

Dogs 101

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Introduction

The Dogs 101 booklet has been designed by AIAM to be a useful source of useful information for people *considering* dog ownership. There are serious ethical obligations about care and consideration involved in owning a dog. In essence: Dog owners who positively shape their dog's attitude and its behaviour in the right way... and... right from the start, will reliably get better results than those who don't.

Obtaining a dog is *not* like purchasing a battery powered toy that can be used and then stored or even thrown away when the moment has passed. Dogs are living creatures that have needs more complicated than just a steady supply of fresh batteries.

When dogs *do* end up being neglected or abandoned because they have become a nuisance or an inconvenience, it is a great shame if these poor outcomes could have been prevented in the first place.

Dogs are famous for being wonderful animal companions. Their evolution has almost tailor made them for this role. But getting good outcomes from this human-animal relationship is not a given - it is not automatic and it is not a matter of luck. It takes time, it takes effort and it takes some skill to successfully secure good outcomes.

Dogs have to be managed competently if they are expected to cope successfully with the companion animal role that our society asks of them.

The material presented here has been shaped to "translate" (for want of a better word) the science of animal behaviour into ideas more suited for general community appreciation and understanding.

DISCLAIMER:

The idea of this booklet is to help create an environment for better behavioural outcomes. Measures recommended here are by their nature empiric, they are not absolute. This advice provides "guidelines" that *can* be followed rather than dictates "tram tracks" that must be

The expression of dog behaviour (what a dog may do at any place or time) is a function of both genetic and environmental influences that represent an unlimited range of combined circumstantial effect. The recommendations put forward in this document come with no guarantees. The responsibility for the actions of dogs ultimately rests with their owners.

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Structure

The business of shaping dog behaviour naturally lends itself to structural dissection because the stages of acquisition, socialisation, obedience, management and control logically follow one another in a broadly consecutive sense. Acquisition is a first step, socialisation follows next, then obedience training and so on.

It should be understood however, that while these five stages are presented separately here, no stage is rigidly independent of any other. Nor is any stage any more or less important than any other. Each of the five stages makes an equally important contribution to the overall dividend.

The big five:

1. **Selection** – is about making a sensibly considered decision in choosing the type of dog that will best suit your needs, your environment and resources.

- **Carefully consider** your own personal circumstances as well as the characteristics of the dog you might be considering.
- **Think ten years ahead:** Dog ownership is for the life of the dog not just for the medium or short term. Consider where you will be living, what you can afford, how much time you will have to spend with the dog, whether you will be having children around and so on
- **Don't get the wrong kind of dog:** A "misfit" circumstance will most often end in tears for everybody (including *especially* the dog).
- **Being unwanted and abandoned is a grim prospect for dogs.** It is naïve to believe that abandoned dogs all live happily ever after being dropped off at the local animal shelter
- **Dogs obtained as adults** may come with "built in" behavioural problem issues that result from previous conditioning – puppies also, but less so.
- **Behaviour is a function of genetics and environment** – you can select for good genetics and you can provide a good environment. Prospective dog owners should try to do both

2. **Socialisation & shaping** – is about the "moulding" of a puppy's attitude and its "sense of self" that will last for the rest of its life. A dog can be trained at any age, but it can only be socialised in this one relatively limited window of opportunity.

- **Socialisation period** is the stage when puppies are adolescents in transition to becoming young adults. It is when they strive to understand who they are, what they are supposed to do and how they are expected to fit in with everyone else.
- **Socialisation period is a window that occurs between about 8 and 16 weeks of age.** Dogs can't be retrospectively "socialised" after this time. First impressions are the most lasting ones and without expert assistance this first impression you make may well be a bad one!
- **Shaping behaviour** expert socialisation is the second most important point (after selecting for sound temperament) for getting good behavioural outcomes for the life of a dog.

3. **Leadership, obedience training and discipline** – are unusually important behavioural imperatives for dogs. Dogs are highly social animals that thrive in the presence of a strong leader. Good leadership provides the discipline dogs need to have clear and consistent boundaries for acceptable behavioural conduct.

- **With successful leadership**, dogs have a steady sense of security and the peace of mind that stems from knowing where they belong and what is expected of them.
- **In the absence of capable leadership**, a dog's instinct compels it to assume that (default) command role and this can result in difficult and dangerous and unpredictable behaviour.
- **Once established in a "default" leader role**, dominant dogs *strongly* resent being challenged. It is much, much harder to re-gain control than it is to maintain it from puppyhood.

