

How to Manage Unwanted Behavior

Excerpted from *Decoding Your Dog*

Nuisance behaviors can be changed to polite manners or managed to a point where they don't bother us, depending on our preference. Here are four strategies:

- Management techniques
- Training consistent interactions
- Training solutions
- Physical and mental stimulation

Management Techniques

Many annoying behaviors can be prevented or managed to a point where they no longer present a problem. Keep in mind that management isn't training. The dog isn't learning how we would prefer him to behave; he is simply prevented from behaving in an unwanted way in a situation because we control the options and outcomes. But management is a great short-term measure for getting relief, especially for young animals with nuisance behaviors, and it often works well enough to satisfy many people in the long term too. Management also keeps the dog from practicing the problem behavior and thus learning bad habits by repeating the same behaviors over and over again. For example, keeping your dog out of the kitchen prevents him from jumping on the counter and being rewarded by finding leftover food. If he isn't allowed in the kitchen, he never learns that jumping on the counter rewards. Remember, for a behavior to be ongoing, it must be reinforcing for the dog; that is why he repeats it.

Management techniques might include setting up barriers such as baby gates and exercise pens, using humane anti-pull devices such as head halters or harnesses, and simply dog-proofing the house, stowing away food, and placing desirable things out of reach.

Substitute sitting for jumping on you by rewarding your puppy only when he is sitting. No punishment is needed, because he learns very quickly that when he sits, he gets what he wants. This allows him to explore different behaviors and make the correct decision.

The puppy will very likely offer this sitting behavior again. If you are consistent in your reactions, soon he will default into a sit position for greetings.

