

down, preferring to keep it as a symbol of its status. This simple mistake of leaving food down can destroy any other bonding work that you are doing.

As the alpha leader you must always eat before your dog. So when you prepare its meal, do so on a high surface and place a biscuit on a plate near the bowl. When the food is ready make a big show of eating the biscuit in front of your dog. It will think that you are eating out of its bowl; Jan calls this "gesture eating". Ideally in the first stages the whole family should do this to establish that their rank is higher in the pack than the dog. When you are finished give the bowl to the dog and leave it alone to eat its food. When it walks away from its food, finished or not, lift the bowl and clear it away until the next meal. If the dog finished too early, then it will soon learn that it must eat when it can. This message is the most powerful to your dog because it says

"I CONTROL AND PROVIDE THE FOOD, I EAT BEFORE YOU, THEREFORE I AM THE ALPHA LEADER".

Some people think that another form of exercising this power is to take the food away from the dog while it is eating, or to touch the dog or its food. This is not so, since food is so high on the dog's list of survival it is not surprising that when it gets its food it may defend it. This is natural and its right within the pack. Some dogs don't mind, while others will never give up their food. Respect this and do not set yourself up for failure by trying to challenge it. When you have been accepted as the leader by your dog then "gesture eating" can be stopped. But if you ever need to remind your dog who is the boss, this is the quickest and most powerful way to do it.

So far nothing has been mentioned about "training". Unless you are going to do obedience trials, then Jan Fennell suggests that Sit, Stay and Recall are the most important skills to teach your dog. But none of this can take place until the first, second and fourth bonding elements are in place. In a young dog this can be very quick, just a matter of days. But in an older dog, that has had to fend for itself, it may be reluctant to pass up its leadership to you and so this bonding could take more than a month.

In Jan's books she gives many examples of difficult dogs, from dogs that constantly bark or chew, to dogs that attack other dogs or even people. In all cases the solution came down to educating the owners and applying these four principles. In particular your dog should never be over-spoilt, allowed to live on furniture when it chooses, or constantly roam wherever it wants to in your house; because this gives it a leadership status that challenges yours.

Good Luck.

Dog Owners Guide



GOZO SPCA

Caring about Animals





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“I AM THE ALPHA LEADER, THERE IS NO THREAT AND I AM IN CONTROL”.

The visitor must then go through the first bonding process, to show to the dog that they are also above it in status. This is just one example of how a perceived threat is managed for the dog, many more are explained in the books.

The third part of the Amichien bonding is taking control of the walk. To a dog the walk is a hunting expedition. Since the Alpha dog always controls the hunt then your pet must lead if it believes it is the Alpha dog. The world of the hunt is filled with threats most of which are not understood by your pet. There are other dogs, strangers, bicycles, children, cars, buses, radios and unfamiliar territory. Trying to control this, while defending the pack against it, is a big stress to a dog. The leader must always lead, so never let your dog out of the house in front of you, this says to your dog

“I AM THE ALPHA LEADER THEREFORE I LEAD THE WAY AND ASSESS THE DANGERS”

Since the leader must go first, pulling on its collar and lead confirms that your dog thinks it is the leader. Your dog must never be allowed to do this, and thankfully won't want to when it has elected you as its leader. It will not challenge your leading role but mostly be happy to hang back and follow you. When this happens it is a strong signal that you are communicating with your dog, not by using our words, but in its own language.

The fourth part of the bonding process is taking control of the food. In a wolf pack the Alpha dogs control the food. They decide when and what to hunt. They always eat first and when they are finished, they let the rest of the pack eat. This is still done according to the status in the pack hierarchy. If a dog has food available any time that it wants, then it believes that it must be the Alpha dog. Worse still it thinks that if it eats all this food then it would be destroying its own power. This is the reason why it will almost always ignore food that is left

