

Problems?

Part II

Whenever you have decided to take your dog out for a walk, I would imagine that, if you are like me, you would probably say, "Millie, would you like to go for a walk?" She would soon associate that phrase with an enjoyable experience and respond accordingly as she saw the leash and slip chain-collar in your hand. With her showing great excitement, your next step would be to put the equipment on to her. Like many handlers this is where you might have a problem. Even though you may have made up the collar correctly and, by holding it with two hands desperately hoping that your dog will put its nose into the collar, you are bound to have great difficulty in getting the dog to put its nose through. The dog may dodge from side to side, duck its head down out of the way, jump up at you, and even run around you having an absolute ball of a time, probably barking joyfully at the same time. Most frustrating, I'm sure you'll agree.

In one sense it is a great fiasco as the handler spends ages chasing the dog around the kitchen floor. Sometimes it needs two members of the family to finally catch the dog. Having done that, they still have difficulty in getting the collar on the dog. This should never be a problem if everything is done in a simple way. So, make up the slip-chain collar and attach the leash to the end ring. Hold the collar in the left hand at the point where the small links travel through the other round ring. Held securely, it won't undo itself. Stand face to face with your dog; take hold of the flesh around the left side of its lower jaw and cheek with your right hand, and hold your dog quite still as you cast the collar over its nose, head and neck. As you do this, you can use the phrase in a pleasing tone, "Put your collar on," followed by, "There's a good dog."

I must have shown this simple technique to handlers thousands of times, and each time it has only taken a few seconds. When I have demonstrated this, many handlers say, "You make it look so easy". Well, yes, it is easy, and furthermore you will, in quite a short time, see how your dog will cooperate by coming towards you and put its nose through the circular shaped collar that you hold quite still. Just before it puts its nose in, say, "Put your collar on" and praise sincerely as soon as its nose enters.

In carrying out that daily exercise, you are exercising control over your dog and therefore you are getting it into respect you and show affection towards you. In taking firm control you are showing the dog exactly what you want. This will achieve good results with many other things you teach your dog in the future.

The next thing you may have to do is to take your dog out through the front door of the house. Once again, your dog may show great excitement and attempt to charge out as soon as you even start to open the door. If this happens, don't follow. Instead, bring it back immediately and shut the door. Your dog has to learn to walk out through the doorway with you and without pulling on the leash. You will only need to repeat this correction a few times and your dog will soon get the message. Again, you will be exercising your control and in return your dog will respect you. It is as simple as that if you put your mind to it. Remember, always be consistent. You are the boss, not the dog.

You may then decide to put your dog in your car to drive some distance to a free running area. As you reach your car, get your dog to sit. Open the car door and after a few seconds invite your dog to jump inside and give vocal praise as it enters. However, if your dog anticipates and attempts to jump in before being told to do so, correct it and shut the door again. After a few seconds, re-open the car door. When you see your dog respond favourably, command it to jump in and give praise as she enters. Once again, you are exercising your control and your dog will show the required respect. It is very important that that respect is also shown as you are driving along. Personally, I have always found the best place to have my dog in the car, is on the floor in front of the front passenger seat. With a short piece of chain with clip attached to underneath the seat, this can be clipped on as soon as the dog has got into the car. Taking this precaution prevents my dog jumping on to me or even into the rear of the car. As you drive you are in a very commanding position, whereas you would not be if the dog was behind you on the back seat getting up to all sorts of mischief.

Upon reaching your destination, it is important that your dog does not jump out as soon as you open the car door. It must learn to wait inside until called out. As it is called out, praise it. If it does jump out prematurely, put it back inside immediately and shut the door. Wait for a few seconds, and then slowly and quietly open the door. If you feel that your dog will attempt to jump out again, say in a quiet, slow, warning tone, "No." This precautionary method conveys to the dog that you are in charge, you are one step ahead of it, and you are in fact a mind reader. Anyway, with the required favourable response seen, call your dog out quietly and praise quietly as it responds.

During your walk, your dog may need to defecate. Before you get your plastic bag out to pick up its motion, bring your dog to heel to sit beside you. There it must stay while you reach down to pick up after your dog. During this procedure, if your dog should attempt to move, cease what you are doing, correct your dog, tell it to stay then pick up again. If you are watchful, quick, firm and consistent, your dog will respect you and keep quite still. Every piece of control is basic obedience being applied in a practical way. Not so very long ago I was training a young man with two German Shepherds. He brought them alternately and they were learning very well. Then after several weeks I asked him to bring them together. During the walk, one of them had to defecate. Being a responsible dog owner, he pulled a plastic bag from his pocket, and then asked me if I would mind holding both his dogs on leads while he picked up. He was quite surprised and somewhat puzzled when I replied, "Yes, I do mind." I looked at him for a moment and said, "Now let's look at it this way. You have trained both your dogs to do the sit stay exercise which they do very well. Now let's put that training into a practical everyday situation. Get your dogs to sit side by side about two metres from and facing what you have to pick up. Tell them to 'Stay' and go round the far side so that when you are picking it up you can also glance upwards at your dogs. If they move you know what you have to do. If you walk straight forward to pick up with your back to your dogs, you will not be in a position to correct them should they attempt to move." Having explained all that to him which he gladly appreciated, he said, "Yes, it all makes sense, doesn't it. You really have to think of all these things before you carry out some necessary procedure. I admit that I would not have thought about that beforehand. So thanks for that tip". Well, that was yet another instance where basic obedience can be applied in a practical every day situation.

Having had an enjoyable walk with your dog, you will then need to go through the whole process again as you get your dog into the car and out of it when you arrive home. Then you will need to get your dog through the front door in a most orderly manner.

So you see how easy it is and by carrying out these basic principles in training you should not encounter such problems which are experienced by so many people who haven't a clue what to do. Remember to think what you are doing when training your dogs and RE-THINK about some of the undesirable ideas and methods which have crept into dog training in recent times. Good luck.

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