The bottom line with control and restraint is: If you keep your dog to yourself and prevent it from intruding into the lives of others, (by and large) the rest of the community is going to be tolerant of its presence. This means (in general terms) that dog owners need to be prepared to:

1. Keep their dog secure behind the fence when it is at home
2. Keep their dog secure on a leash when it is in public places
3. Keep their dog at heel and on the left when in public places so as to not tangle with passers by
4. Actively prevent unnecessary barking

Training is different to obedience and both are necessary

Training is how you show a dog what you want it to do. This generally involves giving rewards for compliance

Obedience is when a dog will do what is asked, simply because the request has been made.

- You can't have a composed dog in the absence of obedience
- You can't have obedience in the absence of leadership
- You can't have leadership in the absence of discipline

Every interaction you have with your dog is an opportunity to train or shape its behaviour.

It is easy to train for bad behaviour by failing to provide the required leadership and control.

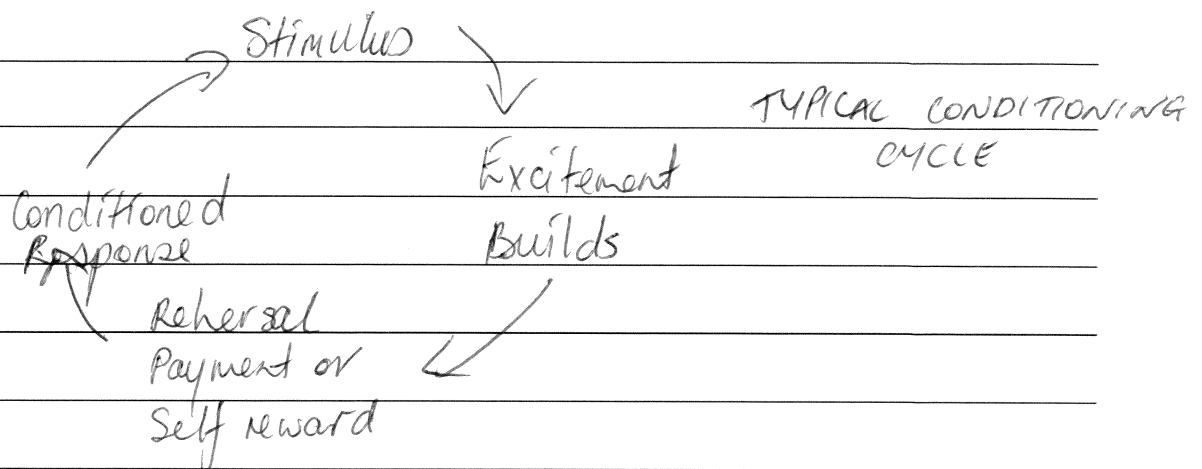
4. Day to day management – Apart from strong leadership, there are four other basic behavioural dog needs. All these needs have to be met if the dog is expected to behave in a balanced way. They relate to the natural instinctive traits of the species – and this includes all types of dogs, both large and small. Dogs need to have....

- a) **Things to do** – dogs are intelligent animals. They need stimulating things to do. Boredom is a common cause of nuisance (stress) behaviour
- b) **People to see** – dogs are social animals. They need to be socially included. Being locked out and away from family and friends is a common cause of nuisance (stress) behaviour
- c) **Places to go** – dogs are mobile animals. They need to exercise. Not getting adequate exercise is a common cause of nuisance (stress) behaviour
- d) **Grapevine to tend** – dogs are territorial animals. Getting out for walks is about more than just getting exercise. Dogs need to regularly check their community scent mail messages to see what is happening in the neighbourhood. Failure to take dogs for regular walks is a common cause of nuisance (stress) behaviour

5. Citizenship, control and restraint – Dog owners should never forget that dogs are dogs, they are not people. While dogs can make great animals companions, they are still animals. Dog owners need to realise that while their dog may be their best friend, to everyone else it is just another dog.

Dog owners and lovers also need to be aware that others have a legal right to not want to interact with their dog. Not everyone likes dogs and not everyone is comfortable around them.

SHAPING DOG BEHAVIOUR USING DRIVES - CRAIG MURRAY



Ask - 1- food/feeding? 2- Play how?

Dogs are either bad, mad or shaped.

Some temperament testing is dangerous, but what is more dangerous? Sending out not tested?

Can change 'prey play' to 'play play'. Must work our dogs in play drive, ^{not} prey.

3-5% of dogs may have mental illness (people ~23%)

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