The first part of the bonding process is to establish who is the Alpha Leader. In a wolf pack, when the leader is away there is no guarantee that it will return. Since there always has to be an Alpha leader, then during that absence a new leader will emerge. On the return of the Alpha leader, it has to reclaim leadership. The wolf does this silently through body language and posturing. The rest of the pack acknowledge its return but it effectively ignores the pack's advances, thereby sending out strong messages that it is still in charge. Since we are to be that leader then we must re-establish this every time that we reunite with our pet. This is done by a period of avoiding eye contact, giving out strong signals through body language that we know what we are doing, not speaking to the dog and not engaging in its antics. After our leadership has been initially accepted, then this period will usually be about five minutes. So make a cup of tea, put the shopping away, or some such; then eventually the dog will decide it is getting nowhere and go off and lie or sit down. When you first arrive the dog's ears will be raised and alert and its eyes will be staring in a hard excited way. When it calms down, its ears will drop back and its eyes will soften, that's when you call it to you and calmly greet it, maybe even give it a treat. To a dog the message is loud and clear,

"I AM THE ALPHA LEADER, I DECIDE WHAT AND WHEN THINGS ARE
DONE AROUND HERE AND I AM BACK"

The second part of the bonding process is to manage all perceived dangers in the den (home). This is often a visitor, although there are others that are explained in the books. A visitor represents a potential threat to the pack. It is the job of the Alpha leader to handle this threat, and if your pet thinks it is the leader, then it will do this by barking, or in extreme cases challenging the visitor. It may also try to impose its leadership by jumping up and taking control of the visitor. It will do this even if it does not believe that it is the alpha leader, but just wants to maintain a higher status in the pack than the visitor. So when the dog barks it believes that it is warning and protecting the pack. Telling it off confuses it completely and just serves to confirm that the situation was worse and more frightening than it at first thought. You need to calm the dog and effectively thank it for its help, and by your calmness you convey

Introduction

This leaflet is produced by Gozo SPCA. We are the only organisation on Gozo that is sheltering stray and abandoned animals. Our aim is to re-home as many of these animals as we can with our main concern being that everything will go well for the animal and its new owners. This leaflet is a guide to help you to look after and live with your new pet. It covers sheltering your dog, feeding your dog, training your dog, looking after your dog's health and what to do if it becomes unwell. It is intended to help all levels of dog owning experience, so we hope that you find the information useful.

What to do before you collect your dog

You have chosen your dog at Gozo SPCA and you are looking forward to collecting it and bringing it to your home, now is the time to really think about what all this means.

A dog lives for ten to fifteen years, it is very dependent on its owner for its existence and well being, so it is important to realise that you are committing yourself to be its guardian for the remainder of its life. The dog you have chosen has probably already been let down by humans, so it is important that it should never be let down again. What does that mean? Well just some of what it means is as follows:

- Your house or flat is big enough for your family and your dog.
- You will provide your dog with a comfortable and clean living area.
- You will buy and provide all the food your dog needs to remain healthy and fit.
- You will provide your dog with a constant supply of water.
- You are prepared for the possibility that it might use your house as a toilet for a while if it is a puppy or not used to living inside.
- If you work all day then unless someone tends to your dog at mid day, then its living area must be suitable for when it needs to go to the toilet.
- You will walk your dog regularly on a daily basis to keep it physically fit and mentally well.
- When your dog is unwell you will take it to the Vet and pay all the bills.
- You will treat your dog as a friend even if it chews your car or your favourite and most expensive household items.
- You are prepared for dog hairs on your clothes and your best furniture.
- You will arrange and probably have to pay for alternative housing when you are away on business, or on holiday for extended periods.
- You will take the trouble and time to train, play with, learn with and understand your dog.

If you had never really thought about all this and want to change your mind, then better to make that decision now, rather than later. Of course we hope that none of this puts you off the dog that you have chosen and that you are still just as enthusiastic. The rewards are great, you will have a

faithful, unquestioning best friend for life and with all those walks, you will live longer too!

Now you need to think about where your dog is going to live, provide or buy some food, a water bowl, a feeding bowl, a dog bed, some bedding, some toys, a collar, a lead, a dog tag and possibly some dog owning literature. How to decide all of this is covered next, but first here is a check list of the essential items that you will need to have when you first bring your dog home.

