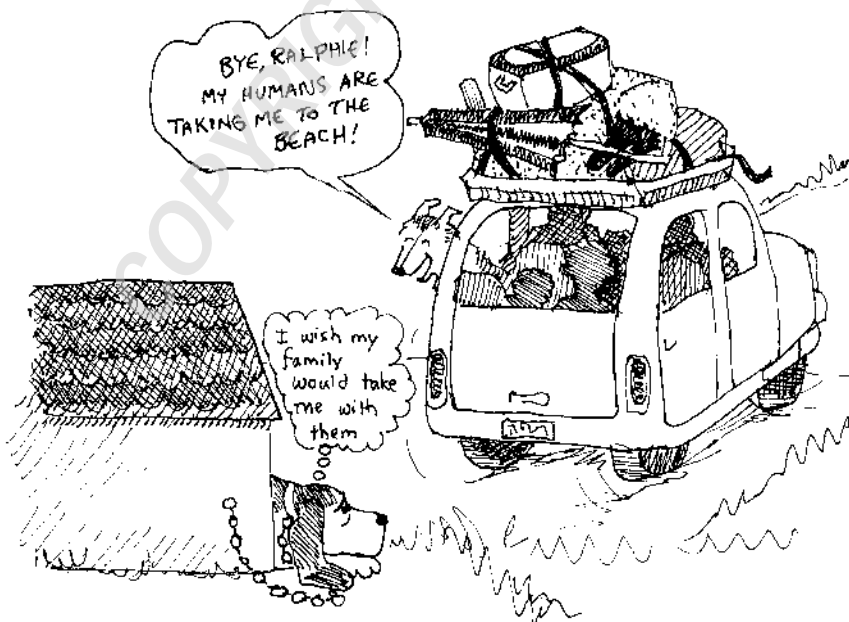


Chapter 1

Why Train Your Dog and When to Start

Trained dogs are “free” dogs. They are welcome almost anywhere because they behave themselves around people and other dogs, they stay when told, and they come when called. They are a pleasure to take for a walk and can be let loose for a romp in the park. They can be taken on trips and family outings. They are members of the family in every sense of the word.



A trained dog spends more time with his family than an untrained dog.

2 What All Good Dogs Should Know

On the other hand, untrained dogs have few, if any, privileges. When guests come, they are locked away because they are too unruly. When the family sits down to eat, they are locked up or put outside because of begging at the table. They are never allowed off leash because they don't come when called. Nobody wants to take them for a walk because they pull, and family outings with such a nuisance are unimaginable.

Your dog—for simplicity, we call him Felix throughout this book—has a life expectancy of 8 to 16 years. Now is the time to ensure that these years are going to be mutually rewarding. For your sanity and his safety, train your dog. Teach him what every *good* dog should know.

WHAT IS A GOOD DOG?

Many dog books tell you that dogs are loyal, obedient, trustworthy, good with children, born protectors, and wonderful companions. Most dogs have the potential to



The perfect pet.

be great pets, but few are born that way. Almost all require some training to bring out the best in them.

A good dog should:

- Be housetrained.
- Come when called.
- Have no bad habits.
- Stay when told.
- Not pull when taken for a walk.

Depending on your dog and what you expect from him, he may need training in just a few of these areas or in all five.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN TRAINING?

It may come as a surprise to you, but your dog's ancestors were bred for their ability to do a particular job well. Looks were considered coincidental. How readily you can train your dog to fit into your lifestyle depends on the job for which he was bred. For example, a dog bred for guarding is easier to train to stay on the property than a dog bred for hunting.

Today, most owners—and we suspect you did, too—choose their pets on the basis of appearance—“What a cute puppy!” But when you selected your dog, did you consider how the instincts for which he was selectively bred over the course of countless generations would affect his behavior as an adult?

Fortunately, some of these instincts are the very ones that endear the dog to you and make him such a good pet—the legendary protectiveness of children, the warning bark when a stranger comes on the property, the friendly greeting when you come home, and the comfort he provides in times of sorrow. Characteristics of specific breeds, such as the Newfoundland's rescue instincts, the Bernese Mountain Dog's willingness to pull a cart, the terrier's untiring playfulness, and the Labrador's eagerness to retrieve for his master, are equally appealing.

