend your knees slightly and balance your weight.
- In order that your dog doesn't feel aggressive when out on a walk, have a friend walk his dog at a short distance ahead of you. Whenever your dog is quiet, reward him for his behavior. Repeat.
- Then, shorten the distance between the two dogs by just a little, and ask your dog to listen to you. The moment he does, reward him. Repeat this exercise until the two dogs walk side by side.
- Just to keep him from lunging away from the leash, distract his attention by making a sound every now and then.
- Every so often, ask him to sit and stay, among other commands. When his attention is entirely on you, his aggressive behavior will reduce and he will submit to you.

• **Protecting yourself from strays:** Keep away from stray dogs, as they are likely to attack you just when you least expect it. To ward off their attacks, open an

automatic opening umbrella in their faces. Alternatively, you can also squirt water pistols, plant misters with diluted vinegar or pepper spray. You can also blow an air horn or throw a tasty treat his way to deflect his attention from you.

• **If you're a bicyclist, skater, skateboarder or jogger:** If you're one of these and go past with a swift and sudden whoosh, this is going to scare anyone's dog, no matter how aggressive. Some dogs like to chase joggers. At other times, somebody might startle them as they rush past them, so the dog may turn aggressive toward them and bite them. So, if you and your dog are out on a walk and you see bicyclists, skaters and runners approaching, keep your dog on leash close to you.

• **How to help your dog:**

▪ **Neuter and spay:** An aggressive dog can reduce his bite by your neutering him. This reduces the chance of him ever lunging at other dogs. If you have a female dog, she will not have the same maternal protectiveness after being spayed and will not mouth or nip.

▪ **Call for help:** If you need professional help, speak to a good canine behavior specialist. Or enroll in a class for dogs with socialization problems so you can practice the techniques you learn with controlled

distractions. Ask for positive reinforcement-based methods.

Chapter 4

Why dogs bite

Though the vast majority of dogs are safe, yet sometimes even a friendly dog may bite if he is threatened, angry, afraid or hurt. Most dog bites, however, are from those dogs that know the victim—it's either the family or the neighbor's dog. Sometimes, when you play rough games with the dog, he gets so excited that he bites you.

- **Your dog's territorial instincts:** Just as we guard our things and families, so also do dogs protect their possessions—whether food, puppies or toys. They also protect their favorite spaces—theirs and their master's. This can include the dog's eating and sleeping areas, yards, porches and parked cars. A dog can be so fiercely protective of his and his master's house that even if a child comes running through a fence and reaches the front door of the house, a usually warm and loving dog can turn nasty and growl and bark at the dog purely to protect his master and his family.

- **Cornering or crowding over your dog:** These are two more reasons for your usually placid dog to rise in self-defense and bite you. This is why innocent children who are unfamiliar with dogs should be wary of them to the extent of standing back and never putting their faces close to that of a dog. This is because cheek bites are very common with dogs.

It is good to be wary of all kinds of dogs you encounter. Here are a few:

- **Stray dogs:** If a dog is lost, frightened or injured, he is likely to bite because he has lost his bearings and feels very vulnerable. So, keep away from him, as he is dangerous to you and your children.

- **Sick or injured dogs:** If a dog is in pain or is sick or injured, obviously he will be unable to cope with his situation and feel helpless. This will make him feel afraid or irritable and in this condition, it is best that children steer clear of him.

- **Elderly dogs:** Senior dogs may be either deaf or blind and may also be sensitive to touch. So, if you touch them without warning, they will most likely bite back in self-defense.

- **Improperly socialized dogs:** If a dog is not socialized, he will not be able to tolerate children around him. But if he has been so, he will be able to handle all the rough treatment kids usually mete out to dogs—and take it sportingly and without biting them. While choosing a pup, be careful to note that it does not play-bite or this will cause later problems for you.