1. Collar and lead. The collar should be fabric or leather and the correct size so that it is neither too tight or too loose.
2. A Dog tag with your telephone number on it. Fix this to the collar, just in case it tries to escape in the first few days.
3. A dog food bowl
4. A water bowl
5. A purpose made dog bed with soft bedding such as a blanket.
6. A few days supply of dog food.
7. Some dog treats to reward it with
8. Some purpose made dog toys that it can chew and play with

Where to keep your Dog

The very best place to keep your dog is in your home with you. That way you get to know and appreciate each other to the full. The worst place to keep your dog is chained up on a roof or hard surface, in the open.

Provide your dog with a place of its own. It must have a basket or dog bed that is sufficiently large and has a soft base of blankets or purpose made bedding. This is important so that your dog does not develop sore skin patches from lying on hard surfaces. It is also important that the bedding is washed regularly to avoid skin infections, parasites and bad smells. If you are keeping your dog in the house, then it may be a good idea to choose a room that has a barrier which will keep your dog from roaming all over where you don't want it. But don't shut your dog in a garage for extended periods or a dark place such as a cupboard. Also remove all precious or tempting items just in case it decides to chew. By taking common sense precautions such as these you are avoiding setting yourself up for failure.

If you do have to keep your dog outside then provide it with a fenced run where it can move freely. It will need a shelter that is water proof, shaded and ventilated. The bed and bedding should be the same as above. You will need to clean out the area two or three times a day, depending on how often you walk your dog. Having cleaned it you will need to bleach any hard surfaces to eliminate the risk of infection

What to feed your dog

These days there are many purpose made dog foods for all ages and size of dog. While it does no harm to feed your dog left over food occasionally, it does not provide the trace elements and vitamins that a dog needs. Also human food tends to have too much salt for a dog. Vegetables and cereals are always good, but ham and sausage for example, are too salty. We think that you should provide your dog with a mixture of tinned dog food and a dry "complete" dog food. You can either alternate between the two or mix them together. When feeding dry foods, always make sure that there is plenty of drinking water available. If you decide to feed only tinned dog food then you

leadership and while they will happily work with the leader, they do not want to get involved in the decision making or strategy for the pack.

The domestic dog sees its life as living in a pack, but the members include its owner and their family. The house is its den and someone in the pack must protect and lead the rest. If the dog does not recognise an Alpha leader in the pack, then since there has to be one, it takes on the role itself. That is when the problems start, because the dog is not able to understand most of modern life it is constantly under the stress of responsibility, fear and failure. Many dogs, if living in a pack, would not be Alpha material anyway. This is reasonable since not all of us are suitable to be leaders, so the dog is trying to do a job that it is not capable of doing. The solution is that we must take the job of the Alpha leader away from it, but do it in such a way that the dog recognises we are the rightful leader and votes to elect us. When this happens the dog is relieved that the stress of hopeless leadership has been removed. Behaviour that is odd to us, but not to the dog, will stop and you will have a happy, well balanced dog that just wants to be a friend and enjoy life.

So how does this bloodless coup take place? Well fortunately Jan Fennell did all the hard work by studying wolf packs and the domestic dog. She came up with four simple principles, which she calls 'Amichien Bonding'. She says that the wolf or dog chooses a leader based on the answer to these four simple questions

1. When the pack reunites after a separation, who is the boss now?
2. When the pack is under attack or there is a fear of danger, who is going to protect us ?
3. When the pack goes hunting, who is going to lead us?
4. When the pack eats food, who eats first?

You have to convince your dog that in all four cases it is you. To keep its faith in you as the leader, Jan Fennell lays down a lifestyle for living with your dogs that the whole family must adopt. For success you can not pick and choose, you must embrace it all.

Appendix 1: Dog Listening

There are two very good books that will help you to understand life from your dog's point of view. These are 'The Dog Listener' ISBN 0-00-257204-4 and 'The Practical Dog Listener' ISBN 0-00-257205-2 by Jan Fennell. The foreword for the first book was written by Monty Roberts, and for those who don't know him, he is a gentle Texan who watched horses in the wild and literally learned their language. His ground breaking training techniques have been used to great effect with difficult horses all over the world.

