

Keeping Bedlam at Bay

The holidays are here! It can be a joyful time visiting with friends, wrapping presents and trying new recipes. Fun, right? Maybe and maybe not. All of these fun activities present the opportunity for your dog to misbehave and, perhaps, get into a great deal of trouble.

People often ask how to best manage peppy pups during these times with new people, presents and food lying around and holiday festivities to navigate through. Read on and let's discover some effective ways to keep our sanity at home for the holidays this season.

Start Planning Your Strategy: Stow the Presents

In lieu of having a perfectly trained dog, the key to keeping the peace is some forethought and preparation. Instead of the traditional "presents under the tree," wrap and put the presents away until it's time to open them. I haven't met a puppy or young dog yet that didn't enjoy chewing some nicely wrapped present. There is nothing more enticing than a ribbon or a bow or fancy wrapping paper. What fun for a bored or hyperactive dog. Along with the disappointment of a present that's been destroyed, it's also possible that the contents of the package may be something that, if ingested, could be very harmful to the dog such as chocolate. A holiday will not be a happy one if it's spent with your dog in the emergency vet hospital.

Crates, Bedrooms, Laundry Rooms & Garages

If you plan to entertain guests and have food to prep and serve, you'll want to get the dog out of harm's way. If you can't be watchful, the safe bet is to put the dog in a place where he or she will not get into trouble. Crates (if your dog is crate trained) are the best. Dogs feel safe and protected in their crates. Short of that, a room that has nothing to chew or destroy will suffice.

An older mellow dog that has been well exercised will probably sleep. A younger dog will not, so don't leave him for long periods unattended. Check on him periodically (every twenty minutes or so) and give him "potty breaks" and some attention. If you plan ahead you will also be able to give the dog plenty to do while he is on his own. Puzzles, stuffing toys or chew toys are great. Chewing on appropriate things are wonderful ways to channel your dog's natural instincts and harness its unbridled energy. A raw frozen marrowbone or even better, a Bully Stick is great too. Stay away from rawhides, which are cowhide and the equivalent of having your dog try to digest a shoe and can cause intestinal blockages.

If it's party time and food trays are sitting on coffee tables or counters, it's best to keep the dogs away from the food. You may think your dog is well mannered and trained to stay away from food, but additional people will bring extra excitement, which leads to less impulse control from your always-hungry canine. Again, it's better to be safe by keeping the dog away from the foods that may make him sick.

Oh yes, one more thing. Every time a dog has a chance to misbehave in this way it's a lesson in how to successfully misbehave. Once a pattern of behavior is established it's much more difficult to reverse the trend.

Jumping Up on Guests

Let's assume you have a dog that does not get into food or try to unwrap and destroy presents—a dog that may be able to enjoy being part of the festivities. The only thing the dog does is jump up on people and licks their faces, which for some folks is no big deal. For others—those people who either are not dog fans or prefer well-mannered dogs—it's best to take some time (in advance) and make sure the dog behaves well.

Why Do Dogs Jump Up?

It's important to understand why dogs jump up in the first place so that you can help correct the behavior. On the surface they appear to be looking for attention and human contact. Below the surface dogs actually jump up as a way of being submissive. Dogs in the wild would jump up on a new dog and lick the sides of the dog's mouth as a way to "keep the peace." Domesticated dogs do a combination of these things based on their social experiences, with people they know and, more often, with those they do not. The good news is that the remedy to jumping is the same regardless of the reasons it's done.

Forget the Knee

The old fashioned method of putting up a knee to get a dog not to jump is not effective. You are actually rewarding the dog for jumping by allowing him the contact with you. Instead, it's best to give the dog a "redirect" or alternative behavior in the form of a "sit." Then use the following steps.

Use a Redirect to Stop the Jumping

1. Use two people—one to knock on the door or ring the doorbell and another to handle the dog—and try this experiment.
2. If the dog is very excitable or a chronic jumper, put her on a leash and step on it, leaving only enough leash for the dog to comfortably sit.
3. Have some very high-value treats ready. When the doorbell rings, tell the dog to “sit.” If she does so easily, deliver the treat the second she sits down.
4. If she does not sit, say “too bad” and look away. At this point no one has even come in the door—the greeter is there to simply ring the doorbell.

Try it again. When the dog begins to understand that by sitting down she will get a very tasty treat, eventually the jumping will stop. Repeat this at least ten times before the person comes into your home.

Then, start again, this time with the greeter entering the front door.

1. Repeat the steps from above the moment the greeter steps inside the door. Ask for a “sit,” and the second your dog sits, deliver the treat. Do this ten times. If the dog jumps, have the greeter quickly turn and go out.
2. If successful, have the greeter ring the bell and come in again. This time, as you deliver the treat hold onto it as the dog nibbles.
3. Have the greeter pet the dog as you hold onto the treat. In doing this exercise, you are desensitizing the dog to the new person and the excitement of being petted.

This routine must be practiced in advance and done with as many new people as possible. Remember, this is a great behavior for your dog to have in everyday life too. If you do not have the time before your festivities, it's best to have the dog in a crate, outside or in a safe room. As for the licking, I trained my own dogs to carry a toy in their mouths when people come over. It helps to have their mouths occupied with something. This is also a type of redirection of one behavior into something more socially acceptable.

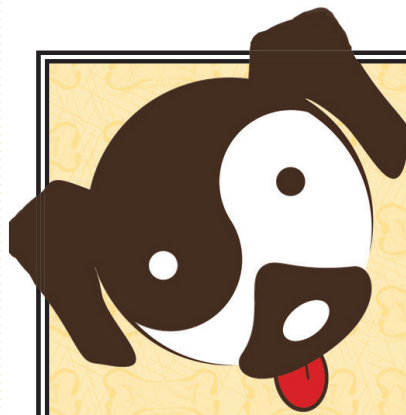
The holidays are a time for family and the family dog may be able to be a big part of the fun. Follow these simple steps to help make the holidays more manageable for you and to give your dog the skills that will benefit all of you year round. Hold onto your sanity and have a great holiday! 🐾



Give the Gift that Has Tails Wagging!

CityDog, the definitive dog lover's magazine about life and living with dogs in the West!

Your City. Your Dogs. www.citydogmagazine.com



Good CitiZEN Dog Training™

peaceful living with your dog

Group classes • Private lessons • Behavior problems • Day care • Day training

Visit us on the web today for class descriptions, rates, testimonials, and much more. Contact us today to discover how we will help you to achieve peaceful living with your best friend and life-long companion!

(253) 752-6878

5121 Pacific Highway East, Fife

www.goodcitizendog.com

Certified dog trainers and behavior consultants serving King and Pierce Counties

FREE DAYCARE

Buy 3 Days Of Daycare & Get 1 Free.



Not valid with other offers. Exp. 2-15-12

**FREE 20 MINUTE
CONSULTATION**



Not valid with other offers. Exp. 2-15-12

\$25 off

Any Puppy Training Class



Not valid with other offers.
Expires 2-15-12