- **What to do when you meet a new dog:**

- Ask the owner's permission before petting his dog
- Leave a mother and her pups alone
- If a dog is tied up, asleep, eating, behind fences or in vehicles, don't try to attract his attention or this will make him whine and bark

- You and your children should not chase or tease dogs, or pull their ears or tails
- Do not grab their food, bones or toys
- When two dogs fight, don't try to stop it, but call an adult or professional for help
- Be gentle with dogs

• **Your responsibilities as a pet owner:** If your dog bites anyone, you can be held liable for your dog's actions, under the law. You can work towards reducing the likelihood of your dog biting unwary people by doing the following:

- Socialize and train your dog early in life so that he doesn't have a chance to turn aggressive.
- Stop your dog from running loose out of the house. Instead, give him a fenced yard and have him on a leash when he goes out running or when you take him for a walk. Don't let young children walk dogs they cannot control.
- If any children you meet take a shine to your dog, see that they approach your dog carefully, if only to protect your dog.
- Select your dog on the basis of his parents' behavior and if he is non-aggressive.
- To reduce your dog's aggression, sterilize him.
- Don't leave your baby or very little babies without a sitter in the company of a dog.
- Teach your children never to hug a dog, as they cannot tolerate such behavior. Instead, teach them to be considerate towards their dogs and not tease, chase and yell at them.

- **How to protect yourself from dog bites:**

- Never approach a strange dog.
- Pet a dog only after it has finished sniffing you.
- Don't turn your back on a dog and run away or he will chase you.

- **If a dog attacks you:**

- Stand still with your hands by your side.
- Don't make eye contact with the dog.
- Continue to stand still till he loses interest in you and then walks away from you.

- **If a dog attacks you:**

- Use your jacket, backpack, bicycle or anything else as a shield to fend off the dog's attack.
- If, as a result of the scuffle, you fall or are knocked down on the ground, curl your body into a ball with your hands over your ears and lie still.
- If the dog bites you, report the bite to an adult without delay and wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- File a report with your local animal care and control agency. Include what the dog looked like, the owner's name and address if you know it, where you saw the dog, whether you've seen it before, and which direction the dog was last headed.

- **When dogs bite kids:** The mildest and happiest of dogs sometimes is so surprised by an innocent child around him that his initial response is to bite the child.

The dog may have taken the best care of itself but this one incident often scars a child against dogs forever. A dog may bite a child for different reasons such as:

- **Excitement:** When kids play, they usually create a lot of noise and movement around them, which disturbs dogs. Dogs that play with fellow dogs usually play a very rough game that ends with clawing and biting each other. When your dog tries to play with you, he applies the same rules of clawing and biting a child, forgetting that he should not do that. Dogs don't realize that they can hurt a child just by accident, or merely by being over-excited. To prevent a dog biting your child, play gently and calmly and if your pet gets too excited, freeze and walk away. Give him enough time to calm down.

- **In pain or sickness:** If your kid touches a dog when he is in pain or if he doesn't understand where the pain comes from, the dog may think your kid is the cause of the pain and will bite you, believing that will stop the pain. If your dog is sick or hurt, tell your child to leave him alone and instead get him medical help.

- **Anger:** If your child touches any of his personal property such as his toys, bed, food and water bowls, yard, house or car, or if the child comes near anything that he feels is off-limits for the likes of you, he will bite you. To prevent a bite from your angry dog, don't enter a yard where such a dog is roaming around. Don't

pet him through a car window or a fence and don't tie him up either.

- **Fear or surprise:** Any quick or sudden movements or loud noises are frightening for dogs, and they may bite your child in self-defense.

- **What you should do:**

- **Alarm bells:** Watch out for warnings that a dog may give when he is angry. Check if his ears are laid back against his head or his legs have stiffened. He is perhaps warning you that he feels threatened and will do all he can to protect himself. If his coat is bristly and upright, you've got trouble coming up, and if he growls or barks or bares his teeth, it means he is ready to bite. This only means you're doing something he doesn't like, so stop doing it.

What you should do	What you should <u>NOT</u> do
Freeze	Don't stare at the dog, he sees it as a challenge
Count to five, slowly and silently	Don't run, jump or wave your arms around
Move away very slowly, sideways or backwards	Don't scream

- **First aid for a child bitten by a dog:**

- Have an adult take you to a doctor.
- Wash the wound with soap and warm water.
- Write down the type, size and color of the animal. Did it have a collar round his neck or any

identification tags? Where did he bite you? After biting you, where did the animal go?

- Report all of this information to the animal control agency in your city.

• **Tips to keep your dog from biting your child:** As a pet owner, your first duty is to see that your pet grows up right to be a happy animal. So, if you make the mistake of chaining him for long periods unattended, you're asking to have an aggressive dog. Such dogs suffer personality quirks when tied and become aggressive. It's better to keep them fenced and away from the sound of noisy kids whose high-pitched sounds lead them to react by biting innocent kids.

