



Beagles are an example of a breed hardwired with a strong personality

### 5 Ways to Maintain Your Top Dog Status with Your Canine

Everyone loves the loyalty and companionship faithful dogs offer. So when you finally have a great dog, you want to build a good relationship, right?

It's easy to forget dogs are creatures of instinct. Above all else, dogs look for leadership they can respect. If you aren't the Alpha, your dog will misbehave and lose respect for you. That takes much of the joy out of dog ownership.

Here are a few ways you and your dog can learn to understand each other:

- **You eat first, then your dog.** If dog's meal time is near yours, make sure you and your family eat first. To your dog, the pack leader is responsible for food and always eats first. The rest of the pack gets what's left. If your dog eats first, he sees you "giving away your food," something no leader ever does.
- **Once your dog knows basic commands, only say them once.** We've all heard people say, "Come, Barfie. Barfie, come. I said, COME!" Barfie heard you the first time! When you repeat the command, your dog learns he doesn't have to respond immediately. He loses respect for you. If your dog is slow to respond, say "NO" repeatedly until he understands he is in a state of disobedience until he obeys. Then, give him a soft voice and some petting. Good dog!

- **Never strike your dog** The days of the rolled-up newspaper are over. You can maintain your Alpha position in other ways. When your dog misbehaves, look him directly in the eyes (hold his head in both hands) and firmly say "NO,NO ,NO." Hold eye contact. This makes your dog intensely uncomfortable, and he will frantically look away. Release, then ignore him for 20 minutes. He learns he will be outcast if he misbehaves, something every dog fears. Do this ONLY WHEN the bad behavior is obvious, and he can make the connection.
- **Know your dog** Every breed has specific characteristics intentionally "bred in," including temperament. It's important to know these traits so you can understand your dog. A hound (such as a beagle) is bred to find and chase small game independently. So beagles are tough-minded, keep their nose to the ground, are easily distracted by other animals and bark more than other dogs. If you try to quash these behaviors, you will have a frustrated, unhappy beagle. (NOTE: For safety and as a courtesy to others, your dog needs to learn heeling and other essential leash commands, but for some breeds, apply only when necessary).
- **Beds are for humans** If your dog sleeps in your bed, you have taught her she is at Alpha level, and she will act like it. Signs of dog-dominant behavior include standing on your chest or pestering when she wants something until she gets it. Do NOT let this happen. Your dog will be happy sleeping in her spot within or out of your sight. She does NOT belong on the bed.

There are many excellent techniques out there to teach your dog specific commands. These broad psychological tips will make your dog training easier and keep you both happier!

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