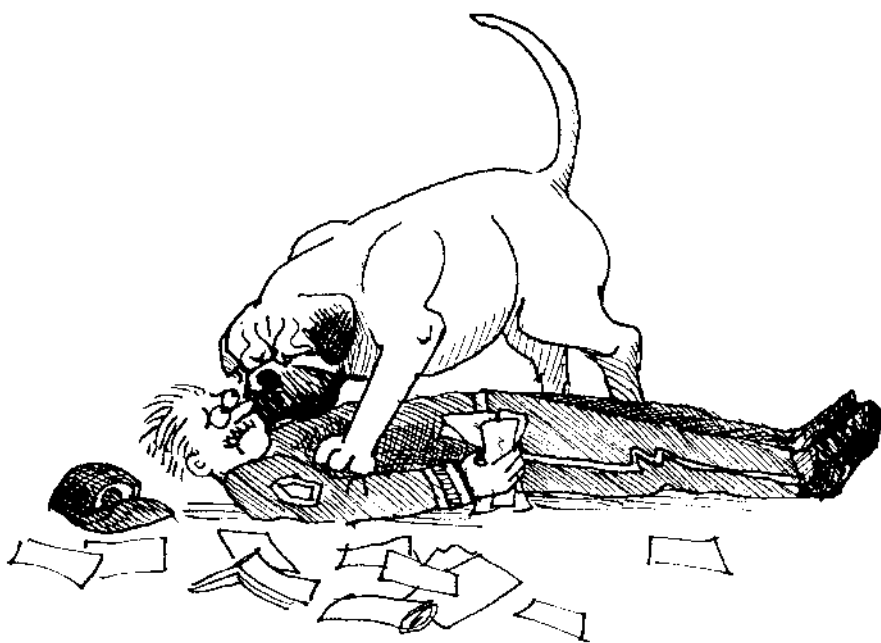
However, other instinctive behaviors get the dog into trouble. A dog bred for guarding who does his job *too* well may be accused of being vicious; one bred for herding may be chastised for chasing children, joggers, bicycles, and cars; and the hunting dog may be reprimanded for pulling on the leash when following a scent. Only the lap dog can get away with almost anything.



If what you are trying to teach your dog is in harmony with his instincts, training him will be easy; if it goes against the dog's instincts, your task will be more difficult. For example, it will be easier to teach a Labrador to retrieve than to teach a herding dog not to chase joggers.