Teach your kid not to run away or scream when the dog is found to be snarling since this can only cause the dog to attack the child. Once he attacks your kid, there's no stopping him since he will react to chemical stimulus not rational thought.

Besides, no matter how well trained your dog is, dogs in general don't consider children to be figures of authority. Then, children often stare at animals purely out of wonder but dogs feel threatened by this person, of the same height as them, who bores his eyes unashamedly into theirs. In such circumstances, any dog may bite as a measure of self-defense.

If the owner of a dog permits your child to come over to his dog, the child should present his closed fist to the

dog to sniff. A fist is a good idea as it protects the child's fingers from being nipped by the dog.

As a dog owner, you can minimize the chances of your dog being a biter by socializing him early in life. For this reason, it is better to buy from a breeder who has already begun socializing his pups before attempting to sell them so that the younger of them is exposed to gentle kids, making him a tolerant individual.

• **How to socialize your dog:** At a very fundamental level, you can socialize your dog by walking him near a playground filled with children who run about, play ball or Frisbee or soccer and make a loud noise. While you and your dog walk through a crowd of children, teach him to walk at heel and watch them play or let the kids pet him on the head. Alternatively, let him stay in the down-stay position till a game of soccer that you both are watching comes to an end. If you do this regularly, your dog will soon get accustomed to the presence and sound of children. You could also make him improve if you do the following:

- Separate your kids and your dogs at snack time so that the latter don't steal food from your children's tiny hands.
- Give your dog a place he can call his own, perhaps a small corner or an unused room, den or a pen in the backyard or crate.
- Teach your children not to bother the dog when he is in his private retreat. Dogs can be very easily scared of

high-pitched voices, stares and quick, unplanned movements—so typical of children.

To reduce tension between children and your pet, you could try the following:

- Give him a crate that is placed far away from the attention of noisy children.
- Insist that they leave him alone when he is in his crate. If they want to pat him, they must be gentle, particularly around the neck.
- Don't let children go close to your dog when he is eating. Not only does it distract him, he feels territorial about his food and will think that your children want to take away his food from him.
- Don't let them play tug-of-war with him because this will encourage him to think that he can grab any item he likes.
- Teach your children not to run past him and scream because their excitement can encourage him to become dominant aggressive.
- Don't tie him in the yard because your kids will only tease him, making him feel aggressive towards them. Then, they will attack your kids by springing on them when they least expect it while your children scream and run for cover.
- Don't let your children sleep with the dog even if they are very fond of each other. This is a very fragile relationship and therefore must be nurtured with great

care. So, teach your child and dog to respect and cherish each other.

Chapter 5

Dealing with an aggressive dog

By nature, all puppies are friendly but as they grow, some of them develop personality traits that are difficult to control. Being an owner, it is your first duty to understand your pet's instinct and ensure that he does not wrest control from you.

If you choose the right breed or pup, that can negate the possibility of raising an aggressive dog, since you will be forewarned of the breed's temperament. This is why it is imperative that you spend enough time with the parents of the pup you're interested in buying. You should also try to check out the offspring of previous litters. When picking out a puppy, make sure it is outgoing and friendly.

It is best to begin training your pup early. It is better to teach him with rewards such as food, toys and most importantly, praise rather than physical punishment. In terms of early training, begin by lifting the puppy to groom or bathe him. Make him lie still while you trim his nails and clean his ears. If you do this often, he will get used to being handled and held around the head and muzzle area, in the down position and on his belly or side.

You might bring home a pup that doesn't like to be touched. Don't stop touching him but do this in a gentle

manner until he grows used to your handling. Now, give him an occasional treat and lots of praise.

Almost any dog can become aggressive when defending its food. To reduce his aggressive tendencies, teach your dog to sit and wait for the bowl to be placed on the floor in front of him. Once it is set down before him, he should be allowed to eat. Get your dog used to being interrupted while eating. For this, give him a small portion of his food and lift the bowl often to refill it during one meal. You could occasionally add a special treat for good behavior.

If you find that your dog is stubbornly aggressive and you can't help the situation, call your vet immediately. He will offer tips on changing or controlling the dog's behavior and perhaps recommend a trainer who specializes in behavior problems.

Your dog can either become aggressive due to poor breeding or poor socializing. This is why it's a fallacy to say that your docile dog turned aggressive overnight—on the contrary, it displayed warning signs of unfriendliness early in life, preferring his own company and quiet corners. Or he could have turned into a bully after growling at strangers or anyone who came near his food bowl or toys.