In this appendix we will say something of Jan Fennell's work, it will only be a brief introduction since the books have to be read to understand it all. Jan was influenced by Monty Roberts and felt that there must be an equivalent for dogs, so she made it her life's work to try and understand the language and culture of a dog. Because the dog has been man's best friend for 14 odd thousand years, we have come to believe that the dog thinks in the same way that we do. We assume that when it does something wrong, it knows it has done so, therefore when we punish it, it fully understands the reasons. Also, because it is fed and housed by us, it knows that we are the dominant partner, which is why it tries desperately to please us by doing what we tell it to do through strict training. We reason that the more intelligent the dog, then the more obvious this is to the dog, so the easier it is to train. We communicate by talking to the dog, which fortunately for us, understands everything that we say.....**WRONG!!**

Jan Fennell has observed that the domestic dog still behaves in a way that is based in its origins from the wolf pack, which is a very structured hierarchy. All that has happened by living with us is that its world has become more and more complicated and less understandable. A wolf pack has two dominant leaders, the Alpha Dog and the Alpha Bitch, beneath them are the rest of the pack which is structured according to their strength, age etc. There always has to be an Alpha leader in any pack. This leader takes all the decisions for the pack, such as where, what and when to hunt. It defends the pack and decides what is a danger and how to deal with it. The rest of the pack accepts the

will need to mix this with dog biscuits or vegetables to provide sufficient roughage. Go by the manufacturers recommendations for the quantity to feed your dog, this is usually based on the weight and breed of your dog. Do not over feed your dog, because just like humans, over eating leads to all sorts of conditions that can prove to be fatal. It is usually not beneficial to change their diet too much since their digestive system may not be able to cope, resulting in upset stomachs and diarrhoea.

Leaving puppies aside for the moment, milk is not good for adult dogs or cats. Humans are the only mammals that as adults can break down and digest the rich fats in milk (cows milk being one of the richest). For other mammals the milk passes straight through and will cause indigestion and diarrhoea.

Puppies and kittens are able to digest milk, but cows milk is still too rich, so there are special preparations that can be bought. But in any case, a puppy that you get from the SPCA will have been completely weaned off milk and will be eating puppy foods.

When to feed your Dog

The golden rule is never, **never, NEVER**, leave food down constantly for your dog. Far from keeping it well fed, this will result in your dog not eating and lead to behavioural problems (more of this under the training section). Some dogs that are in our care have been under-nourished for so long that their stomach has shrunk and so we feed them little and often. We will advise you on how often to feed your dog depending on its current state or condition. The aim is that you will eventually feed your dog its daily intake with two meals; one in the morning and one in the evening. Try to keep the time of feeding regular to establish a routine. If the dog does not eat the food then only leave it down for ten or fifteen minutes and lift it until the next meal time. This may seem very unkind, but a healthy dog will soon learn it must eat when food is available. Of course if your dog does not eat for an extended period, then there may be something wrong and you should seek advice from a Vet. When your dog is eating, leave it in peace and never try to take its food away. Only lift the food when the dog walks away from it; hopefully it will have eaten it all.

It is best not feed your dog at the table or between meals because apart from the bad effects on the dog's fitness, it undermines the feeding routine.

Feeding your dog cooked bones is not generally a good idea, because the cooking process makes them brittle and they break into sharp pieces that can damage your dog internally. Chicken or rabbit bones should never be fed to a dog since they splinter and will cause the same internal damage. Uncooked bones represent a hygiene hazard through bacteria and flies, so they are not a good idea either. There is no doubt that your dog will get much pleasure from chewing a bone-like object so we advise that you purchase special dog chew products from a pet shop.

When to water your dog

ALWAYS... any mammal can survive for days or even weeks without food, but in a hot climate like ours, survival is measured in hours if there is no water. When you walk your dog take some water with you in case it over-exerts in the heat.

While we are on the subject of heat, **never leave your dog in your car even for a moment** many dogs die like this so please don't take that risk with your friend.

Bringing Your Dog Home

When you first bring your new dog home, it will almost certainly be unsure or frightened about what is happening. You already know that you like your dog, but it now has to decide to like you. Many of our dogs have been badly treated and this period of gaining confidence can take a long time. If you read Appendix 1 you will see that your dog needs to feel part of a pack, and the pack must have a leader. The pack will be you and your family and the leader has to be you, or another member of your family when you are not there. Joining your pack and accepting you as the leader is part of the bonding process that will give your dog confidence. As the leader you have to always be confident yourself, because if you are not, then your dog will soon sense it.