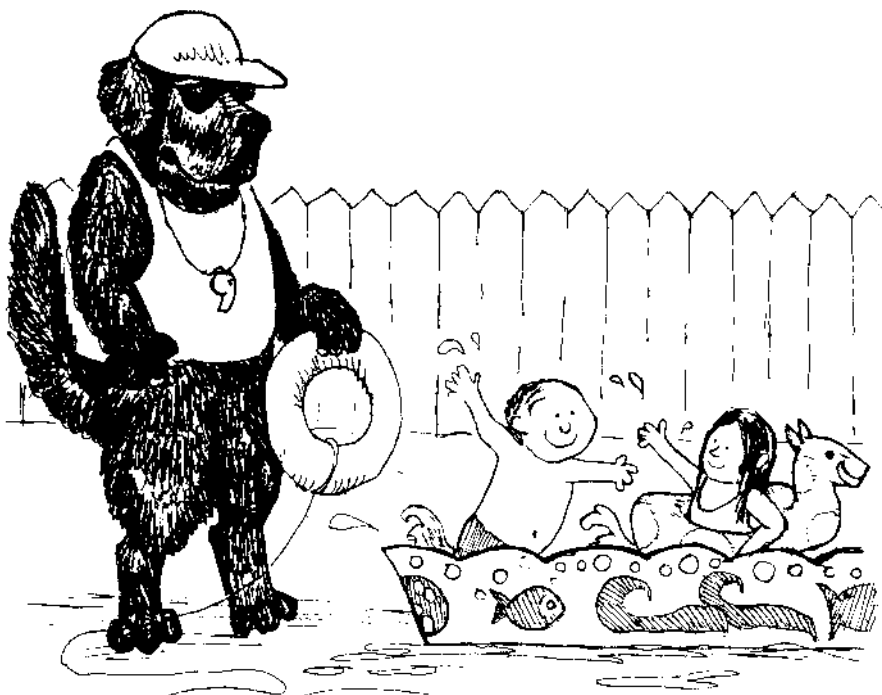
4 What All Good Dogs Should Know

"WHAT A CUTE
PUPPY!"

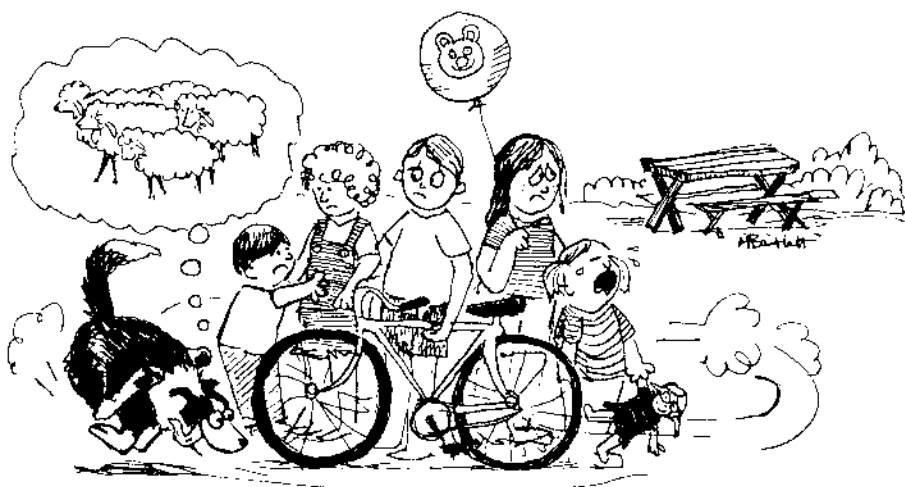


Remember that a cute puppy can be a handful as an adult.

For Barbara and Ed, it was love at first sight with Bentley, a Mastiff puppy. On impulse, they brought Bentley home from the pet store. When he grew into a huge dog and took to knocking down the mailman, Barbara and Ed were horrified. "He was such a cuddly puppy," they recalled, "just like a teddy bear." They did not realize that Bentley was just doing his job—Mastiffs were bred in England to guard estates. With a little training, plus keeping an eye on Bentley when the mailman was expected, the problem was resolved.



Newfoundlands were bred for rescue.



Sometimes instincts get a dog into trouble.

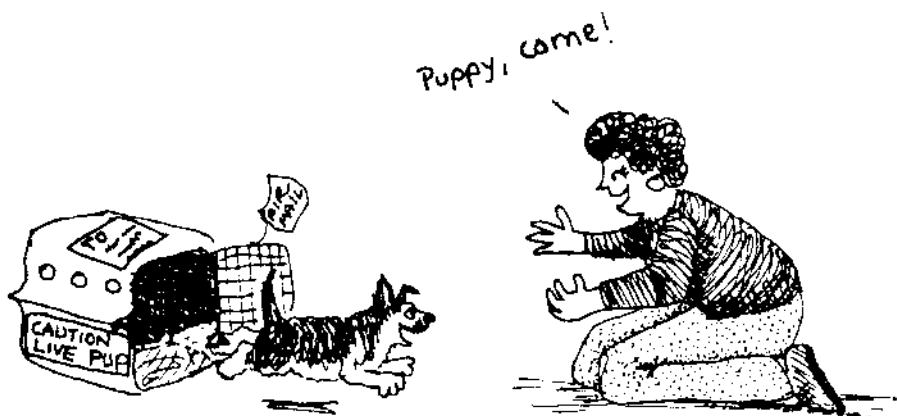
WHEN TO BEGIN TRAINING

Whether your dog is a puppy, an adolescent, or an adult dog, start training him now. There is no truth in the saying “Old dogs can’t learn new tricks”—it just takes longer. For a puppy, the ideal time to begin training is at 7 weeks of age. Your puppy is most receptive to training during an 8-week window from 7 to 16 weeks. You will be amazed at the ease and speed with which a puppy learns. The longer you wait, the harder the job will become. Make the most of the available time now!