If you missed the early warning signs of his aggression, it's probably because this is the first dog you've raised. But now that your dog is aggressive, you have to deal

with this problem head on. The next chapter will show you how.

Chapter 6

Obedience training for your aggressive dog: a primer

One of the best things you can do for your aggressive dog is to put him through obedience training. True, it's not a quick fix for all your doggie problems, but certainly it is the foundation for solving any canine problem. Besides, if you didn't know, training itself opens up a whole new channel of communication between you and your dog. By training your dog well you can instruct him to do whatever you want. Teach him to 'stay' or not rush out of the door; to 'sit' or not jump on visitors; to 'off' or not chew the furniture and you've got yourself a very well trained dog!

Without training, your dog will behave in a very uncivilized manner, soiling your house, destroying your belongings, barking and howling excessively, digging holes in the yard, fighting with other dogs and even biting you. If you complain that your dog suffers from behavior problems, you must remember that such problems are perfectly normal activities that perhaps surface at the wrong time and place or are done to the wrong person for the wrong reasons. For instance, your dog may eliminate at your doorstep or he may bark at other times but not when he senses a prowler in your garden. By training him, you will teach your dog to redirect his natural behavior in acceptable ways in the home.

One more advantage of obedience training is establishing social hierarchy with ease. If you teach your dog a simple command such as “come here,” by obeying you, he shows respect for you. You needn’t establish yourself as the alpha leader by doing roll-over exercises with him, instead teach him to accept a subordinate position by teaching him to submit to you by shaking your hand (say to him, “Paw, Goldie,”), roll over on his back or lick your hand (kiss you). These are obedience commands that dogs usually love obeying. From their eagerness to obey you on these, they show that you are the alpha in their lives.

As a pet owner, it is your duty to make obedience training sessions fun and rewarding for you and your dog. Not only can it better your relationship and make life together enjoyable, you also have a well-trained and confident dog that can be taken just wherever you go.

If you have a snappy pup or adult dog, the surest way of him overcoming his aggression is to enroll him in obedience classes. Not only will he learn how to get over his waspish nature, he will also become very sociable and lovable too!

Though dogs do enjoy these classes, for some it could be stressful. Your aggressive dog may be tense and anxious, not knowing what to do and what’s expected of him. If your dog yawns, that’s a sign of tension.

While at home, practice all that you learn at class at home too—even just 15 minutes are quite enough.

• **Tips to obedience training:**

➤ **Difficulty of the command:** Teach your dog the easiest commands first and then gradually scale up to the difficult ones.

➤ **What's his DNA?** Depending on your dog's breed, you will have to train him appropriately.

➤ **Praise him on time, every time:** When teaching your dog to sit, even if he sits for a couple of seconds, praise him lavishly. Gradually increase the duration your dog should be taught to remain in position.

➤ **Train him when near you:** Begin training him when he's right next to you, and gradually increase the distance between you and your dog as he learns the commands.

➤ **Does a distant object or bird attract your dog?** Supposing your dog is a few feet away from you, but over 20 feet away from a squirrel or beautiful bird, the chances of him responding to you are better than if he was closer to you. Once your dog adjusts to distant distractions, begin reducing the distance between you and your dog and his distractions.

➤ **Teach and re-teach commands:** Your dog may have successfully learnt certain commands such as sit, down, stay, etc. But remember that you taught him these in a particular context. So, don't mistakenly imagine that he will transfer his learning to different locations or environments. If you want him to know the

same command in different environments, re-teach him these commands in those situations or locations.

✓ **Different surfaces:** You might like to re-teach him commands on different surfaces such as cement sidewalks, grass-covered lawns, on sand and on dirt.

✓ **Different object surfaces:** Re-teach him commands on a chair, table, low wall, and log, on a surfboard in the ocean or on horseback.

✓ **Different order of commands:** If you have a “pattern trained” dog, he will expect that a specific command be always followed by another specific command. This can work or not for you, depending on the circumstances. But if you are training your dog, it is better not to give him pattern training as he may not be able to obey a command given out of the set order he knows.

✓ **Different contexts:** If you give your dog a command out of context, he will find it difficult to respond to. Instead, give him simple and familiar commands when you’re:

○ Walking down the street with your dog, or are in the pet store, when you’re at the bank, or when you’re both out on a run.

○ At different parts of the day.

○ In different body positions while issuing commands. To ensure that your dog fully understands your commands, try issuing them in different poses.

