



Being a leader to your dog...

Assuming the leadership

Most dogs will assume that they can do as they please, in the absence of a strong leader.

Some dogs will not be strong enough to make their own decisions, others may tend towards being a dictator.

Either way you end up having to solve the resulting problems.

If you want to avoid these problems, it is up to you to ensure that your dog never thinks they can have their own way all the time.

Simply show them that you are the leader and they must follow some simple rules - behave and they get what they want, misbehave and they miss out on some privileges. **Never use any punishment.**

A nice earner

You must teach them that everything they want has to be earned - never taken without permission. Teaching them is fairly simple and never involves punishment. It does require some careful attention and thought from you, though.

Beds and furniture should never be a place that a dog can call their own. They can use and share them, but if your dog doesn't like moving from the bed or sofa it may be best, not to let them on it. If this becomes a problem then see our leaflet on [possessive dogs](#).

Becoming the leader

Feeding time should be under your control. Your dog earns their supper by sitting quietly while you prepare it. If they don't sit quietly then ignore them for 1 minute and try again - they will soon learn that sitting quietly gets them food.

Never give them scraps straight from the table, you will only encourage them to beg and that may lead to lots of other issues.

Going for a walk is much the same as feeding. They must sit still while you put on their collar and must not push past you in the doorway. If they do, see our page on over-excitables dogs for some help.

Be sure not to give in - if you do, your dog will always find your weaknesses and play on them.

Demanding attention by pawing or jumping up should never be allowed. You must always decide when to give attention and when to stop. It is very important to give plenty of attention, but remember that you decide when, not them!

Dogs can be very sneaky in demanding attention, they will sit on your feet, push against you, sit on your lap and generally sneak up on you - never let them do it.

If a dog tries to force their attentions on you, just ignore them totally. If necessary move away, but don't let them demand attention from you. If you have a big problem then please see the page on separation problems.

When they have left you alone for 3 to 5 minutes, invite them over for the attention they want, as they have earned it by leaving you alone when you asked them to.

Olympic games

Games of strength and other aggressive play should never be allowed. Dogs can decide on a leader largely by shows of aggression and determination. You can never match theirs, so you won't win.

It also leads dogs to think that jumping up and grabbing is a game, which will become a problem.

Finally, as leader, your dog will rely on you for support. Be consistent and kind in the way you treat them. Let them understand that you are a decisive, compassionate and considerate leader.