During this period your puppy is capable of learning far more than you will teach him. What the puppy learns now he will remember for the rest of his life. His brain is the same size as that of an adult dog; he lacks only the experience and motor coordination of an adult dog.

We know what you’re thinking: “I have plenty of time. I can wait until he’s 6 months to a year old. Let him enjoy his puppyhood.” While you may have the best of intentions, your thinking is flawed. Why? There are three reasons:

1. Your puppy *is* going to learn many things while he is growing up, with or without your involvement. Some of the behaviors he will probably learn are the very ones you don’t want him to do as an adult dog; for example, dashing outside, pulling on the leash, not coming when called, and jumping on people. The more ingrained these behaviors become, the greater the difficulty in eliminating them.
2. Learning at this stage is perhaps even more important than any specific commands you want to teach Felix. Future lessons you want your dog to learn are easier to teach to a dog who had some training as a puppy. Besides, puppies like to learn, and your puppy will look forward to his training sessions.



Begin training as soon as you get your dog.

3. Puppies are physically easier to manipulate than grown dogs. Again, you don't have much time—at 7 months of age dogs reach about 70 percent of their full size.

Developmental periods

As your puppy grows up, he will go through various developmental periods. These periods, in turn, influence how he responds to training.

The first major period that influences training occurs sometime between the fourth and eighth months, when your puppy realizes there is a big, wide world out there. Up to now, chances are the puppy followed your every footstep and perhaps even willingly came to you every time you called him. But now he wants to do his own thing—investigate a scent, follow a trail, chase a butterfly, whatever. He is maturing and cutting the apron strings. This is normal behavior. Your puppy is not being spiteful or disobedient, he's just becoming an adolescent.

While Felix is going through this phase, it is best to keep him on leash or in a confined area until you have *taught* him to come when called. Otherwise, not coming when called will become an annoying and potentially dangerous habit. Once it becomes an established behavior, it will be difficult to change, so prevention is the best cure. Chapter 9 explains how to teach your dog to come when called.



Puppies develop into adolescents between 4 and 8 months of age.

8 What All Good Dogs Should Know

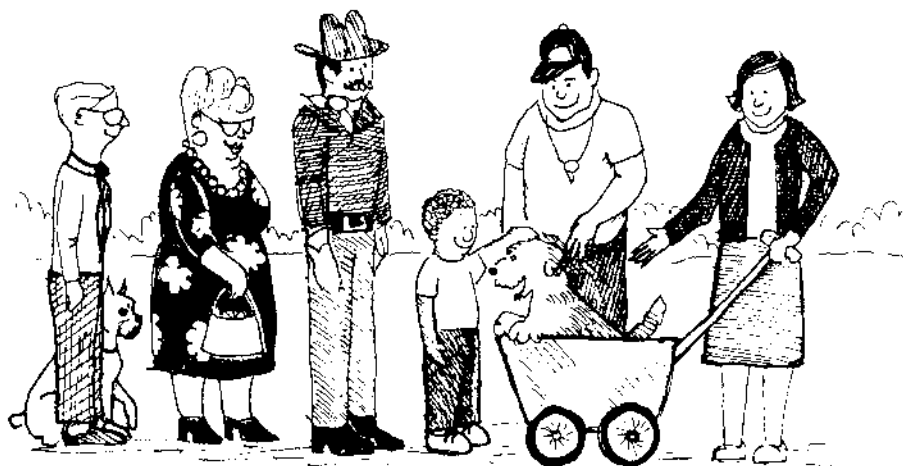
Under *no* circumstances should you chase after your dog, as he will think you are playing his game. Instead, run the other way and try to get him to chase *you*. If that does not work, kneel down and pretend you have found something extremely interesting on the ground, hoping your dog's curiosity will make him come to you. If you do have to go to your dog, approach *slowly* until you can calmly take him by the collar.