✓ **Different levels of volumes and different tones of voice:** Issue commands to your dog in different volumes—such as a whisper, quiet tone, moderate pitch and loud pitch. Also, try different tones of voice, ranging from squeaky, a low voice, singing, etc.

✓ **Disappearing after issuing command:** Issue a command your dog knows well, and then disappear out of sight for three minutes. See if your dog remains in position until you return and then release him?

✓ **Disappearing before issuing command:** Try standing behind your dog, with your face away from him and give a command. If only to watch his performance, have a mirror that will reflect his actions and expressions. Next, issue a “sit-stay” command, and then disappear for exactly one minute. You could enter the next room where the dog can’t see you and return from there. While you are still out of his sight but within his hearing range, issue another command to your dog, this time telling him to get into the “down” position.

• **Choosing a location to train your dog:** Begin training your dog in familiar surroundings where you face minimal distractions. When you and your dog are familiar with the various obedience commands, change the venue and practice the commands there. If you face distractions there, you might need to start all over again, but it’s well worth the extra effort. Add distractions such as bouncing or throwing a ball or toy, squeaking a toy, doing Jumping Jacks, singing a song, running around with your dog, playing “Ring-A-Ring-A-Rosie”

with your dog, have other dogs heel around him, throw treats around him, etc.

Make training part of your daily routine—introduce roll over exercises as a wake up greeting; teach him to heel while moving from the bedroom to the bathroom. Keep him in the “down-stay” position while you brush your teeth. And so on.

- **Reward him:** Reward him for his good behavior because the more you reward him, the quicker he will learn. Give him good practice sessions that end in rewards and praise.

- **Scold him:** Dogs are being scolded constantly, so after a time, they get blunted to these reprimands and ignore them. But if we praise them adequately, any reprimands will make a difference to their behavior. If you want to scold him next, just show him what you want him to do and then reward him for doing it right.

If you do this right with a stern voice, this is quite enough for him to learn. Ideally, a reprimand should be short, sharp and immediate. Never nag him nor reprimand him unless you catch him red-handed. Don't kick, hit or slap him either as this forms the basis of further problems as he grows older. You end up having a barking, shy, fearful or aggressive dog.

- **Build a relationship of trust with your dog:** Your aggressive dog won't take kindly to being trained, so

you need to set this ball of training rolling by building trust between you. First, teach him the “Say Hello” command. Use people and dogs he is familiar with and once he learns the command, use this command in different environments and with strange dogs.

For instance, when you see a strange dog, give your dog the “Say Hello” command and allow the two dogs to sniff each other for not more than three seconds. Once this time period comes to an end, pull your dog away and say in a cheerful voice, “Good boy! Say Hello!” and give him a food treat.

The trick in learning this exercise for you is to pluck the dog away from the situation before he shows any signs of aggression. If they both growl or snap, snatch your dog away from the other one and give your correction command. This could just be a very firm “No” and don’t give him a treat this time. Then, immediately to reinforce good behavior, use one of the dogs your dog likes. Repeat the above procedure with him and end with praise and a food treat.

There are those dogs that can’t begin a relationship with the routine sniffing—they need to meet at a safe distance of about three to 10 feet. But if they don’t show any signs of aggression, they should be rewarded. If your dog needs to succeed at this, he will have to do this many times.

Since you are the alpha in your pet's life, you need to be aware of other dogs around you and what they are doing at your dog's level. Don't allow other dogs to come too close to your dog's face. Don't hold the lead so tight that the two dogs on a "Say Hello" command can only sniff each other's noses. You must remember that proper dog etiquette requires both dogs to sniff each other's backsides, which makes them stand side-by-side when greeting each other.

Give a jolly ring to the "Say Hello!" command as you walk by a dog. If our dog sniffs at him while being perfectly calm, praise him with a food treat. As you go along, increase the time with the other dog for a longer spell, remembering to pull your dog away happily before he shows any signs of aggression. Don't let your dog get into confrontations with other dogs and praise him for non-aggressive behavior when in the company of other dogs.

❖ **Kinds of training for your dog:**

• **Deferential behavior for your dog:** If he needs deferential behavior training, you need to give him patience and a lot of your attention. Training will teach him to be respectful to you before anything he does—whether eating, going inside the house or outside, having you put on his leash, sitting near you or getting special attention from you. Work with your dog for about 15-20 minutes a day. Teach him the following exercises:

▪ **Stay:** Command your dog to sit down. Now, put out your hand towards him with your palm flat and say, “Stay.” Keep saying this word every five seconds, moving just a little away from him with your hand still extended toward him. Are you 10 feet away from him? If you are, take your hand away from him and put it by your side and say, “Come.”