At first allow your dog to explore the new surroundings, and leave it alone while this is going on. You should already have prepared a bed for it, so when it settles down, show it where this is. With a very timid dog it may take two or three weeks before it accepts you and its new home, so do not try to speed this process. A little patience now will pay you back later and it will not be long before your dog is following you around out of choice. When it does, then that is the time to start making a fuss of it. When new people visit then introduce them to your dog, but do not force it if it is frightened. Carry on as normal and it will eventually come round out of curiosity.

A very good way to bond with your dog is to take it out for walks. At first just go short distances and keep it on the lead. Whenever it goes to the toilet, make a big fuss of it and show it how pleased you are. You can also give it a treat of cheese or a favourite chew. Even on longer walks keep it on the lead until you are confident that it will come back to you when called. Always keep your dog on a lead in public places or when walking by the road. When you are sure it is safe to walk without the lead, make the walk fun by throwing a tennis ball or a purpose made toy for it to retrieve. Do not throw sticks since these can cause accidents and serious injury to your dog. Remember, walks are not only good for your dog, but they are very good for your health too.

Some of our dogs have never lived in a home before so they may not be house trained. Many dogs are naturally clean and will only go to the toilet outside, others are more careless. A puppy will certainly have to be trained not to go to the toilet in the house. Fortunately all dogs can be trained to be clean, since in the wild they will not dirty their immediate living area.

Always try to anticipate problems and do not set yourself up for failure; after all you are the most intelligent one in this partnership (aren't you?). Keep your dog in an area that is easily cleaned and can be shut off from the rest of the house. Remove carpets or rugs at night time and if you are worried about your floors then lay down some newspapers a little distance from your dogs bed.

by the sand fly, and it will eventually die from the disease.

Humans can also be infected by the sand fly but it is not usually life threatening in this region. Leishmaniasis can only be passed on by the sand fly so the best way to protect you and your dog from this disease is to avoid being outside for the dusk to dawn hours of darkness, throughout the year but especially in the summer months when the moth is most active. If you take your dog out at night make sure that you and it, are well covered with an effective insect repellent. There is also a 'Scalibo[®]' collar, which is claimed to give your dog protection from the sand fly, as well as ticks and fleas.

Mange and other skin disorders

If your dog is well looked after and kept clean this should not be a problem. However some skin complaints can be caught through contact with other dogs and animals. If your dog starts to scratch a lot or loses its hair then always consult a Vet as quickly as is possible. The earlier these conditions are caught the easier they are to treat.

If your dog becomes listless, sick or injured, always consult a Vet as soon as you can. In most cases delays can cause serious complications, so it is better to be safe than sorry.

Health and Hygiene

We have already mentioned basic hygiene in the dog's living area, also regularly remove any food or bones so that they do not become rotten and fly blown. If you have children then it is very important that the dog does not go to the toilet in any area where they are likely to be playing. The main concern is worms and parasites that are present in the faeces. For this reason if your dog goes to the toilet in the house, then always wipe the cleared area with a strong solution of bleach and water. Take care that your dog does not come into contact with the bleach solution since this can result in very severe chemical burns. Do not encourage your dog to lick you, but if it does then make sure that you wash your hands and face afterwards.

It is not only the law, but as a courtesy to others and to protect the environment when you are out walking your dog, it is important that you clean up after it. This is very easy to do using a plastic shopping bag. Using the bag as a glove over your hand, pick up the faeces, then pull the bag forward so that the faeces are now inside the bag and you can then seal and dispose of it in a waste bin.

It is a good idea to give your dog a bath from time to time. Use a dog shampoo or a very mild shampoo. Make sure that you rinse your dog thoroughly afterwards to remove all traces of the shampoo. When you bath your dog, you remove natural oils that are in its coat and skin, so it is not a good idea to constantly bath it, particularly if it lives outside. Unless your dog rolls in something smelly, two or three baths a year should be all that it will need. As dogs get older and clean themselves less, then they may need more frequent bath's. Swimming in the sea is good for your dog, but rinse off the salt water with fresh water, after each swim.

