



IMPULSE CONTROL

A dog is far more likely to be safe and a pleasure to be around if they have developed great impulse/self-control skills. This means they look to their people for permission and guidance rather than acting impulsively by grabbing food and other items from people, barking, whining, jumping, dashing through doorways, dragging you down the street, or running off to get what they want.

Impulse control is:

- ✚ Teaching your dog patience.
- ✚ Teaching your dog how to ask politely for the things they want.

Your dog can ask politely for and earn what they want by:

- ✚ Offering a behavior such as sitting or lying down.
- ✚ Responding to your request to do something such as sitting, lying down, hand targeting, or any other behavior you have taught them.

Examples of inadvertently rewarding lack of impulse control:

- ✚ Giving your dog his meals after he jumps about as you prepare it.
- ✚ Allowing anyone to talk to your dog (even to say something like “off” which is negative, but is still attention) when they jump or vocalize.
- ✚ Allowing anyone to give your dog a treat when he jumps for it or takes it in a rough manner (you should not feel any teeth on your hand).
- ✚ Allowing anyone to let your dog out of any enclosure or through any doorway when they jump, bark, whine, or pull.

PRACTICE IMPULSE CONTROL EVERYWHERE:

Considering that a dog with impulse/self-control is far more likely to be safe and a pleasure to be around, make an effort to expect your dog to exhibit mannerly, controlled responses in as many environments and situations as possible. Look at your dog's behavior as a whole and recognize that if you let them be impulsive and pushy in one area or context, they are likely to behave that same way in others. Making excuses for rude, impulsive, and risky behavior is not in your dog's best interest. So, the next time you hear yourself saying something like “he's just really excited” as your dog jumps all over someone, drags you towards someone or something, snatches something from someone's hand or a countertop, or dashes through a doorway, consider that a dog can be mannerly and kept safe at the same time as they are excited.

Exercises for Setting a Foundation of Impulse Control

You can set a foundation of impulse control with the following training games. Once your dog has mastered these skills in brief (3-5 minute) practice sessions you can start to practice and apply them in real life situations.

Treat Over Head:

1. The purpose of this exercise is to teach your dog to keep four paws on the floor (we typically suggest in a seated position) and to be quiet as a way of asking for and earning what they want.
2. Have your dog on a leash to start. You might choose to step on the leash or tether it to a table object in the first few sessions.
3. Hold a treat or a toy about 12-20" over your dog's head.
4. Your dog will most likely engage in some sort of impulsive behavior such as jumping or barking. If so, simply lift the treat or toy out of their reach without saying anything.
5. Present the treat or toy again and wait for them to offer a sit and be quiet for a second or two, then say "yes" or "good" (both good options as marker words that your dog will learn mean whatever behavior they exhibited at the exact moment they hear the word is what is earning them a reward) and give it to them.
6. It typically only takes a few 3-5 minute practice sessions for a dog to have a lightbulb moment and figure out that the way to get the food or toy is by remaining still and quiet.
7. Gradually increase the amount of time your dog must hold the sit without exhibiting any impulsive behaviors before saying "yes" or "good" and giving them what they want.

Treat from Your Hand:

1. The purpose of this exercise is to teach your dog to take food gently, without using teeth and without snatching.
2. It is advisable to begin this exercise by having your dog on leash and tethered to a stable object.
3. Offer a treat to your dog, if your dog moves forward quickly to grab or if you feel teeth, take the treat away quickly without saying anything.
Try again and be sure to mark (by saying "yes" or "good") promptly when your dog waits (no lunging forward to grab it) and takes the treat gently.
- 4.

Crate Exits:

1. For most dogs, opening up the crate door is a big reward, so make sure what your dog is doing at the time you open the crate door and then give them permission to exit is something you would like to see again
2. To begin, wait until your dog has four feet on the floor and is quiet before opening the crate. Be sure to mark (by saying "yes" or "good") for even just a second or two of calm behavior.
3. Once your dog is doing this consistently, you can gradually increase the amount of time your pup must be still to include when you start to open the crate door. If they try to push through the door when you are opening it, calmly and gently close it again, wait for your dog to back off from the crate door, and try opening it just a bit again. If they politely wait for even just a second or two and with the door just slightly ajar, mark and reward by tossing a tiny treat on the floor of the crate or letting them out.
4. Gradually increase the amount of time your pup waits politely until you can fully open the crate door and then mark and reward for a job well done!

Doorway Manners:

1. Practicing impulse control at doorways is important for your dog's safety (to prevent rushing through doors) and because this makes for a great opportunity to start walks on a positive, mannerly note
2. Walk to the front door with your dog on leash. Wait for your dog to offer a sit, then immediately release your dog by saying your marker word and giving a tiny food reward and/or opening the door.
3. Once your dog is consistently offering a sit when you approach the door, practice touching the door handle, mark, and reward.
4. Keep building on this until you can open the door a tiny bit before marking and rewarding. If your dog pops up when you open the door a small bit, simply close it and try again.
5. Daily practice sessions will result in a dog that has developed superb doorway manners and sits politely (even when the door is fully open) until you let them know to go through.