▪ **Sit:** Now, stand one foot away from your dog and face him. Point to his rear and say, “Sit.” Take both your hands and make him sit down, repeating the word “Sit” every five seconds. If he is seated, give him a treat and verbal praise. Repeat these actions and slowly eliminate the second step when he sits on his own. Use his name to grab his attention. If he doesn’t look at you when you use his name, go up to him with your face near his eye and say, “Look.” All your dog needs is a little reassurance and ongoing instruction. Once he learns to sit, praise him and give him a treat.

If he is pushy and defiant, he may press his body against you, snort or will sit at an angle from you rather than face you. In these positions, don’t challenge him. Once he stops doing these, you’re making progress.

The above exercises will help your aggressive dog in these ways:

➤ By teaching him to defer to you for everything he wants, your dog learns to look to you for cues about appropriate behavior.

- This form of behavior can give him a respite from a terrible situation. He will learn that if he responds appropriately to your request, you will decide his next form of behavior. He will learn not to be anxious about his responses.
- Deferential behavior gives your dog a chance to calm down, so he won't tear around the place. With verbal cues and physiologic responses, a peace envelops him.
- If such behavior is consistently reinforced, your dog knows just what is expected of him.

• **More training exercises:** If your dog has managed to learn all the exercises spelt out until here, it means that his basics are sound. You can now take him to the next level where training will be a whole load of fun. Teach him the Hide and Seek exercise between meals with his favorite treats. But be sure he is interested in your treat. Give him small pieces as treats—about a quarter inch square piece or smaller of chicken, cheese or liver. The tastier the reward, the more inclined he will be to learn and the better he will retain all that he learns.

Back and forth recall: This is a simple but enjoyable training exercise in which two or more people stand at a distance of 10 yards or more. One person calls the dog over to him and instructs him to sit-stay while the other person also calls him over. Dogs love this exercise because in rushing between the two participants, they feel their big prize of good kibble is that much closer to them. Don't let the dog out of the sit-stay position until

he is called. Or, if he is not being asked to stay, then the other participant should call out to him. Only the person who calls the dog is entitled to give the latter a treat.

Hide and seek: Here, two or more people stand in the center of a room. Each one calls out to the dog, and after they have done this, they go further away from the center of the room. As the game advances, each person will be in the master bedroom, guest room, kitchen, bathroom, etc. The dog can't just run up to someone who is calling out to him, he has to go in search of each person. This game teaches the dog to associate a certain action with the words "come here"—something he will learn to associate with his master and food instead of fear. Also, it is a good reinforcer because this game appeals to a lot of the dog's natural instincts.

Random recalls: There are times when you know your dog will respond the way you want him to. If, for instance, you say to him, "Ride in the car?" he will get to his feet immediately. Or he may come running to the front door when he hears the jingle of your car keys, or the creak of the door that stores his treats. You could keep doing and saying such things to him through the day and add to it cheerfully, "Come here."

You could also call the dog over to you. If he comes, hold out the leash and ask him to sit, while you put it on him and then take him for a walk. If he disobeys you, pick up the leash, wave it around him, then put it away

and ignore him. The next time you tell him to “come here” you will get a swift response.

Distraction training: While training him, don’t let a fun thing like running free interfere with your sessions. But you could use it as a reward. Make him understand that if he comes over to you when you call him, he will get a lot of praise, a food treat and then be allowed to continue playing.

At first, find quiet corners to practice in which have minimal distractions. Have your dog on a long leash. You should be able to enforce your command even if he is initially disobedient to you. He should not ignore you, however, and if he does, tug on his leash to make him come over to you. After many exercises of “Come Here, go play” your dog will be convinced that his freedom is not at stake because you’ve called out to him.

Gradually, add on more and more distractions, and when you find you no longer need to enforce your command, ease off the exercises. But if he does regress, just begin all over again. If he realizes he can disobey you once and get away with it, he will do it as a rule. To avoid such a situation from occurring, practice all these exercises continually.

And remember, if you want to change his behavior, he needs to trust you as his leader. If he can’t trust you, he will have to take the matter in his own hands, and you can imagine what that means.