



# Grafton Dog Obedience Club Inc.

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## ESTABLISHING THE HOUSE RULES

Having a new puppy in my household has reminded me of the need to establish boundaries and teach a new puppy the “house rules”. The basic rule I go by is “If you aren’t prepared to tolerate a particular behaviour in an adult dog – don’t allow it in a puppy”.

So if you don’t want your 40 kg adult dog to jump up on you, teach your 10 kg puppy to sit politely for attention NOW. If you don’t want that same 40 kg dog sleeping on your bed as an adult, establish where you want your puppy to sleep now. If you don’t want your shoes etc chewed up by your adult dog, don’t allow your puppy to chew your possessions.

Of course this doesn’t mean punishing our puppy. We can teach our puppy what our expectations are and what the boundaries are by redirecting inappropriate behaviour to an appropriate behaviour and/or by teaching an alternate behaviour.

So if your puppy rushes up to you and jumps on you, teach him to sit for attention. If, every time he rushes up to you, you ask him to sit, **and reward him for sitting**, he will soon start sitting in front of you instead of jumping up on you. As it is impossible to jump up and sit at the same time, in teaching the “sit” you have eliminated the undesirable behaviour (jumping up) by teaching a desirable alternate behaviour (“sit”). By always rewarding him for sitting – initially with treats and attention but later by just paying him the attention he actually wants, you will be reinforcing the appropriate behaviour.

In the case of jumping up for attention, pushing the puppy away isn’t enough to stop the undesired behaviour, as this still gives the puppy the attention and contact he craves.

If, as most puppies do, your puppy chews your shoes, etc, redirect his behaviour to something more appropriate. Exchange the shoe (or whatever it is you don’t want chewed) for a chew toy that your puppy likes. If you do this every time you catch your puppy chewing or playing with something inappropriate, he will soon learn that he should only chew or play with his own toys.

These principles apply to all inappropriate behaviours: if he paws at the door to come in or out, teach him to sit politely at the door before allowing him in or out; if your puppy chases your chooks, teach him to chase an appropriate sized ball or frisbee instead. Teaching alternate behaviours for inappropriate behaviours, and redirecting undesirable behaviours to desirable behaviours will solve most of your puppy behaviour problems.

If you are consistent and ask for the alternate behaviour or redirect the undesirable behaviour EVERY time your puppy displays inappropriate behaviour, your puppy will soon learn the house rules.

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