Remember that Gozo SPCA is always willing to help you or give you advice. You can find our contact details on the inside cover page.

Your Dogs Health

The longer you own dogs, the more you will get to know about their health and well being. At first there is quite a lot to learn and it can be worrying. We are always happy to help you with advice and so is your Vet. These days there is lots of information about dog training, dog feeding and nutrition, dog ailments, dog breeds, etc., etc. all on the Internet or World Wide Web.

Vaccination

It is very important that your dog receives a full course of vaccinations which will protect him against a number of life-threatening diseases, of which Canine Parvo Virus is currently the most dangerous. This is particularly true for puppies since it is invariably fatal. After the initial course of vaccinations your pet will need an annual booster. At the SPCA we vaccinate all dogs that come into our care, however depending on the stage that you adopt your dog, the series may not be complete. We will tell you what remains to be done and it is vital that you follow this up with your Vet.

Worms

All dogs are born with intestinal worms, we treat our dogs for worms, but you must follow this up in order to keep your dog worm free. Worming tablets from pet shops are not so effective as those prescribed by a Vet. Depending on where you live, the frequency of treatment may vary and your Vet will advise you accordingly. If your dog does have worms then you will see these in its faeces when it goes to the toilet. They look very much like white threads or thin flat spaghetti pieces. Quite apart from the dogs health, it is vital that you treat for worms if you have children, since worms can be passed from dogs to humans in the faeces and saliva. For this reason it is not wise to allow a dog to lick your face and children should always wash their hands after playing with a dog.

Fleas and Ticks

Fleas and Ticks are not only a nuisance to you, but they can be life threatening for your dog. Fortunately regular treatment with products such as Front Line which is only available from your Vet, makes them easy to control.

Leishmaniasis and the Sand Fly

Leishmaniasis (sand fly disease) is the most serious parasitic disease to affect dogs in the Mediterranean and unfortunately at the moment there is no vaccination against it. The disease is spread by the 'sand fly', which is not a fly at all, but a tiny night flying moth. It does not live in the sand either, but is mainly found in rubble walls, wooded areas and sometimes grasslands. This insect sucks blood from a dog that is infected, then when it bites a healthy dog it passes the parasites to that animal. There is no cure, but treatment can be effective if caught early using daily tablets of Allopurinol or a generic equivalent. In the later stages treatment can be expensive and may involve many painful injections. These days the life expectancy for an infected dog under regular treatment is very good, so do not despair if your dog is diagnosed with leishmaniasis. Because there is no cure, an un-treated infected dog is a source of the disease should it be bitten

The most likely times when a dog will go to the toilet are when it wakes up, after it has fed, or if it is left alone for any period of time. So at these times make sure that you take your dog outside for a walk, encouraging and praising when it goes to the toilet. Frequent walks are the best solution since your dog simply won't have any need to go to the toilet at other times.

When there are accidents, never shout or hit your dog. This is very important because it would give your dog the message that it is bad to go to the toilet when humans are around, so it will not even do it for you on walks; it will simply wait until you are not there and do it then. The correct thing is to show that you are not pleased through body language, put your dog on its lead and walk it outside. If it does anything now, then make a huge fuss of it and forget the incident.

The next section is about training your dog, but you have already started the important bonding process. Do not be tempted to over spoil your dog in these early stages, it will just become confused about who is in charge. Be kind, encouraging, confident and firm. Never be cruel, angry or physically hard. Use your voice and body language, often just ignoring your dog will be punishment enough.

Training your Dog

As a general rule, dogs do not need much training, but humans usually do. There are a couple of very fine books written by Jan Fennell that explain what is meant by that. Appendix 1 briefly outlines her approach and we can confirm that it works even for the most difficult dogs. You will understand this section better if you read Appendix 1 now.

Stick to the four basic principles and your dog will be happy, will respect you and will want to do basic "training". Never be tempted to over-spoil your dog or you will end up with a bad mannered dog that thinks it is in charge and does what it likes. But on the other hand always have fun with your dog.

