

Consistency is very important in developing a relationship with your dog. You want to be consistent and clear on what behaviours are acceptable and what are not. Daily when we interact with our dogs we can set them up for success, by communicating with our body language and behaviour. The following behaviours are easy to incorporate into your daily life and will work on building a strong relationship with your dog.

- Feed meals to your dog on a consistent schedule, leaving the food down for 20 minutes and then removing it until the next meal. Always have your dog “sit” and “wait” for up to 30 seconds after you put the food down and before he is allowed to eat. Before you put the bowl on the ground, take out a few pieces of kibble and get him to offer a few behaviours. (Great training opportunity that takes very little time.) Age and medical conditions may require you to feed your dog on a different schedule.
- Using our bodies to block our dogs can be used to encourage dogs to move or not come into our space.
- Practice “name attention” or “watch me” twice a day. This teaches your dog to give you attention when you ask for it and develop a positive association with his name.
- If your dog is in the way, have him move rather than walking around or over him.
- Have your dog “sit” and “wait” for up to 30 seconds before you let him go in and out of doors. If you are with the dog, you should go first. You may need to use your body to block the entrance to the door when you first start this exercise.
- Have your dog “wait” at one end of the stairs until you have finished climbing or descending, then call him to you.
- Only allow your dog to jump on you when invited to do so. Reward your dog when he comes up to greet people and keeps all four paws on the ground.
- Teach your dog to “leave it” and “drop” items. It is much easier to teach our dogs what is appropriate rather than reinforcing them for stealing items when you are chasing them around.
- Teach your dog to eliminate on command. Pick ONE spot in your yard for your dog to urinate. The first time your dog urinates, he does so to eliminate, every other time the dog is marking his territory.
- If your dog paws or nudges you for attention, ask the dog to do something (like “sit” or “bring a toy”) BEFORE petting the dog. While affection is an important part of your relationship with your dog, he should not be demanding attention. Get into the habit of asking your dog over and giving him attention.
- Teach your dog to walk nicely beside you. Walks are much more enjoyable for everyone when there is no tension on the leash. When we are up by their heads or shoulders we can influence them with our body language.
- When you ask your dog to do something only ask once. Ensure that you have your dog’s attention prior to asking for a skill and that they are likely to be able to comply. When introducing behaviours you need to reinforce them every time, but once they know the skill reinforcement should be intermittent.
- Never allow your dog to put his teeth or mouth on you. During rough play dogs are easily aroused and reinforced for inappropriate interactions that can be generalized to all people.
- Reward your dog for behaviours that you like and discourage through management and consistency behaviours you do not want your dog to do.