The need to socialize

Your dog is a social animal. To become an acceptable pet, he needs to interact with you, your family, and other humans, as well as dogs. If denied that chance, his behavior around other people or dogs may be unpredictable, either fearful or aggressive. For example, unless he regularly meets children during this period, he may not be trustworthy around them, especially when he feels cornered.

Your puppy needs the opportunity to meet and to have positive experiences with those people who will play a role in his life. If you are a grandparent whose grandchildren occasionally visit, have your puppy meet children as often as possible. If you live by yourself, make an effort to let your puppy meet other people, especially friends and members of the opposite sex. Interacting with other dogs on a regular basis as he is growing up is equally important.

If you plan to take Felix on family outings or vacations, get him used to riding in a car. Time spent on socializing *now* is worth the effort in making your puppy a well-adjusted companion. Puppyhood is short and goes by quickly, so use this time wisely.



Make sure to socialize your puppy.

BUILDING TRUST

Picture your dog getting loose and chasing a cat across the road. Your heart is in your mouth because you are afraid a car might hit him. When he finally returns, you are angry and soundly scold him for chasing the cat and giving you such a scare.



How your dog perceives coming to you.

10 What All Good Dogs Should Know

Here is how your *dog* looks at this situation. First, he chased the cat, which was a lot of fun. Then he came back to you and was reprimanded, which was no fun at all. What you wanted to teach him was not to chase the cat. What you *actually* taught him was that coming to you is unpleasant.

One of the commands you will want to teach Felix is to come when called. To be successful, remember this principle: *Whenever your dog comes to you, be nice to him.* Reward this behavior. No matter what your dog might have done, be pleasant and greet him with a kind word, a pat on the head, and a smile. Teach your dog to trust you by being a safe place for him. When he is with you, follows you, or comes to you, make him feel wanted.

When you call your dog to you and then punish him, you undermine his trust in you. When your dog comes to you voluntarily and gets punished, he associates being punished with coming to you.

You might ask “How can I be nice to my dog when he brings me the remains of one of my brand new shoes, or when he wants to jump on me with muddy paws, or when I just discovered an unwanted present on the carpet?” For the answers, you will have to read this book; it will show you how to deal with all these situations without undermining his trust in you.



Always make your dog feel wanted when he comes to you.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

If there is any magic to training, it is consistency. Your dog cannot understand *sometimes, maybe, or only on Sundays*. He *can* understand what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

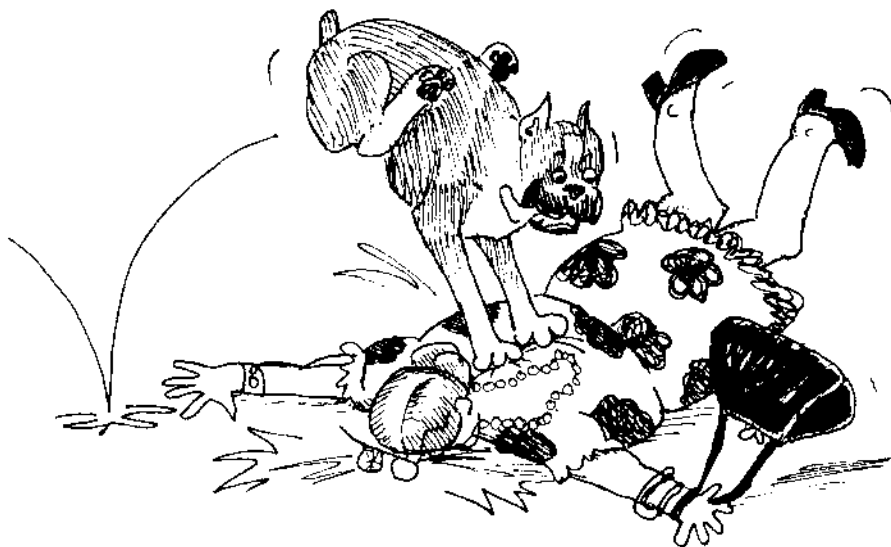
For example, it is confusing for Felix if you permit him to jump on you when you are wearing old clothes, but then get angry with him when he joyfully plants muddy paws on your best suit.