If you have followed the four principles then your dog will probably walk to heel already because that is the natural thing for it to do. You will also want to teach it to "sit", "stay" and "come" (re-call). You may also want to teach it to lie down, shake hands, roll over etc. but that is more for fun than essential.

Don't try any training until you have bonded with your dog and it understands who is the "pack leader" (in case you are unsure, that is supposed to be you not your dog). A good time to do training is after a meal, and limit the sessions to five or ten minutes. Do not try to train more than one new skill at a time. Patience is a virtue, so control your temper and never hit your dog. If your dog does not do what you want, it is because you are not making yourself clear, or you are trying to go too fast for it. If you hit your dog you may never regain the trust that is essential for it to want to do what you ask. Training should always be fun for you and your dog. If either of you are not enjoying a session then put it off until another time, when you are in a better frame of mind. Depending on the skills of you and your dog, this training may take days, or many weeks, so don't set any time limits.

You will need to have a lead and collar for your dog right from the first day. Always have a leather or fabric fixed collar with a dog tag that gives the dog's name and a contact telephone number should it become lost. This is very important in the early stages when your dog may be unsure of its new home, or owner and try to escape. The collar should be adjusted sufficiently tight so that it does not slip over its head, but loose enough for it to breathe easily. If the dog is large and strong then a full choke or a stop choke collar may also be needed when you are out walking. However the long term aim is to train your dog so that it does not pull on the lead and such collars should only then be important if your dog is distracted by a cat or another dog.

A very useful training aid is a 'clicker', this is a device that makes a loud click when you press it. The idea is that when your dog does what you ask it to do, you click the clicker and give it a treat. The dog quickly associates the click with a pleasant outcome and learns that the click comes when it does something that you want it to do. It is very clear to the dog that it has done the right thing when it hears the click. We have noticed very high levels of concentration even with the most unruly of our dogs, because they seem to like the clicker game very much. The following assumes that you are using a clicker.

Teaching "Sit"

Use a treat such as cheese, then standing in front of your dog, extend the treat forwards and just

over its head. Your dog will follow the treat with its eyes and will have to sit down to do so. As it starts to sit say "SIT". When it is sat, click, repeat the word "sit" and give it the treat. You can also make a bit of a fuss and show of pleasure. During the training sessions repeat this, but gradually instead of extending your hand over its head, just lift it until the dog will sit to command with no hand movement at all. The final stage is to ask for the "sit" outside training sessions, then to eventually remove the treat rewards. Your aim should be to get your dog to sit no matter how far away from you it is.

Teaching "Stay"

Start with your dog on the lead and sitting directly in front of you. Raise one hand and step backwards with your left or right leg. Hold your hand up in front of you (like a Policeman's Stop signal) and say "STAY". Then bring your leg forward again, click and reward your dog with a treat. Because you only move one leg the dog is unlikely to move forward, but if it does, then do not reward it and repeat the process. The next stage is to step backwards with the other leg so that you are now a pace away from your dog, click, then step forwards again and reward your dog. You may have to repeat "STAY" if your dog wants to move with you when it shouldn't. The progression is to step as many paces away as the lead will allow, at this stage you introduce the re-call or "come" command.

Teaching re-call

When at the end of the lead in "stay" call your dog by name and "COME". Your dog should come to you, click, ask it to sit and reward it. The progression is to remove the lead and move further and further away from your dog while extending the "stay" period.

Re-call is probably the most important skill that your dog needs to learn for its own safety. You should practice it when you are out walking your dog and it is just a few paces away from you. It becomes difficult the more the distractions and the further away that your dog is; but no matter how tempting, never hit or shout at your dog if it delays coming to you. If you do then your dog will become confused and associate coming to you with being told off. You will then have lost all your previous training and may never recover it. If your dog refuses to come, simply turn around and walk away from it. If every thing else is in place, then because you are the leader, your dog will eventually follow and come to you. When it does, praise it and maybe put it on the lead, but do not be cross. Another tactic is to crouch down when you call your dog and hold your arms out wide. This is non-threatening to a dog and it is much more likely to want to come to you.