

# Becoming Your Dog's Pack Leader

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Dogs, like children, need boundaries. They see the world the same way we do. They aren't fuzzy, four-legged people. They are social, curious intelligent animals quite capable of controlling humans. In more houses than we would like to admit, the dog is the big boss.

You say, "Not in my house!" Lets see:

- When your dog brings you a toy because he wants to play, do you play with him?
- If your dog nuzzles your arm when you're on the couch, do you pet her?
- If you dog barks at you when you're not paying attention to him and, in response, you ask? What do you want? Then give him a treat, toy or go out on a walk?
- When your dog barks and whines near her feeding time, do you go to fill her bowl?

Yes? Then guess who is running the show: Your dog.

Dogs like in a social structure called a "pack". This pack formation, ordered like the rungs on a ladder, represent power and structure to your dog. All dog behavior problems can be traced back to some misinterpretation in the pack order.

Even if you aren't aware that you're supposed to be the "pack leader" the "big boss", your dog is. **If you aren't comfortable in this position, if you hesitate, feel bad when you reprimand your dog, or don't have the time or energy, your dog will pick up on your weaknesses and take advantage of them.** If your dog thinks that he or she is in charge, that gives them the RIGHT to bite you or anyone else they do not respect!

Many things that a dog needs are viewed by humans to be "mean" or "cruel". Dogs are not humans, they don't need the same things, and they don't communicate the same way. Trying to make your dog human is ultimately going to harm your dog.

So what can you do? How can you be in charge?

1. **Always eat before you feed your dog.** This is pretty easy, always feed your dogs after your family. It is the pack leaders right to eat first, gorge themselves and own any leftovers. If your dog growls or snaps while eating, they eat only when they are hand fed.
  - Your dog should be fed twice a day
  - The food bowl should be put down by you, and picked up by you 15 minutes later
  - You dog should never be "free fed (have food out all the time)
2. **Restrict access to your bedrooms and furniture.** Ensure you can have free access to all the prime areas of the house. Sitting on the dog's bed will no doubt confirm your neighbors suspicions that you have lost it, the dogs however will view the situation very differently - you can 'occupy' their spot. Take this one stage further and restrict access to your bedroom and it reinforces the point that your 'superior' sleeping spot is out of bounds, theirs is not.
  - If your dog has ever bitten, growled at, or snapped at a human, they should **NEVER** be allowed on any furniture.

- Your dog needs to earn the right to sleep on the bed.
3. **Make your dog move out of your way.** Do not step over the dog that is constantly in your way - take the shortest route to your destination and move the dog.
    - Standing or laying in front of you, in front of doors or at the top or bottom of the stairs is your dog's way of controlling where you go
    - Scoot your feet on the ground to move the dog out of your way
  4. **Always run away from your dog if it gets loose.** Pack leaders GET chased, subordinate pack members chase. Never chase your dog yelling "COME!"
    - If you are chasing your dog, you can't possibly be the leader!
    - Having you chase him is a game to your dog – they are playing with you! We are smarter than they are, make it your game for them to chase you!
  5. **Call your dog to you to play or get affection.** Paying attention to your dog should be when you want, not when they want. They shouldn't tell you what to do.
  6. Make sure your dog is paying attention to you. They will ignore you if they don't respect you.
    - Do not repeat yourself, their hearing is 20 times better than yours, they heard you, they're just ignoring you!
    - Do not command your dog if you are not prepared to reinforce your command.
  7. **Initiate games with your dog, make sure you win and end up with possession of the toy**
    - Do not play any games you can't win
    - NEVER WRESTLE OR ROUGHHOUSE WITH YOUR DOG, IF THEY BITE YOU, YOU WILL NOT WIN THE GAME!!!
    - **Don't play violent games with opponents that have big teeth!**
  8. **REWARD YOUR DOG FOR COMPLETING AN EXERCISE WELL**

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