Tom loved to wrestle with Tyson, his Boxer. Then one day, when Grandma came to visit, Tyson flattened her. Tom was angry, and Tyson was confused—he thought roughhousing was a wonderful way to show affection. After all, that's what Tom taught him.

Does this mean you can never permit your puppy to jump up on you? Not at all, but you have to train him that he may *only* do so when you tell him it's "OK." But beware: Training a dog to make this distinction is more difficult than training him not to jump up at all. The more "black and white" you can make it, the easier it is for your dog to understand what you want.



Training your dog is a question of who is more persistent—you or your dog. Some commands he will learn quickly, others will take more time. If several attempts don't bring success, be patient, remain calm, and try again. It sometimes takes many repetitions before a dog understands a command and responds to it each and every time.



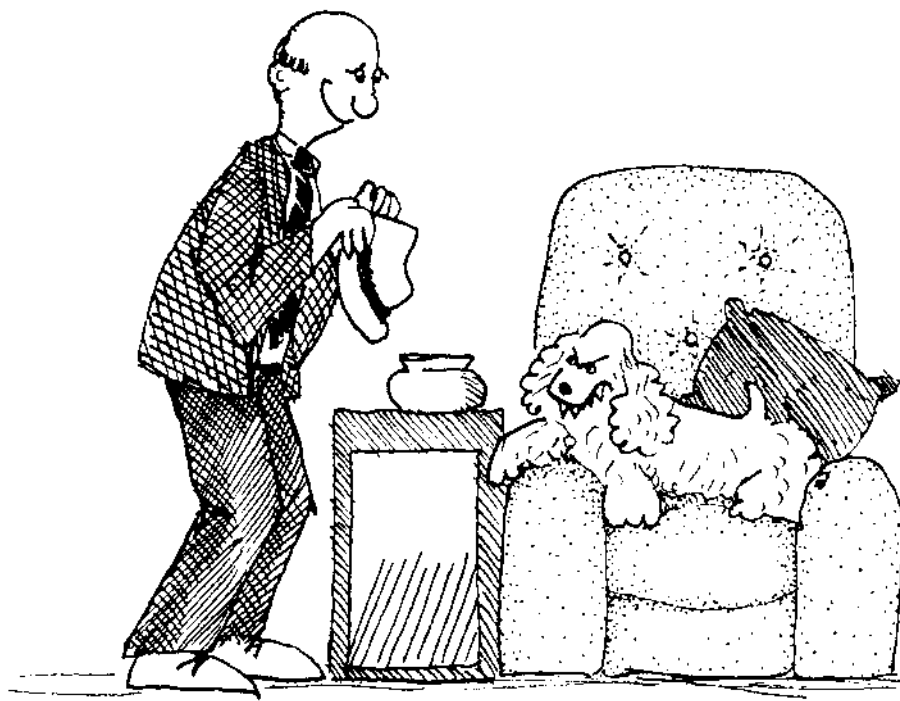
Don't encourage your dog to roughhouse.

TAKING CHARGE

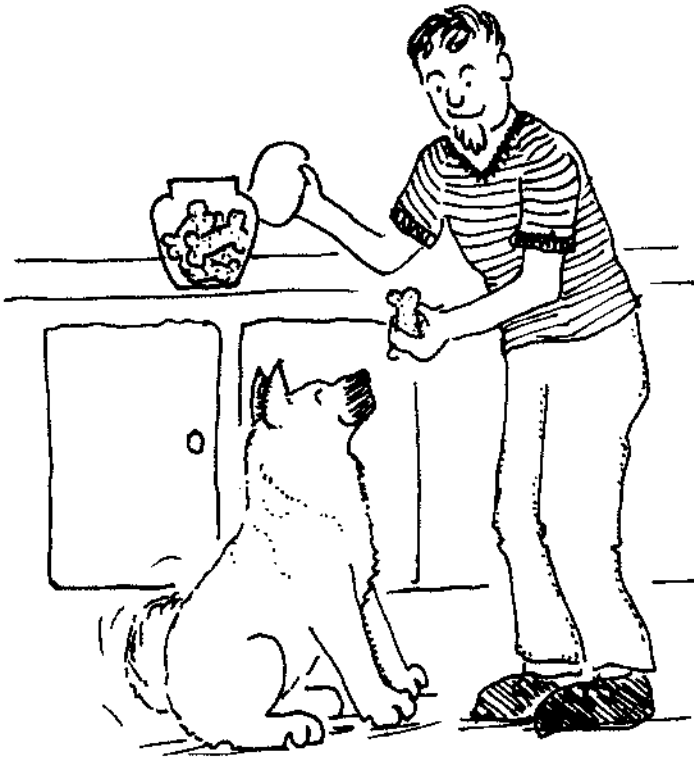
Taking charge is not a matter of choice. Dogs are pack animals and you and your family are now his pack. As far as he is concerned, no pack can exist without a leader, and it's either you or him. That's the way it *has* to be.

Few dogs actively seek leadership and most are perfectly content, and actually prefer, for you to assume the role of pack leader. But you *must* do so, or even the meekest of dogs will take over. Remember, it's not a matter of choice. If you expect your dog to listen to you and obey your commands, he has to accept you as his pack leader.

If your dog takes over your favorite armchair, constantly demands attention, ignores you when you want him to move, or shoots outside ahead of you when you open the door, he is in charge instead of you. Part of his behavior may be due to a lack of education, so the first order of business is to begin training him. Start by teaching him to sit on command (see chapter 6) and to lie down on command (see chapter 7). Both of these exercises not only help you to control your dog, which is an important part of dog ownership, but they also teach your dog that you are in charge.



Even the meekest dog will take over if you don't assume the role of pack leader.



Dogs are calmer when their owner is in charge.

After you have trained your dog, use the commands you have taught him on a regular basis. For example, have him sit before doing any of the following:

- Giving him a treat
- Putting down his food bowl
- Petting him
- Letting him go through a door

Toshiba, Richard's Akita, constantly crashed through doors ahead of her owner, ignored commands, and growled when Richard wanted her off the sofa. Richard realized he had to train Toshiba. He trained her to sit and behave before she was petted or got any treats, and to stay off the furniture and lie on the rug instead. What most impressed Richard was the change in Toshiba's attitude: She seemed calmer, more relaxed, and happier. "I guess she really wanted me to be in charge all along," Richard commented.

WHERE TO TRAIN

When you begin your training, do it in an area familiar to your dog and one that is relatively free of distractions so that you are his center of attention. Such an area can be a room in your house where the two of you can be alone or your backyard. Avoiding distractions in the beginning will speed up the learning process.

After Felix has learned to respond to a particular command in this setting, take him to a new location without too many distractions, such as a quiet park or an empty parking lot, to practice. Finally, practice in the presence of distractions, such as other people and children.

Felix will not be fully reliable until you practice the commands you have taught him under conditions when you need him to respond. For example, to prevent Felix from jumping up on guests to your home, you need to teach him to sit and stay, and you need to practice by having a friend or neighbor come to the door, ring the bell, and have Felix sit and stay as you open the door. (See chapter 6 for more on the Sit and Stay commands.)

Facts from Felix

- 1) A trained dog is a free dog.
- 2) Start training your dog as soon as you get him.
- 3) Whenever your dog comes to you, be nice to him.
- 4) If there is any magic to training, it is consistency.
- 5) As far as your dog is concerned, no pack can exist without a leader.
- 6) For your sanity and his safety, you have to be the one in charge.

